ACTIVISM FROM ABROAD

THE TRANSNATIONALIZATION OF BURUNDIAN HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS AFTER THEIR SUSPENSION IN 2015

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Abstract

This thesis analyzes the collective action strategies that have allowed Burundian diaspora human rights activists operating in Rwanda, Uganda and Belgium to rebuild and cross transnational lines in their respective organisations in exile after they were forced to leave the country in the aftermath of the April protest from 2015. So far, academics have mostly researched social movements and contentious collective action of movements operating from *within* their respective countries through the lens of social movement theory. This thesis however uses the analytical concepts of political opportunities, mobilizing structures and framing within social movement theory and combines it with the transnational network-approach to research the modus operandi of *exiled* organizations. It argues that these organisations have to transnationalise in order to rebuild themselves and continue pressuring the government of their home country from outside.

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"Education is the most powerful weapon we can use to change the World"

- Nelson Mandela, mediator in the Burundian conflict and former president of South Africa

List of abbreviations

APRODH : Association Burundaise pour la Protection des Droits Humains et des Personnes Détenues (Burundian Association for the Protection of Human Rights and Detenees)

ADC : Alliance des Démocrates pour le Changement (Democrats Alliance for Change)

ACAT : Action des Chrétiens pour l'Abolition de la Torture (Action by Christians for the abolition of Tortures)

FOCODE : Forum pour la Conscience et le Développement (Forum for self-consciousness and development)

CNARED : Conseil National Pour la Restauration d'un Etat de Droit au Burundi

CNDD FDD : Conseil National de Défense de la Démocratie- Force de Défense de la Démocratie (National Council for the Defense of Democracy- Forces for the Defense of the Democracy)

MSD : Mouvement pour la Solidarité et le Développement (Movement for Solidarity and Development)

FRODEBU : Front Pour la Démocratie au Burundi (Front for Democracy in Burundi)

FNL : Forces Nationales de Libération (National Forces of Liberation)

FIDH : Fédération International des Défenseurs des Droits Humains (International Federation for Human Rights Defenders)

HRW: Human Rights Watch

UPRONA: Union Pour le Progrès National (Union for National Progress)

RCP : Réseau des Citoyens Probe

FORSC : Forum pour le Renforcement de la Société Civile (Forum for the Strenghtning of Civil Society)

COSOME : Coalition de la Société Civile pour le Monitoring Electoral (Civil Society Coalition for Election Monitoring)

OLUCOME : Observatoire de Lutte Contre la Corruption et les Malversations Economiques (Observatory against Corruption and Economic Malversations)

OAG : Observatoire de l'Action Gouvernementale (Observatory of Governemt's action)

MFFPS : Mouvement des Femmes et Filles pour la Paix et la Sécurité au Burundi

CAVIB : Collectif des Avocats pour la Défense des Victimes de Crimes de Droit International commis au Burundi

CPI: Cour Pénale Internationale (International Criminal Court)

UNHRC: United Nations Human Rights Council

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1. Introduction

On the 25th of April 2015 the ruling political party of Burundi, the National Council for the Defense of Democracy- Forces for the Defense of the Democracy (CNDD FDD) announced the candidacy of Pierre Nkurunziza as the party's contender for the June 2015 presidential election. This would mean that, if victorious, Nkurunziza would serve three consequent terms as president. Following the announcement of his candidacy, a protest movement broke out in Bujumbura, the capital city of Burundi, and quickly spread to other parts of the country (Nshimirimana & Gatavu 2017; Van Acker 2015; Popplewell 2016; Vandeginste 2015;) The organisers of the protest judged Nkurunziza candidacy for a third term as a violation of the Arusha Peace Agreement (2000) which had marked the end of violent decade of civil war, as well as a violation of the 2005 constitution, which had emanated from the Arusha Peace Agreement. These two texts stipulated that an individual cannot hold the position of president for more than two terms of five years each. [1]Nkurunziza was elected in 2005 in a joint session of the national assembly and the senate and again in 2010 by direct vote in a democratic election. While protestors argue that running for a third term was, therefore in a clear violation of the constitution, proponents alleged that Nkurunziza's first term is not included in the constitutional prohibition, as his first term was not the result of a direct vote.[2]

The protests that arose after the officialization of Nkurunziza's candidacy triggered political backlash. This political backlash was not a new development, but rather a culmination of pressure on, and restrictions to civil society and the opposition political party which had been building ever since the CNDD FDD had transformed from a rebel group into a political party and took office in 2005. Throughout the first term civil society organizations that sought to hold the state accountable on issues of human rights, good governance, corruption and democracy had been viewed as critics of the government and were targeted as a threat to the regime and its legitimacy. The electoral crisis in 2010 and the violence that accompanied it exacerbated the government's attitude towards civil society. As a consequence of the opposition's boycott of the 2010 parliamentary and presidential elections, the CNDD FDD established one-party rule. With the absence of the opposition in parliament, civil society organizations called for the government to be held accountable for his abuse of power.

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[1] Article 7 of Protocol II of the Arusha agreement stipulates that 'the president of the Republic shall be elected for a term of five years, renewable only once'. Additionally, Article 96 of the constitution provides that 'the president of the Republic is elected by universal direct for a mandate of five years renewable one time'

[2] Article 302 of the Constitution stipulates that exceptionally, the first President of the Republic of the post transition period is elected by the National Assembly and the Senate meeting in Congress, with a majority of two third of the members.

