Peacebuilding and Conflict Prevention in Burundi's 2015 Election Crisis

Mike Jobbins
Global Affairs and Partnerships, Search for Common Ground

Floride Ahitungiye
National Director, Search for Common Ground Burundi

On April 26, 2015, the small central African nation of Burundi was plunged into its most profound political crisis since the end of a civil war. During the crisis, more than 300,000 people died—often in intercommunal violence. The nomination of President Pierre Nkurunziza to run for a third term in office led to sustained street demonstrations by opposition forces in the capital; an attempted coup d'état; and a cycle of insecurity, fear, human rights abuses, and targeted killings. This political crisis threatens to undermine one of the most notable successes in resolving seemingly intractable conflicts in Africa in recent years. The crisis also sheds light on the influence and limits of international cooperation. Building peace in Burundi during the conflict, supporting reconciliation and the consolidation of democracy, and addressing the dynamics of the current crises are the processes that the authors have seen firsthand over the past decade. We both work with Search for Common Ground, an international non-governmental organization that has worked to support societal conflict transformation in the country over the past twenty years. Floride acts as Burundi Country Director, and Mike is Director of Global Affairs.

The Birth of Peacebuilding in the Face of Violence

The Great Lakes region of Africa in the mid-1990s was swept by a wave of civil conflicts that shocked the world's consciousness. The way in which the international community responds to crises was profoundly shaped by the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, state collapse and regional wars in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the Lords' Resistance Army insurgency in northern Uganda, and intercommunity violence in Burundi. The horror of the Rwandan genocide contributed to the global "Responsibility to Protect" movement (Government of Canada 2002). Mismanagement of the Rwandan refugee crisis in the DRC contributed to the emergence of many of the international standards that guide humanitarian intervention, including the Sphere Standards (Buchanan-Smith and Margie 2003), and the Do No Harm principles (Anderson 1999).

Meanwhile, the Burundian crisis represented one of the first major attempts by the global community to address identity-based violence and civil war through complementing formal negotiations, with approaches from the emerging field of peacebuilding in the post-Cold War context. The term "peacebuilding" itself was defined and endorsed within the United Nations (UN) System in 1992 by then Secretary General Boutros Boutros-

Send correspondence to Michael Jobbins, Global Affairs and Partnerships, Search for Common Ground, Washington, DC 20009; telephone: 202-265-4300.E-mail: mjobbins@sfcg.org.

doi: 10.1093/global/guw003

Ghali, just one year before the outbreak of conflict in Burundi (United Nations 1992).

Due in part to the horrors of Rwanda, international reaction to the crisis in Burundi incorporated a strong peacebuilding component as a deliberate strategy to prevent an escalation of targeted intercommunal violence. This effort was led by international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and later incorporated into national and multilateral engagement strategies. In the mid-1990s, Burundi saw some of the first major peacebuilding programs by NGOs, including Search for Common Ground, International Alert, the South African NGO The African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD), and faith-based groups such as the American Friends' Service Committee and the Community of Sant'Egidio. These NGO-led initiatives, often in partnership with Burundian groups, typically focused on supporting grassroots dialogue processes aimed at building relationships across ethnic lines. They also focused on promoting reconciliation, local mediation, and other forms of dispute resolution. Moreover, a number of organizations, including Search for Common Ground, La Benevolencija, and Panos Paris focused on supporting the development of constructive journalism and production of media content, aimed at addressing hate speech and accompanying peacebuilding programs.

At the governmental and multilateral level, Burundi was among one of the first countries to receive funding under the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)'s Conflict Management and Mitigation Grants Program (Social Impact, Inc. 2014). Alongside Sierra Leone, Burundi was the first country-specific engagement of the UN Peacebuilding Commission. The African Union's AU Mission in Burundi (AMIB) was one of the first to move beyond peacekeeping to take an active role in supporting the peacebuilding (Murithi 2008). The British Department for International Development (DFID), the European Commission and the World Bank supported innovative high-level conflict resolution and training by the Woodrow Wilson Center, under the leadership of the former U.S. Special Envoy Howard Wolpe, aimed at facilitating the peace process (Wolpe et al. 2004).

Given both the legacy of ethnic conflict, as well as the international focus on peacebuilding across the lines of ethnic identity, the risk of interethnic violence during the current conflict has attracted significant attention from the media and the international community. It is equally relevant to draw some preliminary assessments of the results of international engagement in Burundi, in the context of the current crisis. In the following sections, we look at the dynamics of ethnic politics in Burundi. We then consider factors that contributed to the current crisis, providing an example of the peacebuilding community's response, and citing some preliminary lessons.

The Rise of Ethnic Politics in Burundi

One of Africa's most densely inhabited countries, Burundi, is home to three ethnic groups: Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa. Like its northern neighbor, Rwanda, Burundi has experienced repeated outbreaks of politically driven mass violence targeting civilians based upon ethnic identity. Much of Burundi's recent history has been understood in terms of the relationship

between its Hutu majority and Tutsi minority, with the pygmy Twa playing a marginal role.

