

BURUNDI | Trends in Conflict and Cooperation

POLITICAL

Deepening rifts in Burundi’s ruling *Conseil National pour la Défense de la Démocratie-Forces pour la Défense de la Démocratie* (CNDD-FDD) resulted in the party’s president, Hussein Radjabu, being forced out at an extraordinary congress in Ngozi on 7 February. Radjabu has been increasingly perceived as a burden to the government as well as a political rival to President Pierre Nkurunziza. ‘Burundi’s strong man’ was held responsible for recent errors such as last year’s arrest of former President Domitien Ndayizeye and six other prominent opposition politicians on charges of coup plotting, followed by a massive crackdown against media and civil society activists. Subsequently, divides within the CNDD-FDD worsened and international assistance declined.

Under substantial internal and external pressure, and in the run-up to the next donor conference, on 15 January the Supreme Court acquitted five of the accused plotters, including Ndayizeye, on the grounds that there was insufficient evidence. The verdict seemed to confirm what many had suspected, namely that Radjabu orchestrated the alleged coup plot in order to bolster his own power. Nonetheless, Alain Mugabarabona, who claimed that he had been tortured into confessing, and Tharcisse Ndayishimiye were found guilty and sentenced to prison terms of 20 and 15 years, respectively. In this way the government reportedly tried to save face, as earlier it had claimed to have indisputable evidence against Ndayizeye and the others.

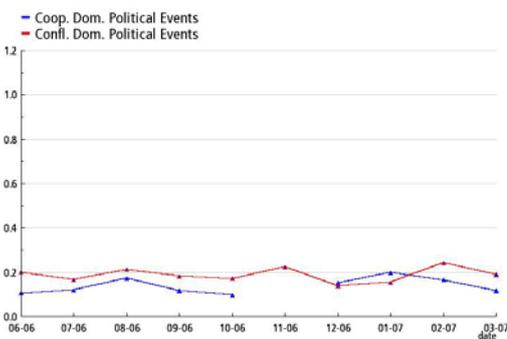
Radjabu had to vacate his position and turn it over to Colonel Jérémie Ngendakumana, an ally of President Nkurunziza and former ambassador to Kenya. The ousting of the party chairman was accompanied by fears of violent confrontations with his supporters, especially after the discovery in early February of vast quantities of explosives in the south of the country and on a Tanzania-flagged boat near Nyanza-Lac. Up until now, there were consistent rumors of arms shipments to Burundi planned by Radjabu, ostensibly for the purpose of overthrowing President Nkurunziza. Indeed, Radjabu has contested the legality of the Ngozi congress and submitted his grievances to the High Court. At the same time he tried to gather support within and outside Burundi. On 7 March he was backed by 22 parliamentarians of the CNDD-FDD who boycotted their parliamentary group over the dismissal of the former party president and demanded the Constitutional Court to settle the case. Radjabu’s claim was eventually rejected by the High Court on 5 April. In the aftermath of his removal, several of his loyalists in senior and lower level positions were also divested of office. These include second Vice-President Marina Barampama, the Minister of Communication and

spokesperson of the government, Ramadhani Karenga, the President of the National Assembly, Imaculée Nahayo, as well as a number of heads of parastatals. Others, who had to leave for exile during Radjabu’s rule, returned; namely former Vice-President Alice Nzomukunda, FRODEBU spokesman Pancrace Cimpaye, and CNDD-FDD parliamentarian Mathias Basabose. On 27 April Radjabu was arrested and imprisoned after having been stripped of his immunity by parliament. He is accused of threatening national security due to the discovery of a tape that reportedly reveals his intention to overthrow the Nkurunziza Government.

The hope that the political crisis in Burundi would be resolved with the departure of Radjabu and his supporters did not materialize, even though conflictive political events decreased slightly (see graph). Ngendakumana, the newly elected president of CNDD-FDD, lacks the means to unify a party that is – noticeably with regard to the 2010 elections – marked by deepening internal divides and growing competition along regional lines and between rival personalities. President Nkurunziza, on the

other hand, faces increasing criticism by the opposition over his incapacity for leadership. He is said to again dedicate most of his time to prayer and football instead of taking advantage of Radjabu’s sacking to strengthen his power and influence. Moreover, on 13 March the Senate issued a statement censuring Nkurunziza for not respecting the institution of parliament. It particularly deplored the fact that the president hardly ever attends a session of parliament, and criticized him for violating the ethnic, political and gender balances as required by the constitution. The country, according to *Burundi Réalités* on 17 April, resembles a boat guided by a captain who completely ignores the itinerary and only navigates by improvisation and palpation.