In response to the political role played by civil society organizations and their critical comments against the government, two laws were adopted by the parliament in 2013 restricting the civil society's capacity to operate (Nshimirimana & Gatavu 2017: 18) [3]. Following the adoptions of these two restrictive laws, staff members of various organizations were victims of intimidations, harassment and even arrests. [4] At the start of 2015, Nkurunziza's potential candidacy for a third term was already a controversial issue. On 26 January, a coalition of 304 Burundian civil society organizations under the umbrella of FORSC (Forum pour le Renforcement de la Société Civil au Burundi) launched the campaigns 'Halte au 3è Mandat' (Stop the 3rd Term) aimed at preventing the president from presenting his candidacy for a third term (Idem 22). The campaign's members urged the president to step down after his second term in office.

It was therefore unsurprising that only two weeks after the April protest began, a dissident group within the army attempted a failed coup which resumed the peaceful protest. In August 2015, after the eruption of mass protests, Nkurunziza's attorney general established a commission to investigate the damage caused by the April 'insurgency'. The report singled out eleven civil society organizations that were thought to have played a leading role in the protests. The minister of interior proceeded to temporarily suspend the eleven organizations and froze their assets. The suspension of the organizations was accompanied by harassment and intimidation of their staff members. For their personal security and safety, many staff members left the country one by one and sought exile in neighbouring countries, such as Uganda and Rwanda. With the majority of their staff in exile, these eleven suspended organizations had to look for new opportunities to rebuild their organizations in order to continue the investigation and documentation of the ongoing human rights abuses committed by the Burundian state. This thesis seeks to analysse the ways in which these organizations managed to adapt to operating in exile and have maintained the ability to document and expose ongoing human rights violations in Burundi.

The question this thesis seeks to answer is thus as follows: 'What are the collective action strategies that have allowed Burundian diaspora human rights activists operating in Rwanda, Uganda and Belgium to rebuild and cross transnational lines in their respective organizations in exile after having been forced to leave the country in the aftermath of the April protests from 2015 to 2019?'

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[3] In 2013, two restricted laws were adopted by the parliament: The Law on the Press and the Law on assemblies and public demonstration. The law on Assemblies allow the administration to ban any assemblies that are seen as challenging the ruling party
[4] Condemnation of the detention of Mbonimpa PC by FIDH https://www.fidh.org/en/region/Africa/burundi/15805-burundi-the-african-commission-condemns-the-detention-of-pierre-claver

To answer this question, this thesis will be operationalised using the analytical concepts of 'political opportunities', 'mobilizing structures' and 'framing' that are derived from social movement theory. The three concepts will be described, deconstructed and reassembled to explain how the exiled human rights activists managed to reinvent and transnationalise their respective organizations.

To unpack my research puzzle and gather a nuanced perspective on the analytical concept that this research will be operationalised, the following sub questions will be used:

1. How do political opportunities shape the rebuilding process of Burundian human rights organizations in exile?
2. What are the mobilizing structures that exiled Burundian human rights activists draw on to continue investigating the human rights violations in Burundi and place pressure on international actors to take action?
3. How do the exiled organizations frame the human rights situation in Burundi to attract donors and transnational actors?

In order to answer the aforementioned research question and sub questions, this thesis is divided into six chapters. The first part of this thesis provides the general introduction and the research design and methodology. Then, chapter three discusses the academic debate on social movements. The three analytical concepts of political opportunities, mobilizing structures and framing will be analysed in depth. As this research analyses organizations in exile that have been forced to reinvent in order to put pressure on their home state, I will examine the existing literature on transnational networks. In chapter four, I will situate my main research questions and conclusions within the context of Burundi. This chapter will mainly focus on presenting the history and background of Burundi, and more specifically, the country's transition to democracy. I will start by discussing the first attempt at democratisation process at the start of the 1990s and the civil war that followed its failure (1993-2000). The second section of the chapter will analyse the events that lead to the Arusha Peace Agreement (2000) and its implementation materialised by the first democratic election in 2005. In the third section I will discuss the constitutional power-sharing arrangement that concretised political pluralism and the post-war democratisation process (2005-2015). In the last section, I will analyse the condition of public space and freedom of opinion in Burundi before the 2015 political backlash. Chapter five will be dedicated a case study of Burundi Civil Organizations (CSOs). In the first section, I will discuss the context that facilitated the creation and emergence of a civil society in Burundi. Section two will discuss the role played by CSOs in the transition to democracy. In the third section, I will discuss the role and impact of civil society organizations in the post democratisation process. To do so, I will conduct an in-depth analysis of the activities undertaken by that

CSOs which were aimed at strengthening and promoting democracy in Burundi as well in the domains of accountability, governance, rule of law and the promotion of civil liberties in the post war democratisation process (2005-2015).The last chapter of this thesis will discuss how the human rights activists were able to reinvent their organizations while in exile. This chapter will be based on the field work I conducted with Burundian human rights activists in Uganda, Rwanda and Belgium form March to May 2019. The first section will discuss the profile of the organizations that have been more successful than others at rebuilding in exile. In the second section, I will apply the analytical concepts of my research to the main findings of my fieldwork to analyse the transnationalisation of Burundi Human rights organizations. I will conclude this thesis with a general conclusion and lingering questions for further research.