Despite this history, both Hutu and Tutsi share a common language, religion, and culture. The current borders of each country reflect the boundaries of the pre-colonial kingdoms, which were only briefly combined under a single Belgian administration. During the pre-colonial and colonial period, political authority in Burundi was consolidated under the rule of a Tutsi king, a position that was continued through German and later Belgian policies of "indirect rule" (Reyntjens 2000).

Both Hutu and Tutsi played a role in pre-colonial government, under the mwami and his courtly inner circle *(ganwa)*. Both groups suffered as Belgian colonial policies consolidated power in the hands of a small set of elites and foreign interests (Lemarchand 1994). While the Hutu and Tutsi remained distinct identity groups, the multiplicity of overlapping regional, familial, and social class-based divisions between Burundians in the pre-independence period created "bridging" social capital. This bridging was based on the cleavages between and within the major ethnic groups that characterized society and produced links across ethnic groups (Brachet and Wolpe 2005, 6).

An interethnic anti-colonial movement under the banner of the Union pour le Progrès National (UPRONA) fueled the country's independence movement. The assassination of UPRONA's leftist leader, Prince Louis Rwagasore in 1961 left the monarchy as the sole arbiter of political power at independence (Reyntjens 2000). After independence and Rwagasore's death, interethnic political alliances rapidly eroded.

The Emergence of Post-Independence Ethnic Politics

Competition between Hutu and Tutsi elites, localized violence, and spillover of ethnic tensions from Rwanda culminated in a power struggle and instability that saw the assassination of a Hutu prime minister in 1965. The volatility and violence continued with an attempted Hutu-led coup against his *ganwa* replacement, reprisal massacres, and consolidation of power within a single-party state led by predominantly Tutsi military governments under the UPRONA party. In 1972, the military led a violent purge of Hutu intellectuals, in response to a claimed insurrection attempt. This abolition left as many as 200,000 dead and forced several hundred thousand more into exile, and is referred to by many scholars as a genocide (Lemarchand 1994, 77–105).

The scale of violence in 1972, as well as bloodshed in Rwanda, cemented a cycle of fear and defined political life as a competition based on ethnic identity. The elimination of many Hutu, and some Tutsi, elite further translated the ethnic division into economic and social classes (Brachet and Wolpe 2005, 6). Seizure of now-unoccupied land, expropriations, and the progression of rural development schemes precipitated future land conflict.

Democratic elections were organized under international pressure in 1993, which placed Major Pierre Buyoya of the ruling UPRONA party against the Front Démocratique du Burundi (FRODEBU). FRODEBU swept to power, due in part to support from the radical and outlawed Parti pour la Libération du Peuple Hutu (PALIPEHUTU). While the electorate did not vote exclusively along ethnic lines, among the Tutsi, the results raised the

specter of complete ethnic exclusion and possibly extermination—a reversal of the 1972 massacres (Lemarchand 1994).

Following the overwhelming FRODEBU victory in 1993, the Tutsi minority saw their control of the army and the civil service as crucial to their protection (Sullivan 2005). FRODEBU's elected president was assassinated in an attempted coup by the Tutsi-dominated army. The intercommunal massacres that followed claimed approximately 50,000 lives in the immediate aftermath, both Hutu and Tutsi (Reyntjens 2000).

While the 1993 coup attempt failed to dislodge the FRODEBU government, increasingly active UPRONA-linked militias and Army units targeted Hutu throughout the country. Members of FRODEBU established the Conseil National pour la Défence de la Démocratie, with its armed wing the Forces pour la Défence de la Démocratie (CNDD-FDD). The banned Hutu parties PALIPEHUTU and the smaller Front pour la Libération Nationale established their own armed wings (PALIPEHUTU-FNL and FROLINA) (Reyntjens 2000).

After this escalation, intercommunal violence spiraled and the humanitarian crisis reached horrific proportions. Amidst increasing insecurity, the FRODEBU-led government was increasingly marginalized, caught in between the Tutsi-dominated army and the UPRONA party who subverted their leadership in what some scholars termed a "creeping coup" on one side (Reyntjens 1996, 239), and by the radical Hutu militias on the other. The de facto coup formalized in 1996, when the Army officially ousted the FRODEBU government and reinstalled Buyoya—three years and over 100,000 deaths after he first handed over power in democratic elections (Scherrer 2001). The war would eventually kill an estimated 300,000, and hundreds of thousands would be exiled or lose their homes.