Cooperative and Conflictive Domestic Political Events (relative)



Source: FAST event data

SECURITY

The implementation of the September 2006 ceasefire agreement between the *Parti pour la libération du peuple hutu - Forces Nationales de Libération* (Palipehutu-FNL) and the government is still pending. The FNL is suspected of delaying the process in order to avoid any close association with the current government, thus potentially enhancing its chances in the 2010 elections. On 19 February, after five months of delay, the *Mécanisme Conjoint de Vérification*

*et de Suivi* (MCVS), which is in charge of the implementation of the peace deal, finally started work and met with a FNL delegation of 20, involving 17 persons who flew in from Dar es-Salaam. The latter were welcomed by hundreds of supporters of the rebel movement upon their arrival at Bujumbura airport on 18 February. Since then, the MCVS had to suspend activities for four times due to the FNL. They were either raising concerns over the ongoing presence of government forces in areas under their control, or trying to impose new terms and conditions; such as impunity for its members, jail releases for some of their fighters, as well as military and political integration in the country's institutions. In response, the government freed six rebels on 11 February but denied them access to the government or other elected institutions, such as the National Assembly. Soon, a new round of talks between the government and the FNL is expected to take place in Dar es-Salaam under the mediation of Charles Nqakula, the South African Minister for Safety and Security. However, according to the mediator's envoy Kingsley Mamabolo, the patience of the international community 'cannot be endless.' On 3 April President Nkurunziza announced that his government would not meet any more new demands from the FNL, which 'is changing its mind all the time.' He also referred to the binding character of the constitution and the ceasefire agreement that could not be offended. Notwithstanding these difficulties in the peace process, observers assume that a resumption of an armed struggle by the FNL is unlikely. In order to ensure the correct implementation of the MCVS, on 28 February the government of Burundi and the African Union agreed on the deployment of 1,100 South African peacekeepers to the country.

Although overall security significantly improved since the signing of the September ceasefire agreement, the small FNL faction of Jean-Bosco Sindayigaya is still responsible for the spread of violence, especially in the north-western and western parts of the country. On 25 March combatants loyal to Sindayigaya were involved in a skirmish in Bukinyanya with troops from the Forces de Défense Nationale (FDN), resulting in the killing of three rebels. Again, on 30 March there were reports of Sindayigaya's men recruiting children in the *commune* of Rumonge. Furthermore, numerous unidentified gunmen and criminals as well as demobilized FNL fighters – often subjected to dire living conditions in cantonment sites – continue to terrorize, kill, rape and rob civilians. Along with a recent initiative aimed at reducing the number of small arms at large, state officials burned some 400 guns in an official ceremony at Musigati stadium in Bubanza on 17 March. The government, for its part, has been criticized by Human Rights Watch over fundamental weaknesses in the justice system, especially with regard to hundreds of prisoners and detainees aged 13 to 18, yet who are treated as adults and suffer serious abuses including torture. Another aspect of justice involves the creation of a truth and reconciliation commission as stipulated by the 2000 Arusha Agreement. Similar to last year, the second round of discussions between Burundian officials and the UN, which took place at the beginning of March, did not result in an agreement. No new dates for a continuation of the talks are scheduled at this time. Meanwhile the government is believed to be slowing down the establishment of a special tribunal for fear of being accused for crimes of its past.

## SOCIO-ECONOMIC

Heavy floods during the month of January and February have destroyed most of the agricultural production and reduced potential crop harvest by 50 to 80 percent, in particular in the northern and central parts of the country. World Food Program officials reported that several people were killed, hundreds of houses destroyed and at least 23,000 persons were left homeless. The situation is deteriorating rapidly and will likely affect food security throughout 2007. Various humanitarian organizations have called for some USD \$12 million in urgent aid to face the crisis until the end of the 'lean season' in June. By the end of March local sources revealed a tendency to politicize humanitarian aid. They especially referred to the *commune* of Kayogoro in Makamba Province, where only CNDD-FDD members benefit from assistance. This kind of exclusion allegedly also affects projects that are financed by the World Bank. During his visit to Burundi from 7-9 March, World Bank President Paul Wolfowitz harshly condemned on-going corruption. At the same time he agreed to donate USD \$130 million in aid for 2007 to help the country's recovery in the aftermath of a 13-year-long civil war.

## OUTLOOK

Burundi's fragile political situation needs to be resolved as soon as possible; otherwise the impression that the state is rudderless will gain ground. It is up to President Nkurunziza to change this situation, although he is running the risk of becoming weaker as those around him and his rivals lose respect for his inability to assert himself as a strong leader. The international donor community must stay engaged and bring about a tangible peace dividend for the people. If not, the government is likely to lose the support of the population. Meanwhile the prospect for an agreement between the FNL depends on the government's will to make concessions, which is rather improbable. Thus, the FNL is likely to carry on delaying the implementation of the September peace agreement, while low-scale warfare will continue.

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FAST International is the early warning program of swisspeace, covering 25 countries/regions in Africa, Asia and Europe. Based in Bern, Switzerland, the program is funded and utilized by an international consortium of development agencies, including the Austrian Development Agency (ADA), the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).

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