2. Research design and methodology

In order to answer the research question and sub questions presented in the previous section, this thesis will treat the Burundian human rights organizations as social movement. That is, 'complex or formal organizations that identify their goals with the preferences of a social movement and attempt to implement these goals' (McCarthy 1977:1218). In doing so, this thesis relies on three factors that scholarship has identified as significant in social movements and collective action: 'political opportunities', 'mobilizing structures' and 'framing processes' (King 2007; Mc Adam, McCarthy & Zald 1996). Additionally, in order to account for the fact that these organizations operate in exile and therefore transnationally, this thesis will draw on insights from literature regarding transnational advocacy networks. Keck and Sikkink (1999:89) define transnational advocacy networks as 'actors working internationally on an issue, who are bound together by shared values, a common discourse, and dense exchanges of information and services'. The core activities of these civil society organizations are investigations into human rights violations and, necessitated by their status as exiled organizations, advocating to international actors to take action to address those violations. Transnational network approach will be especially useful to explain how these organizations have succeeded at developing links with international allies in order to put pressure on the Burundian government from outside Burundi.

This thesis will take a structurationist stance derived from the work of Giddens (1974), who states that structures, and agents stand in a dialectic relationship to each other and are presented as mutual entities (Demmers 2017:144). In this context, Wallace and Wolf (cited in Demmers 2017, 128) define structures as 'rules that are articulated in social interaction and tell people how to do social life, and the resources on which people can call to achieve their objectives'. This research thus regards Burundian human rights organizations in exile as actors with agency, operating in a political environment (structure) that shapes their activities. Moreover, this thesis assumes that the agents (human rights organizations) and the structure (the political environment) are interconnected and stand in a dialectical relationship to one another.

2.1. Research phases

My research looked at Burundian Human rights organizations that operate in Rwanda, Uganda and Belgium. The organizations selected for my research are those banned to operate in Burundi in the aftermath of April 2015 protest movement in which they took the lead. Prior to fieldwork consisting of interviews with staff of the exiled human rights organizations, I reviewed the literature on social movement theory, transnational networks, and articles that concerned the political backlash against civil

society in Burundi. In addition, I read annual reports of international organizations that discussed the situation of human rights organizations in Burundi and the work of exiled human rights organizations. The insights I gained from the literature then informed which questions were on the list of questions (questionnaire) I used to conduct the interviews with staff of the organizations. I established connections with these organizations and their staff by sending them information about me and the aims of my research. As I used to work for a Burundian human rights organisation and joined the movement when the campaign "Halte au 3è mandat "was launched, I was already familiar with the main human rights organizations and had personal connections with some of their staff members.

The interviews were conducted between February and May 2019 and were divided into two parts. The first part, which took place from the 26th of February to the 1st of April was the field work conducted in Rwanda and Uganda. During that period, I conducted semi-structured interviews with staff members of five organizations: APRODH, ACAT-Burundi, RCP, FOCODE and ITEKA league. These five organizations were selected because they have been suspended in Burundi in the same year, and now all operate from abroad. The choice for Rwanda and Uganda for my first round of fieldwork was driven by the fact that many staff members of the exiled organizations operate now from there. For the second round of my fieldwork, I went to Belgium in April-May 2019 and conducted semi structured interviews with human rights activists from three organizations: FORSC (Forum pour le Renforcement de la Société Civile), MFFPS (Mouvement des Femmes et Filles pour la Paix et la Sécurité au Burundi) and the Burundi Coalition for the International Criminal Court. In addition to that, I conducted interviews with senior staff members of two of the organizations I had previously interviewed staff members in Uganda. These were the chairperson of APRODH and the executive secretary of FOCODE. The choice for Belgium for my second round of my fieldwork was informed by the fact that there is a large community of Burundians in Belgium and several leaders of the suspended organizations are based there. It was moreover the most logistically feasible option as I am based in the Netherlands. For each organisation I interviewed a senior level staff member; in most cases this was either the director or the executive secretary of the organisation.

The interviews were semi structured, using a questionnaire to serve as a guide. As stated previously, the questions listed were informed by the literature on social movement theory and transnational networks. I then asked in depth follow up questions drawing on my own experience as a human rights activist and my personal involvement in the protest movement. The questionnaire comprised two main sections. The first section discussed the organizational structure of the organizations and the political context before the events in April 2015. The main questions in this section regarded the

background of the organisation, the relation with the government and other actors, the challenges they faced, and the strategies developed to overcome those challenges. The second section of the questionnaire concerned the modus operandi of the organisation after they were suspended in Burundi and the staff of these NGO's were forced to flee the country. These sections were thus separated by April 2015 as a key period of transition and were divided into questions concerning methods and strategy "before the protest" and "after the protest".

2.2. Data collection techniques and analysis

During my fieldwork, the qualitative method was used in the data collective process. Hereof, I used two main data techniques: the semi-structured interview and document analysis. Before the interviews, participants were asked to sign a consent form and all interviews were recorded with their prior agreement at this end. The interviews lasted on average between one hour and an hour and a half, with a minimum of 45 minutes and a maximum of an hour and a half. In addition to formal interviews, I had informal conversations with my interviewees which provided me the opportunity to collect crucial information related to my thesis that I couldn't get in a formal way. After each interview, the data collected was transcribed and were grouped into two main parts. The first part was related to how those organizations operate prior to their suspension and the second part regarded how they operate in exile. I used these data collected to see how they answer my initial research question and sub-questions. The data was further categorized into the three analytical concepts of my research such as political opportunities, mobilizing structures and framing.