The Arusha Accords and a Radical Experiment

In 1998, international concern about the unfolding crisis led to the start of the Arusha peace process, aimed at finding a solution to the conflict. Under the mediation of regional heavyweights Julius Nyerere, former president of Tanzania, and later Nelson Mandela, negotiators eventually arrived at an agreement between the Government and most of the major political parties in 2000. However, neither of the two largest rebel movements, the CNDD-FDD and the PALIPEHUTU-FNL, was parties to the agreement (Reyntjens 2000). Brachet and Wolpe write that the implementation of the Arusha Accords "resembled an arbitration," mandating that President Buyoya lead the government for the first half of the transition period, and then hand over power to FRODEBU leader Domitien Ndayizeye (Brachet and Wolpe 2005). This handover occurred without incident in early 2003.

The Arusha Agreements were the first of a series of agreements that paved the way for the peace process and the resumption of democratic rule. The CNDD-FDD, and later the PALIPEHUTU-FNL, eventually signed separate ceasefire agreements with the government. A constitution based upon the Arusha Agreement was adopted in 2005, and was followed by multiparty elections that were won by the CNDD-FDD with 57.8 percent of the vote. The CNDD-FDD's leader President Pierre Nkurunziza ran unopposed and was elected by the parliament through indirect elections, as laid out under the constitution. Disagreements over whether this initial indirect

election should be counted against the presidential term limits would eventually lay the groundwork for the 2015 political crisis.

The Arusha Agreements s and the 2005 Constitution laid out one of the most radical experiments in the recent history in African governance. Many political and military conflicts have ended in negotiated solutions and temporary power-sharing governments aimed at meeting the concerns of different regional, ethnic, and political interests. However, the institutional framework envisioned by Arusha, and enshrined in the constitution, was unique in that it laid out a permanent ethnic quota system.

The constitution explicitly acknowledged ethnic differences and ensured both Hutu and Tutsi positions within government. It also over-represented the Tutsi minority. In this framework, there would be two vice presidents, each from a different ethnic group. The Ministries of Defense and the Interior could not be from the same ethnic background. Ethnic balance within the security forces were laid out, and quotas were set in parliament: at least 40 percent for minority ethnic groups, 30 percent for women, and at least three seats for the Twa minority.

While this form of "consociational" government is not altogether new, it proved a radical experiment, particularly in a region in which state-building projects had historically focused forging national identities, and de-emphasizing ethnic affiliation.

Building Peace and Transforming Ethnic Conflict in Burundi

The institutional arrangement that emerged in Burundi following its transitions to peace and democratic rule has been gradually reinforced. We see four key social developments that have helped consolidate peace in the country. These developments in the security, social, and political realm were achieved through the commitment of ordinary Burundians as well as an emerging consensus among Burundi's political elite. At the same time, these areas were also the targets of international diplomatic engagement and development cooperation.

First, the country has experienced one of the most dramatic processes of security sector reform, including integrating substantial numbers of ex-rebels into the national army and ensuring ethnic balance in an institution that has historically been seen as the bulwark of Tutsi interests and security guarantees. The reform also involved the creation of a new national police force, and the reintegration of tens of thousands of former rebel fighters (Baltrop 2008). The development of the Burundian Army, the Forces de Defense National (FDN) as a unified, apolitical, and national force over the course of this period was among the most dramatic successes. Burundi's army is now deployed in peacekeeping operations in Somalia, the Central African Republic, and elsewhere, and has been rightly hailed as a successful example of international assistance and security in security sector reform. The Army has also received substantial investments and support from the United States, the Netherlands, and other partners to help with addressing the political, structural, and technical elements of the reform (Ball 2014). At the same time, other components of Security Sector Reform, including reform of the police and intelligence services, as well as the full disarmament and successful reintegration of ex-combatants, saw much less progress. This lack of progress was driven both by relatively unclear commitments within

the peace process (Baltrop 2008), and by an absence of political and donor focus and commitment afterwards (Nindorera 2007).

Second, Burundians have embarked on profound grassroots community reconciliation and conflict management, particularly across ethnic lines. A conflict analysis in March 2015, just before the crisis, found that a majority of Burundian Hutus and Tutsis no longer consider ethnicity to be a "significant problem," that they did not feel ethnic discrimination, and interacted with people from other ethnic groups on a daily basis—a remarkable finding so soon after the interethnic violence (Search for Common Ground 2015). The formal sector peace processes were accompanied by intensive community dialogue and cultural programs, led by local government, international and national NGOs, religious institutions, and individuals that aimed to encourage public acknowledgment of the past and build intercommunity cohesion grassroots level. One illustrative example is the *Inkingi y'Ubuntu* (Pillars of Humanity) program, which sought to undermine the notion of "heroism" as fighting for one's own ethnic community in armed struggle. Launched by Search for Common Ground, the campaign used a radio program, community meetings, and festivals to celebrate "pillars" of society who had worked across ethnic lines: Hutus who hid Tutsi in their houses at great personal risk and vice versa (Burundi Voices Project 2006). The initiative introduced the metaphorical sense of the word *inkingi* or pillar, into social parlance, acculturating the appreciation of cross-ethnic solidarity (Muyango December 2011). Other examples include trauma healing initiatives, local mediation, and forgiveness ceremonies. The results of this work on shifting interethnic perceptions have been notable.