By going through the data collected, I gained new insights about the successfulness of the exiled NGOs. The most factor was their ability to adapt to the new situation, and how they use the existing networks to rebuild their organizations. The data collected showed that three organizations seemed to be more successful in the rebuilding process of their organizations and managed to continue receiving funding form donors. In the data analysis process, I focused mainly to these three organizations and tried to analyze what made them more successful than others. I made a comparison of the data collected and analyzed to see what they said are similar as well as their difference. I used those similarities and differences in chapter three where I discuss the operational capacities of Burundian CSOs before the April 2015 protest movement.

2.3.   Ethical dilemmas and sensitivity of the topic

Before conducting interviews, I explained to staff member of the exiled organizations the aim of the research and how the data will be used in this regard. Almost all interviewees agreed to use the name of their organizations in this research. But I decided to only use the name of senior staff of the organizations. Because of the sensitivity of this research, I decided to skip some information that might harm the organization's survival. Information that could prevent those organizations that are still fragile from re-establishing their operational capacities is omitted from this thesis. As being part of the movement and still sympathize with staff members of the organizations in exile, I was aware that there is a risk of bias in this research. But however, if I was not part of the movement there would be some crucial background information that I would have missed during my fieldwork. My own experience and access to my informants put me a good position to analyze what happened to the exiled human rights activist after they have been banned to operate in Burundi and forced to leave the country.

To overcome this dilemma of a possible bias, I had conversations with scholars and experts that published articles related to Burundi political backlash. Their insights helped me to have a critical analysis of the information I collected during the interviews with staff members of the exiled organizations. Because they are not part of the movement and don't share the same goals with them, their respective thoughts and analysis on the operational capacities of the exiled organizations helped me to be critical on my own insights and knowledge on human rights organizations in Burundi. The conclusion of my main findings was guided by the comparative analysis of the interviews I conducted with the staff members of the exiled organizations and the analysis and the reasoning of experts and scholars.

3. The analytical framework

This chapter presents the analytical framework that applies to this research. The research draws on two fields of study: contentious collective action theory and transnational advocacy networks. Both originate from the social movement literature. This thesis analyzes exiled Burundi Human organisations as social movement organisations. As stated in the introduction, social movement can be defined as 'a complex, or formal organisation which identifies its goals with the preferences of a social movement and attempts to implement those goals". (McCarthy 1977:128). Tilly (1978) defines social movements as "a group of people identified by their attachment to some particular set of beliefs" (Tilly 1978:9). Tilly and Tarrow (2007:8) identify four main elements of a social movement: 1) sustain campaigns of claim making; 2) an array of public performances (public meeting, demonstration, petition, lobbying…); 3) continual public demonstrations; 4) organizations, networks, traditions and solidarities. Scholars in the field of social movements summarized these four elements presented by Tilly and Tarrow (2007) into three mains factors to analyze the emergence and development of social movements: 1) the political opportunities and constraints confronting social movements; 2) the forms of organisation (formal and informal) available to the insurgents; 3) and the collective processes of interpretation, attribution and social construction that mediate between opportunities and action (McAdam et al. 1996; Benford and Snow 2000; King 2007).

These analytical concepts, "political opportunities", "mobilizing structures" and "framing" are important to understand the emergence and development of a movement. Social movement theory seeks to explain how social movements mobilize and operate within a country. Therefore, it is not fully suited to analyze the particularities of claims-making organisations that operate outside the country and put pressure on their home country from abroad. To account for the new, transnational context in which these organisation operate, this thesis draws on additional research on transnational advocacy approaches. These help to analyze how transnational networks provide Burundi human rights organisations political space to mobilize and organise from abroad in order to bring pressure on their state from outside. Last, this research discusses existing literature on civil society to explain what types of organisations this thesis will be referring in the analysis of Burundian civil society organisations.

3.1. Social movement theory

3.1.1. Political opportunities

In the past decades, scholars in the field of social movement studies paid specific attention to the importance of the political system in structuring the opportunities available to movements for advancing their claims. Political opportunities can be defined as 'consistent but not necessarily formal, permanent, or national signals to social or political actors which encourage or discourage them to use this internal resource to form social movements' (Tarrow 1996:58). The starting point of this theory is that the context in which a movement emerges affect its possibilities to mobilize effectively (King 2007; McAdam et al. 1996; Tarrow 1978; and Tilly 2011)

Literature on social movements identify mainly four dimensions of political opportunities: 1) the relative openness or closure of the institutionalized political system; 2) the stability or instability of that broad set of elites that typically undergird a polity; 3) the presence or absence of elite allies; and 4) the state's capacity and propensity for repression (McAdam et al. 1996:27). The first scholar to use the political opportunities framework was Eisinger (1973) in his analysis of various political environment conditions in correlation with protest behavior in American city. Eisinger (1973:28) underscored the flexibility of political opportunity structures for a challenger to engage successfully in collective action. He stressed that emergence of protest varies depending on the openness of the political system. In this regard, the perspective for challengers to advance their claims, mobilize supporters and affect the powerful group depend on the political environment in which they are embedded. Tilly (1978) builded upon Eisinger's work and defines opportunities as 'relationship between the population's interest and the current state of the world around it' (Tilly 1978:55). Opportunities are the process by which actors make tactical choice in pursuit of interests within a repertoire of contentious (Tilly 1978, idem). Scholars in this field emphasize the spectrum of the openness of the political system in providing opportunities for collective action.

It should be noted that the concept of political opportunities has been the subject to criticism. Many scholars criticized it for being structure-based and neglect the agency of individual actors to participate in collective action. Jasper (2004) is among one of the scholars that highly criticized the structuralist focus of the theorists mentioned above. He argued that individual agents within social movements have the agency and ability to create opportunities within the environment in which they are embedded (Jasper 2004: 3). For him, participants in social movements make strategic choices and have the ability to create certain opportunities that might fit their target goals best (idem).