Outside of the ethnic realm, perhaps the clearest demonstration of the community reconciliation process has been within the context of the return of hundreds of thousands of displaced people, predominantly farmers, into a land-scarce environment. This process has not been without isolated violence, and land disputes remain among the thorniest of issues facing the country. Nonetheless, the fact that so many refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs), after in some cases more than three decades outside the country, were able to return and reintegrate into impoverished, land-scarce, subsistence-farming areas is a testament to the contribution of ordinary Burundians to rebuild after conflict. The many land disputes have been settled through direct negotiations between landholders and returnees, and through mediation by NGOs, by local authorities, or by traditional leaders, the *bashingantahe.* By 2011, the land dispute arbitration mechanism set up as part of the peace process—the Commission Nationale des Terres et des Autres Biens (CNTB)—had resolved over 16,000 cases. The process has received intensive technical assistance from NGOs including ACCORD, Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), the Norwegian Refugee Council, and Search for Common Ground, while national and international NGOs have provided pro bono legal services and paralegal mediation. The process has been intensively supported, particularly in the context of refugee return, with support from both UN and government donors (Baribeau 2011). Elements of the process have been criticized, particularly by political actors who viewed the CNTB as politically partisan prior to the 2015 elections. However, the broad acceptance of the mediation and arbitration of scarce land, with very few cases of violence between families, represents a positive step on a difficult road.

Third, throughout the later years of the war, and throughout the peace process, public participation increased significantly in civil society, through local governments, and particularly through a diversified media sector. Despite isolated cases of threats, intimidation, and some violence, the country nonetheless maintained a climate of relatively free expression and public discussion of contentious issues. This liberalization of the media space included the birth of new newspapers, television, and the gradual extension of internet access, but was most dramatically reflected in the growth of community and independent radio. While the state broadcasters dominated the media landscape through the early 2000s, the landscape gradually liberalized. In 1995, Studio Ijambo was launched as an independent production studio producing news and drama programs by Hutu and Tutsi journalists and artists. Major public-interested independent news outlets appeared on the scene in the early 2000s, and most had missions aimed at promoting dialogue and supporting the peace process. Key outlets emerging in this period included Radio Isanganiro, Bonesha FM, and Radio Publique Africaine. Prior to the crisis, the radio sector had nineteen independent broadcasters, providing a mix of news, educational, and religious content on national or community levels. Over the past fifteen years, media has made key contributions, including Arusha process coverage, in supporting public consultations around the truth and reconciliation process, coming together to form a joint network to form a "synergie" providing common electoral coverage, raising the voices of women and youth, and reporting on the transition and democratic process.

Challenges of Peace Consolidation and the Roots of the Current Crisis

While the process of peacebuilding made significant progress from 2005 to 2015, a large series of significant structural background issues remained fundamentally unresolved.

First, Burundi remains one of the poorest and most agriculturally dependent countries on earth. A country the size of Maryland, Burundi is home to more than ten million people—the overwhelming majority of whom depend on subsistence farming for their livelihoods. Even with its rich volcanic soil, small plot sizes barely yield enough food for many families. Researchers put the rate of anemia at 45 percent for children under five (Institut de Statistiques et d'Etudes Economiques du Burundi 2012), and NGOs report stunting rates of 58 percent (Global Nutrition Report 2014). In a written testimony by the author to the House Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations (2015), co-author Mike Jobbins noted the following:

> A 2010 analysis by the Food and Agricultural Organization noted that in some parts of northern Burundi, the average smallholder farm could feed a family of five for just two or three months out of the year – the remaining nine months they were left to their own devices.
>
> Within the context of rural desperation, postwar Burundi has developed the third-highest rate of urbanization in the world, after only Qatar and its northern neighbor Rwanda [(CIA World Factbook 2013)]. Many of the recent migrants to cities have been young and poor, with little hope for a better future. The future for young Burundians is even more challenging: projections show that even under

> "optimistic" scenarios by agricultural and climate scientists, childhood malnutrition will likely drop from 45% today to just under 40% by 2050, underscoring the bleak nature of the long-term outlook [(Waithaka et al. 2013)] (Jobbins 2015).

The past decade has seen some successes in extending education and healthcare, including flagship initiatives to extend access to basic services by ensuring free maternal and infant health and free primary education. Despite this, economic growth has lagged behind regional trends. While these reforms have dramatically expanded access to basic services, lingering concerns remain over access to secondary education (Sommeiller and Wodon 2014), and ensuring accountability and quality of services in both sectors (Manirambona et al. 2015).

Second, although Burundi has experienced modest growth over the past decade, and despite the increased opportunities created by the end of the war and membership in the East African Community, there was not a "peace dividend" of significant economic growth. Between 2006 and 2014, Burundi's GDP growth rates hovered between 3.5 and 5.5 percent (Tokindang and Gbetnkom 2015). These rates were lower than most of its neighbors in the East African Community and Great Lakes region, and barely exceeded population growth rates of between 3.0 and 3.5 percent. This absence of significant economic growth reflects the lack of a fundamental transformation of the political economy. In Burundi, as in many of the surrounding countries, the legacy of colonialism and authoritarian rule has led many to see political patronage and a career in the public service to be the only means of securing a stable economic future. This is true among young people (Andres 2014), and has historically led many elites to see state capture as central to the political endeavor. It has been considered the surest path to personal prosperity and security, through official corruption, control of state-run enterprises and patronage (International Crisis Group 2012).

Third, in a country where nearly 65 percent of the population is under 25 years old, food insecurity, urbanization, and the lack of economic growth has had a concentrated impact on Burundi's youth (CIA World Factbook 2013). While researchers have consistently found a generally optimistic attitude among young Burundians, high levels of unemployment, food insecurity, and the lack of skill development suggest a difficult economic outlook (World Bank 2012). Search for Common Ground conducted field research in March 2015, a month before the outbreak of the current crisis, documenting high concern levels among the general public about relationship between youth unemployment, a perceived increase in criminality, and the risk of political manipulation of young people by political actors. Majority groups of the population—particularly in the capital, Bujumbura—reported not feeling safe moving around in their own community (Search for Common Ground 2015).

From Structural Challenges to the 2015 Crisis

The current crisis erupted in April 2015 after the president announced that he would run for a third term, as opposition protesters took to the streets of Bujumbura claiming this violated the term limits clause of the constitution. In May, army officers launched a coup d'état while the president attended crisis talks in Tanzania. While the coup was eventually controlled, many of the nations' media outlets were damaged. Journalists, civil society leaders,

opposition figures, and others left the country, claiming that they feared arrest as potential coup sympathizers. Parliamentary, presidential, and local elections were held throughout the summer, with the boycott of many opposition candidates. President Nkurunziza was successful, with the only opposition coming from longtime FNL leader Agathon Rwasa. Since President Nkurunziza's reelection, the country has experienced dozens of targeted assassinations of government, opposition, and civil society figures in apparent reprisal attacks, the coalescing of an opposition in exile, and at the time of writing, escalating rhetoric and rumors of armed activity.

Although the current crisis in Burundi was triggered by differing interpretations of the constitutionality of the ruling CNDD-FDD party's nomination of President Nkurunziza to stand for a third term in office, it occurs against the backdrop of both the successes and failures in the process of consolidating peace over the past decade. The fraying of the political and social consensus forged throughout the peace process, the incomplete success of the demobilization and security sector reform process, and the growth of an urbanized young underclass have each contributed to the current crisis.

First, the development of the Arusha Agreements, the 2005 Constitution, and the number of other accords that established the framework for a return to peace and democratic rule reflected a herculean effort to forge a political consensus across deeply divided elite. This effort was supported by high levels of regional and global diplomacy, drawing in some of the biggest names on the world stage at the time, including Bill Clinton, Nelson Mandela, and Julius Nyerere, and was supported by intensive training and Track II diplomacy. At the same time, it was supported as a "social conflict transformation" strategy by grassroots and media actors, including Search for Common Ground. These actors used local education and dialogue, radio programs, and the community to share information about the formal process and create an environment conducive to tolerance and reconciliation.

However, the political consensus supporting this framework has begun to unravel as attention waned. At a national level, this was driven by the acrimonious outcome of Burundi's 2010 elections, which saw opposition boycotts, the return of political violence, and deep and persistent division among the political elites. The social consensus and vibrant discourse was undermined as civil society and media groups complained of tightening controls on freedom of expression in the run-up to the 2015 elections, as well as during the subsequent crisis (International Media Support 2015).

At the international level, the critical efforts that helped support the political consensus-building process in the first place were not sustained. This lack of sustained effort is visible most recently by the inability to launch a dialogue process to resolve the current impasse, or to begin the process of reopening media outlets that have been shuttered since the May 2015 coup attempt. Outside of the 2010 election year, there was little international assistance in supporting democratic governance and citizen participation in political life, through media, civil society, or local government. By the time the 2015 elections crisis was becoming apparent, the diplomatic corps had reduced its presence, and many organizations had ceased work. Those groups that remained focused on the challenges of consolidating peace and addressing root causes of conflict, struggled in the face of regular budget cuts. At the same time, the high-level diplomatic attention from global personalities, such as Bill Clinton and Nelson Mandela, which was critical in supporting the unique political arrangement, waned with time. Absent an

active conflict, international support for non-governmental consensus-building activities with political elites ended.