He adds that 'strategic choices are made within a complex set of cultural and institutional contexts that shape the players themselves, the option perceived, the choice made from among them, and the outcomes' (Ibid5).

In response to these criticisms, some scholars strive to unpack the concept of opportunities in greater detail. Giulini (2009:364), for example, distinguishes between four types of opportunities: 1) discursive opportunities, presenting opportunities in relation to the public visibility and the resonance and the extent to which the claims and identities to the prevailing discourses in the public domain; 2) specific opportunities, claiming that opportunities are specific to certain movements or issue fields; 3) perceived opportunities, claiming that opportunities must be perceived before they are seized by the challenging groups; 4) the shift from conditions to mechanisms that underlie the mobilization.

In my thesis, the concept of political opportunities will be used to look in particular at enabling and disabling factors in the new political context in which the exiled human rights activists operate. This research will take in consideration Jasper (2004) and Giuilini (2009) critics on the structuralist focus of political opportunities. As a result, I will pay specific attention on the agency of human rights activists and their ability to create new opportunities in order to reinvent their organizations in exile.

3.1.2. Mobilizing structures

Mobilizing structures are 'those collective vehicles, informal as well as formal, through which people mobilize and engage in collective action' (McAdam et al.1996:4). They are individuals or organisations that enhance the capacity of the challengers to advance its interests. In the absence of such collective vehicles, the challenger group is incapable to mobilize in collective action even when given the opportunities to do so (Idem). The mobilizing structures can be considered as the organisational strengths of the aggrieved population that enable them to seize the opportunities in the environment in which they are embedded.

The mobilizing structures constitute the building block of a social movement. Through these structures, social movement organizations can engage in processes aimed to change the normative context in which they are embedded (Joachim 2003:252). Social movement organisations have several strategic tasks that include mobilizing supporters and achieving change in target (McCarthy 1977:1218). The availability of pre-existing networks helps the growth of the organisation and empower movement capacity to engage in collective action.

Furthermore, each SMO has a set of target goals towards which it claims to be working as well as necessary resources in order to achieve its goals (Idem: 1219-1220). For Kriesi (1996:7), two elements distinguish SMO from other types of organisation: firstly, they mobilize their constituency for collective action and secondly, they do so with a political goal (obtaining collective goods from authorities). Literature on mobilization structures comprises two main theoretical approaches: the resource mobilization approach and the previously discussed political process model known as political opportunity structures.

Resource mobilization theory emphasizes the crucial role of resources and formal organisation for the emergence and sustainability of a movement. Social movements are perceived as rational attempts by excluded groups to mobilize sufficient political leverage to advance collective interests through non-institutionalized means (McAdam 1999). The absence of a functioning organisation (either formal or informal), as well as sufficient resources, constrain political opportunities (McAdam et al. 1996:8). Tilly (1978:7) defines mobilization as 'the process by which a group acquires collective control over the resources needed for actions'. In this regard, mobilization is viewed as the combination of the way groups acquire resources and make them accessible for collective action.

The resource mobilization model presented by McCarthy (1977) emphasizes the interaction between resource availability, the pre-existing organisation of preference structures, and entrepreneurial attempts to meet preference demand (McCarthy 1977: 1236). In his large-N analyses, Ted Gurr (cited in Demmers 2017:94) places the mobilizing structures of a group (the group's capacities for collective action), as one of the four key factors that determine the nature, persistence and intensity of a group's action. The other factors concern the political opportunities, the salience of ethno-cultural identity and the group incentives for political action. He adds that group capacity increased when the group could fall back on pre-existing networks and authentic leaders (Idem 95). In short, scholars in this field of thought argued that mobilizing structures help in mobilizing practices that enable individuals to participate in a social movement.

This thesis analyses the mobilizing structures that Burundians human rights activists while in exile have at their disposal. These include resources, political entrepreneurs, networks, staff members, and leadership to continue investigating and exposing the ongoing human rights violations. This analytical lens will be used to study the organisational structure of Burundi CSOs organizations prior and after the suspension of their activities by Burundi's regime.

3.1.3. Framing

The use of the concept 'frame' in the social movement literature emanated from the work of Goffman (1974). He defines frame as 'schemata of interpretation which allows its user to locate, perceive, identify, and label a seemingly infinite number of concrete occurrences defined in its terms' (Goffman 1974:21). Built upon Goffman (1974) work, Tarrow (1998) refers to the analytical concept of 'collective action frames' in his analysis of the mechanisms and processes that lead to collective action. He points out that collective action frames redefine social conditions as unjust and intolerable with the intention of mobilizing potential participants by making appeals to perceptions of justice and emotionality (Demmers 2017).