Second, the lack of economic growth has long driven political conflict in Burundi, both by raising the stakes of elite political competition and by increasing the number of youth vulnerable to recruitment into armed violence (Nkurunziza and Ngaruko 2005). The "zero-sum" competition for political power on all sides and the easy mobilization of vulnerable segments of the population—particularly urban youth and ex-combatants—on display throughout this political crisis have their roots in the failed economic peace dividend, which was supposed to create new opportunities for youth and decrease the incentive for state capture. From 2010 to 2013, Burundi received 567 million USD, on average, in annual development assistance from all donors. While this resource transfer is a significant contribution by any measure, the level of assistance to post-conflict Burundi was still less than half of that received by neighboring Rwanda, and a fraction of the international assistance received by better-off members of the East African Community Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development 2015).

Third, the incomplete process of security sector reform outlined above has emerged as a major driver of violence within the current crisis. Human rights reports, international observers, and the Government's statements have acknowledged the lack of oversight and poor performance of elements within the national police. Human rights groups have criticized heavy-handed response by security institutions, both in responding to initial protests, as well as in the treatment of detainees suspected of offenses (Amnesty International 2015). At the same time, the lack of progress in disarmament of the civilian population during the immediate post-war period has had the effect of creating opportunities for assassinations and intimidation not only by security forces, but also by other political actors and criminals in the context of the current crisis.

It is important to note what this crisis is not. It is a testament to the will of the Burundian people at the grassroots level that this crisis has not led to the mass violence seen in previous political crises in Burundi. Apart from isolated cases, six months into the political crisis, we have not seen widespread ethnically motivated hate speech, mobilization, or violence. The risk of further escalation into open armed conflict or even civil war should not be neglected. Given the long history of manipulation of ethnic identities and inciting violence for political advantage in Burundi, it is difficult to imagine that armed conflict could continue to escalate without an ethnic component. Yet, it would have been unthinkable ten or fifteen years ago in Burundi that the country would experience a crisis marked by urban protests, a coup attempt, and a political impasse, and that there would not be ethnic overtones. Furthermore, apart from the coup attempt led by officers from within the CNDD-FDD and FDN, the neutrality and restraint of the newly formed FDN, once generally seen as the bastion of Tutsi interests, demonstrates the degree of integration and professionalism that was sought through the army reform process.

The Peacebuilding Response

In response to the emerging challenges around the 2015 elections process, the international community increasingly focused on the elections as a

potential trigger for violent conflict or mass atrocities, informed largely the experience of the previous cycles of violence in Burundi. The United States and UN dedicated additional resources to support peacebuilding in Burundi through the State Department's Conflict and Stabilization Office, and the UN's Peacebuilding Fund. The European Union also began similar measures. The run-up to the April 26th announcement of Nkurunziza's candidacy, the ensuing crisis, and coup d'état led to a series of international and regional diplomatic engagements. Since May 2015, the East African Community has sought a leadership role in resolving the current crisis, and launched a dialogue effort under Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni at a high level. At the same time, the UN has sought to support tactical-level dialogue among political parties, in line with the mandate of its mission in Burundi. The African Union has sent Human Rights Observers. However, despite these efforts, as well as increasing pressure from the United States, European, and some African governments, there has been little political process—even as media report new killings each week and fears of a conflict escalation persist.

In light of the current impasse, the main peacebuilding national and international peacebuilding non-governmental groups in Burundi have sought to adapt their approaches to the current situation. Within the media space, well-established media organizations, including the Association Burundaise des Radiodiffuseurs (ABR), Search for Common Ground, La Benevolencija, and the Observatoire des Medias d'Afrique Central (OMAC), are continuing to work in the media sector, encouraging pluralism, and monitoring hate-speech. Search for Common Ground's Studio Ijambo has been producing public service messages, radio dramas, and reporting. In the absence of existing radio outlets, Voice of America and other international channels have picked up more local content and new media such as Facebook and Soundcloud have become increasingly useful channels as Burundians flock to new sources of media. For example, Search for Common Ground in Burundi went from barely having a Facebook page in Burundi prior to the crisis, to becoming one of the largest in the country in just a few months. One of the most popular campaigns aimed at reducing violence at the height of the street violence (entitled "Humanisation") featured interviews with protesters and security forces, highlighting their common dreams for a better future for their country on both sides of the conflict.

At the community level, Action on Armed Violence (AOAV), Search for Common Ground, CEDAC, ADISCO, and a number of faith-based and other local organizations are conducting outreach to youth and ex-combatant aimed at promoting dialogue and discouraging participation in violence. Even as the current political crisis unfolds, groups such as UNICEF, the Quaker-Church supported African Great Lakes Initiative, Search for Common Ground as well as national and international development organizations have struggled to maintain long-term programming focused on some of the root causes of the conflict, including economic and social issues.

Has Peacebuilding Failed to Prevent this Crisis?