In the social movement literature, scholars present framing as an important element to organise and guide action in the collective action process. Framing is considered as a mediator between opportunity and organization, and enables political entrepreneurs to interpret, present and market their actions (Demmers 2017:94). In this line of seeking relations between social movement theory and framing processes, McAdam et al. (1996) set forth that framing processes clearly encourage mobilization, as people seek to organize and act together to achieve their goals. McAdam et al. (1996:6) defined framing as 'conscious strategic efforts by groups of people to fashion shared understandings of the world and of themselves that legitimate and motivate for collective action'. They present five main functions of framing that enable collective action; 1) the cultural toolkits available to insurgents; 2) the strategic framing efforts of movement groups; 3) frame contests between the proponents of movement and other collective actors (opponent) ; 4) the role of media in shaping public and policymaker perception of the movement; 5) the cultural impact of the movement in modifying the available toolkit (Idem 19)

Later, Benford and Snow (2000) embraced the analytic frames developed by Goffman (1974) to the field of social movements theory to analyse how meanings are constructed to render events or occurrences meaningful through collective action frames processes (Demmers 2017: 100). They define collective action frames as 'action-oriented sets of beliefs and meanings that inspire and legitimate the activities and campaigns of a social movement organization' (Benford and Snow 2000: 614). Benford and Snow (2000) identify three core tasks of the collective action frames: 1) diagnostic framing, which consist of the identification of a specific problems and causes by focusing on blame and responsibility; 2) prognostic framing, which consists of the articulation of a proposed solution to the problem, and; 3) motivational framing, which is the justification for action (idem 615-617). They refute the structuralist approach, by underscoring that actors in any movements are active agents engaged in the production and the preservation of meaning for constituents, bystanders or antagonists (Idem 613).

In this research, it is important to analyze how Burundian human rights activists seek to gain 'donors and international actors' support by rendering their activities more meaningful. In this regard, Keck and Sikkink (1999:94-96) argue that NGOs seek to gain the support of powerful group by creating new issues that might resonate towards them and by providing convincing explanations to gain their attention. Other scholars have applied frame analysis on how violent entrepreneurs mobilize potential participants (King 2007; Kriesi 1996). They emphasize the power of framing in managing the processes of perceptions of conflict by external actors. King (2007:117) sets forth that frames are the ways in which the goals and objects of mobilization are presented to potential participants, the nominated opponents and to third parties.

In this thesis, I will look at one particular dimension of framing to analyze how the exiled organisations developed new frames to attract support of the donors. As mobilizing resources is the key condition for the survival of the Burundian exiled organisations, I will particularly look on how they create new frames that are adapted to the context in which they operate while in exile to secure funding for their donors and other partners. As exiled organisations are physically cut off from the Burundi government arena, yet continue to put pressure on Burundian regime from outside, this research will also analyse what meaning these organizations create to influence powerful actors to take action that aim at addressing the human rights violations in Burundi and how their claims resonate.

3.2. Civil Society and transnational advocacy networks

3.2.1. Civil society

In exile, civil society organizations such as the ones under study here, strive to reinvent themselves in order to continue their core activities of investigating and exposing human rights violations. Burundian civil society organisations can be defined as 'voluntary organisations that occupy the space between the family and state. It comprises formal and informal associations that are separate from the state and enjoy autonomy from it. Those associations are formed voluntarily by members of society to protect or extend their interests or values' (Omara and Ackson 2009:41). This section discusses the emergence and development of the concept of 'civil society' within academia. This will help us locate it within the existing literature in order to have a better understanding on how this concept will be used in this research.

The concept of civil society is vague and is employed in many ways. Different authors used it in a various way and developed different ideas and theories on what constitute civil society.

In this regard, civil society must be understood in a broader historical, theoretical and practical context within which it is located (Jensen 2006:41). The interest in civil society within academia increased in the late 1980 with the rise of political revolutions in Eastern Europe and Latin America. These civil society movements played a key role in challenging the communist regime and pushed authoritarian regime to democratize by opening the political space. In this context, civil society was envisaged as 'an actor in competition with the totalitarianism that aimed to defend society against injustice' (Kopecký 2006:3). From that moment, the concept of civil society gained important attention among scholars and use it in various way.

Scholars in the field of democratization present civil society as a key element in strengthening democracy in places where public liberties and political rights are not fully guaranteed (Grugel 2000; Mercel 2002). They place civil society at the center of the democratisation process. For scholars in this field of thought, an active and vibrant civil society is a key to defend and promote the interests of citizens by holding the government to account and foster greater civic and political participation of citizens. In this regard, civil society is considered as a public sphere in which individuals get together and act collectively to express their interests and ideas, exchange information and make demands on the state (Edwards, 2004, 55-56). However, Van Der Borgh and Terwindt (2014:26) emphasize the diversity of the public sphere and make a distinction between selected 'arenas of contentious' where selected organisations interact with other actors, including the state. They define civil society as 'organizations and associations that aim to protect or extend their interests or values vis-à-vis range actors in society'(Idem).

Other authors refer to the concept of civil society by emphasizing the natural need of individuals to belong and interact with each other. For them, civil society is conceived as a realm of social life in which individuals are free to come together. In this regard, Jensen (2006:42) points out that 'civil society is a zone of freedom for individuals to associate with others and for groups to shape their norms, articulate their purposes, and determine for themselves the internal structure of group authority and identity'. Hereof, civil society must be understood as a place where citizens pursue their own individual interests in accord with the common good. In other words, civil society is a place where different interests of individuals and the common good are reconciled (Jensen 2006:48).

This research will use the concept of 'civil society' to refer to heterogeneous organisations carrying various ideas and goals that seek to influence the state to advance their interests (Palmans 2006:216)With regard to the law regulating civil society in Burundi, we can distinguish two main category of civil society organisations: non-governmental organizations (NGOS) which are mostly urban-based and externally funded. Those organisations make claims towards the government and seek to

control its action by holding the state actors to account. The second category consist of community-based organisations that operate in rural areas with a strong connection with local population (Poplewell 2019; Palmans 2006). My thesis will focus on the first category. Special attention will be paid on the claim-making organisations that seek to play a watchdog role vis a vis the state in the contentious arena of human rights, governance, the rule of Law and Democracy.

3.2.2. Transnational advocacy networks

A transnational advocacy network is 'a network of actors working internationally on an issue, who are bound together by shared values, a common discourse, and dense exchange of information and services' (Keck & Sikkink 1998:89).The main goal of transnational networks is to create what Keck and Sikkink called 'Boomerang pattern' This holds that domestic actors seek international allies to exert pressure on their respective states (idem 93). Transnational networks help domestic organisations to promote their goals and influence policy in their home country as it creates new political space and develop new potential allies (Shawki 2010:388). In this regard they frame issues to make them comprehensible to target audiences and to attract the attention of powerful actors and encourage them to take action. They play a key role at the regional and international level by bringing issues to the table that aims to attract attention and motivate collective action.
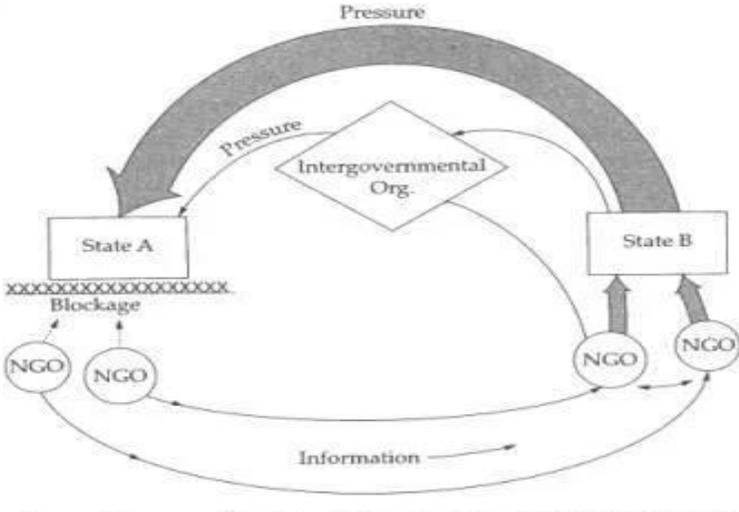
According to Seck and Kikking (1998: 95-98), transnational advocacy networks use four main tactics and strategy to convince powerful actors to act and influence policy change in target actors:

1) Information politics: generating and disseminating or withholding salient information. The goal here is to persuade powerful actors and stimulate them to act.
2) Symbolic politics: the framing process of an issue by providing a convincing explanation for powerful symbolism to create awareness and connect with a variety of audiences.
3) Leverage politics: in order to bring policy change, networks need to develop alliances with powerful actors. Networks seek leverage to gain influence among powerful actors (moral and material leverage)
4) Accountability politics: networks seek to hold the government to account and put pressure to make the change needed into practice.

Keck and Sikkink (1998:98) propose five stages under which advocacy networks can be effective: 1) by framing issues and attention/agenda setting; 2) by boosting discursive commitments of the state and other actors (regional and international); 3) by influencing institutional procedures; 4) by shaping the policy change in target actors; 5) influencing behavior changes of the State.

In my thesis, it will be analyzed how the exiled Burundian organisations developed alliances with transnational actors to rebuild their organisations and attain greater visibility in the international arena. Since the core activities of those organisations changed the time they fled the country and focus now on advocacy towards international actors, this thesis will analyze how those transnational networks provide Burundi CSOs opportunities to have access and leverage to powerful group to make their claims resonate.

3.3.   Conclusion

In the previous decades, we have witnessed growing attention towards the study of social movements. Three broad set of factors have been presented to analyse the origins of contentious collective action: the political opportunities in which movements are embedded, the mobilizing structures that movements have at their disposal (formal as well informal) and the framing process through which movements explain, interpret, present, and market their actions (King 2007, Kriesi 2004; McAdam et al. 1996). Scholars argue that the three factors have to be analysed as complementary to one another. A gap in the existing literature is how SMT applies to exile organisations. This chapter has sought to complement SMT with literature on transnational networks and showed the importance of studying how exiled organisations seek international allies to try to bring pressure on their states from outside.

4. The fragile transition to democracy

Since its independence from Belgium in 1962, Burundian history has been characterized by a series of violent conflicts between the two main ethnic groups, Hutu that constitute 85 percent of the population and Tutsi 14 percent (Uvin 1999). In the period that followed independence, Burundian elites perpetrated the ethnic manipulation inherited from the colonisers and implemented a policy of ethnic polarisation and political exclusion along ethnic lines. Ethnicity was a critical element of recurrent conflict in Burundi and has been used as a tool for exclusion and mobilization (Curtis 2012). This politics of ethnic discrimination and exclusion and the mobilization along ethnic lines has led to subsequent massacres targeting each ethnic group, with the most violent episodes taking place in 1965, 1972 and 1988. In the aftermath of the 1988 massacres, the international community urged the regime to liberalise the political sphere.