If Burundi was among the first cases of international peacebuilding being used to respond to an ongoing violent conflict, it is reasonable to ask what

the resurgence of political violence in Burundi means for the aims of the broader peacebuilding exercise.

While it is difficult to draw lessons in a fluid situation, one element that has become clear is that the crisis demonstrates the old salesman's rule that "you get what you pay for." The issues that received significant investment by Burundian, regional and international governments and non-governmental actors include interethnic reconciliation, army reform, the return of refugees and resolution of land conflict, and gradual progress on transitional justice. These issues have been the elements that have thus far held solid throughout the six months of political impasse. This outcome would have been difficult to imagine a decade ago, and can be attributed at least in part to the commitment of Burundians and the support of the international community in these areas—without which, the situation today would surely be worse.

At the same time, the fact that peace and stability in Burundi are in jeopardy despite so much international investment demonstrates the limits of crisis-driven foreign policy. Global diplomatic attention has historically wavered in regards to Burundi, and development cooperation has never met the scale of need in one of the most food-insecure countries in the world. The areas that have created the current political crisis and the risk of further escalation: support to inclusive governance and political consensus-building, supporting economic growth, and addressing food security in the context of land scarcity, require sustained engagement between elections cycles. While much of the international discussion on the crisis in Burundi has focused on respect for the commitments made by Burundian parties during the Arusha process and the subsequent political negotiations, it is also worth questioning whether the international community that supported that process made the full range of commitments necessary to supporting that process.

As of the writing of this article, there is a broad consensus among Burundian actors and the international community that there should be a process of dialogue, facilitated by the East African Community, to end the current crisis. Apart from the broad consensus that dialogue is useful, there is deep disagreement on nearly every other element, including the agenda, prerequisites, participants, and location. At the same time, targeted killings persist, the economic and social costs of the conflict are increasing, and rumors and fears of an outbreak of armed violence continue. Even as we look to learn from the response to the Burundi crisis for the future, there is also an urgent need for immediate and sustained engagement to find common ground and launch an inclusive dialogue process to meet the rising humanitarian need in the country.

Works Cited

Amnesty International. 2015. *Burundi: Torture used to extract confessions and crush dissent*. https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2015/08/burundi-torture-used-to-extract-confessions-and-crush-dissent/ (accessed October 4, 2015).

Anderson, Mary B. 1999. *Do No Harm: How Aid Can Support Peace–Or War*. Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Reinner Publishers.

Andres, Alejandra. 2014. Progress Evaluation of Programmes for the Youth in Burundi. *Search for Common Ground*. https://www.sfcg.org/wp-content/uploads/

2015/03/FINAL-ENGLISH-Africa_Eval_BurundiSFCG_10032015.pdf (accessed October 4, 2015).
Ball, Nicole. 2014. Lessons from Burundi's Security Sector Reform Process. *Africa Center for Strategic Studies*. http://africacenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/ASB-29-Lessons-from-Burundis-SSR-Process.pdf (accessed October 4, 2015).
Baltrop, Richard. 2008. *The Negotiation of Security Issues in the Burundi Peace Talks*. Geneva: Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue.
Baribeau, Grégoire. 2011. *Land Conflict in Burundi: A Strategic Review of Programming*. Bujumbura: Search for Common Ground.
Brachet, Juliana, and Howard Wolpe. 2005. Conflict-Sensitive Development Assistance: The Case of Burundi. The World Bank Social Development Papers: Conflict Prevention and Reconstruction.
Buchanan-Smith, and Margie. 2003. *How the Sphere Project Came into Being: A Case Study of Policy-Making in the Humanitarian Aid Sector and the Relative Influence of Research*. London: Overseas Development Institute.
Burundi Voices Project. 2006. *Courage at a Time of Genocide and Ethnic Conflict*. http://www.burundivoices.org/ (accessed October 2, 2015).
CIA World Factbook. 2013. *Burundi*. https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/by.html (accessed October 5, 2015).
Global Nutrition Report. 2014. *2014 Nutrition Country Profile: Burundi*. http://globalnutritionreport.org/files/2014/11/gnr14_cp_burundi.pdf (accessed October 2, 2015).
Government of Canada. 2002. *Letter Dated 26 July 20002 from the Permanent Representative of Canada to the United Nations Addressed to the Secretary-General A/57/303*. New York: United Nations General Assembly.
Institut de Statistiques et d'Etudes Economiques du Burundi. 2012. Enquete Demographique et de Santé Burundi 2010. *The DHS Program*. http://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR253/FR253.pdf (accessed October 5, 2015).
International Crisis Group. 2012. *Burundi: A Deepening Corruption Crisis*. http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/africa/central-africa/burundi/185-burundi-la-crise-de-corruption-english.pdf (accessed October 5, 2015).
International Media Support. 2015. *Radio Silence: Burundi's Media during the 2015 Election Crisis*. http://www.mediasupport.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/radio-silence-burundi-ims-2015.pdf (accessed October 4, 2015).
Jobbins, Mike. 2015. *Written Testimony*. http://docs.house.gov/meetings/FA/FA16/20150722/103782/HHRG-114-FA16-Wstate-JobbinsM-20150722.pdf (accessed October 4, 2015).
Lemarchand, Rene. 1994. *Burundi: Ethnic Conflict and Genocide*. Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press and Cambridge University Press.
Manirambona, Josiane, Léonard Ntakarutimana, Muhorane Carmen, and Fedjo Galbert. 2015. *Burundi: Transparency and Accountability in the Management of Free Healthcare Using Performance-Based Financing*. https://rbfhealth.org/sites/rbf/files/Transparency%20and%20Accountability_EN.pdf (accessed March 21, 2016).
Murithi, Tim. 2008. The African Union's Evolving Role in Peace Operations: The African Union Mission in Burundi, the African Union Mission in Sudan and the African Union Mission in Somalia. *African Security Review* 17(1): 69–82.
Muyango, Astere. 2011. *L'Opportunité de la Mise en Place de la Commission Vérité et Réconciliation au Burundi*. Cape Town: Institute for Justice and Reconciliation Policy Briefs.
Ngaruko, Floribert, and Janvier Nkurunziza. 2000. An Economic Interpretation of Conflict in Burundi. *Journal of African Economies* 9(3):370–409.
Nindorera, Willy. 2007. *Security Sector Reform in Burundi: Issues and Challenges for Improving Civilian Protection*. Bujumbura: CENAP/NSI Working Papers.
Nkurunziza, Janvier, and Floribert Ngaruko. 2005. Why Has Burundi Grown so Slowly? *Swarthmore College*. http://www.swarthmore.edu/SocSci/soconne1/documents/Nkurunziza.pdf (accessed October 5, 2015).

Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. 2015. *Development Aid at a Glance: Statistics by Region – 2. Africa*. http://www.oecd.org/dac/stats/documentupload/2%20Africa%20-%20Development%20Aid%20at%20a%20Glance%202015.pdf (accessed October 3, 2015).

Reyntjens, Filip. 2005. Briefing: Burundi - A Peaceful Transition after a Decade of War? *African Affairs* 105(418):1–19.

——. 2000. *Burundi: Prospects for Peace*. London: Minority Rights Group Reports.

Scherrer, Christian P. 2001. *Genocide and Crisis in Central Africa: Conflict Roots, Mass Violence, and Regional War*. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers.

Search for Common Ground. 2015. *Burundi: Conflict Scan No. 1*. http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Burundi_%20CS1%20Report.pdf (accessed October 4, 2015).

Social Impact, Inc. 2014. *Evaluative Learning Review Synthesis Report: USAID/CMM's People-to-People Reconciliation Fund, Annual Program Statement (APS)*. Arlington, VA: Social Impact, Inc.

Sommeiller, Estelle, and Quentin Wodon. 2014. Enrolment Gains from the Elimination of Primary School User Fees in Burundi. *Global Partnership for Education*. http://allinschool.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/OOSC-2014-QW-Burundi-Primary-final.pdf (accessed October 4, 2015).

Sullivan, Daniel P. 2005. The Missing Pillars: A Look at the Failure of Peace in Burundi through the Lens of Arend Lijphart's Theory of Consociational Democracy. *Journal of Modern African Studies* 41(1):75–95.

Tokindang, Sibaye Joel, and Daniel Gbetnkom. 2015. Burundi 2015. *African Economic Outlook*. http://www.africaneconomicoutlook.org/fileadmin/uploads/aeo/2015/CN_data/Cn_Long_FR/Burundi_2015.pdf (accessed October 3, 2015).

United Nations. 1992. *An Agenda for Peace, Preventive Diplomacy, Peacemaking and Peace-Keeping*. New York: Report of the Secretary-General A/47/277-S/24111.

Waithaka, Michael, Gerad C. Nelson, Timothy S. Thomas, and Miriam Kyotalimye, eds. 2013. *East African Agriculture and Climate Change: A Comprehensive Analysis*. Washington, DC: International Food Policy Research Institute.

Wolpe, Howard, Steve McDonald, Eugene Nindorera, Elizabeth McClintock, Alain Lempereur, Fabien, Nsengimana, Nicole, Rumeau, and Alli Blair. 2004. Rebuilding Peace and State Capacity in War-Torn Burundi. *The Round Table* 93(375):457–67.

World Bank. 2012. Voices of Youth in Post-Conflict Burundi: Perspectives on Exclusion, Gender and Conflict. *World Bank Post-Conflict and Social Development Unit*. https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/12460/689830ESW0P09500BurundiEnglishfinal.pdf?sequence=1 (accessed October 4, 2015).