The first democratic election since independence was organised in 1993. But this democratic process lasted for a short period as the country experienced an extremely violent conflict after the assassination of the first Hutu elected president in October 1993. This period marked the beginning of a violent decade of civil war between the Tutsi dominated army and several Hutu rebellions. Peace negotiations that started in 1998 resulted into a power sharing agreement between Hutu and Tutsi leaders signed in Arusha, Tanzania, in August 2000. This agreement marked the end to the violent decade of civil war that caused the death of more than 300.000 people (Le Marchand 2006, Vandeginste 2009)

Following the ceasefire agreement between the transition government and the largest rebel group, the National Council for Defence of Democracy- Forces for Defence of Democracy (CNDD FDD) transformed into a political party afterwards, general election was organized in 2005 and the CNDD FDD won. From 2005 the country experienced a period of relative peace until 2015 when the current president, Pierre Nkurunziza elected prior in 2005 and 2010 announced his candidacy for a third term. His candidacy was seen unconstitutional and in violation of the Arusha agreement by many actors including some members of his own political party. After the announcement of his candidature, a protest broke out in Bujumbura and other parts of the country and was violently repressed by Burundi's security force. Since the beginning of the conflict more than 3000 persons have been killed, thousand arbitrary arrested and around half a million refugees have fled the country (Nshimirimana, V & Gatavu, A. 2017)

In this chapter, I will situate my research within the context of the history of the conflict in Burundi. This chapter will present the history and background of Burundi, and more specifically the country's transition to democracy. I will start by discussing the first attempt at the democratisation process in the beginning of 1990s and the civil war that followed this failed democratisation (1993-2000). In the second

section of this chapter, I will analyse the steps that lead to the Arusha Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation (2000) and its implementation materialized by the first democratic election in 2005. In the third section of the chapter, I will discuss the constitutional power-sharing arrangement that concretised political pluralism and the post-war democratisation process (2005-2015). In the last section, I will analyse the condition of public space and freedom of opinion in Burundi before the 2015 political backlash.

4.1.   The first attempt at Democracy (late 1989 – early 1990)

Since the abolition of the monarchy and the instauration of the first Republic by Captain Michel Micombero on the 28th of November 1966, the country was under control of one party, the Union for National Progress, UPRONA (Union Pour le Progrès National) (Sindayigaya J.M 2018:64) with the president of the country at the same time president of the ruling party. The situation remains the same in the different regimes that followed up, Bagaza (1976-1987) and Buyoya (1988-1993), both accessed to power through a military coup.

In the aftermath of the massacres in the North of the country in Ntega and Marangara communes in 1988, the international community put pressure on Buyoya regime and pushed the latter on the process of liberalisation (Sullivan 2005 and Vandeginste 2009). In order to respond to the international community's demand for political liberalisation, President Buyoya set up in October 1988, a national commission composed of twelve Hutu and twelve Tutsi in charge of 'studying the question of national unity' (Vandeginste 2009:6).   In line of this political liberalisation and inclusiveness, President Buyoya proceeded to establish a government of national unity with equal representation of Hutu and Tutsi in government position, led by a Hutu prime minister. This liberalisation process was seen as a response to the grievances of Hutu (which constitute the majority group with around 85%) victims of inequality, social and political exclusion which resulted in past to an attempt to seize power and violence repression of the Tutsi dominated army. It was in the aftermath of the fall of communism and the wave of the democratisation process of Africa that Buyoya made further steps towards the democratisation process with the instauration of a multiparty system. A new constitution that allowed the multiparty system was adopted by referendum on the 9th March 1992. Following the promulgation of the constitution, new political parties were created headed by the Front for Democracy in Burundi, FRODEBU (Front pour la Démocratie au Burundi). In 1993, multi-party general elections were held and won surprisingly by the new political party (FRODEBU) defeating the long-time dominating party UPRONA (Vandeginste 2009:63). The victory of FRODEBU marked the end of almost three decades of dominancy of UPRONA,

with the candidate of FRODEBU Ndadaye becoming the first Hutu president in the History of the country (Schraml 2011, 41).

4.2. Civil War and Peace Process

To the surprise of many, Buyoya accepted his defeat and transferred power to the new elected president. When Ndadaye took office in July 1993, he established a consociational democracy in which members of UPRONA was fairly represented with a prime minister from UPRONA (Vandeginste 2009:78, Sindayigaya 2018: 91-92). Following the victory of FRODEBU, new reforms were implemented in different levels of public administration and was marked by the participation of Hutu in different positions that used to be Tutsi monopoly. The latter saw those reforms as a threat to the privileged positions they gained under the single party rule, UPRONA. The attempts by president Ndadaye to reform the army met a strong resistance of the Tutsi community that relied on the army as their only protection against the violence of Hutu extremist group (Sullivan 2005:78; Vandegsinte 2009). But for the new ruling party, the reform of army was the condition sin qua non to strengthen democracy and secure the power they gained through election. In the last three decades, the political regime was under the domination of the single party (UPRONA) and a military regime dominated by Tutsi.

This attempt to reform the army seen as monoethnic by the winning Hutu majority party and the fear of the Tutsi elite for losing their positions led to a military coup by the Tutsi dominated army and the assassination of the first Hutu elected democratically Ndadaye Melchior on the 21st of October 1993. His murder was followed by large scale violence that left the country in an institutional imbroglio and power vacuum (Vandeginste 2009:67). Within days, around 50.000 civilians were killed and half million mostly Hutu fled to neighbouring countries and around thousands of internally displaced (Idem 68). All the initiatives initiated by the UN and other international actors in order to restore security and political stability in the country met a resistance of Burundian main stakeholders grouped into two big coalitions: one predominantly composed of Hutu parties led by FRODEBU, the FCD (Forces du Changement Démocratique) and the other one composed by Tutsi parties led by UPRONA the CPPO (Coalition des Parties Politiques de l'Opposition) (Vandeginste 2009:69).

Faced with this deadlock situation, a military coup brought former President Buyoya back to power in July 1996. This return to power of Buyoya was condemned by the international community and the region that imposed a total embargo aimed to bring down the regime and pushed it to launch talks with Hutu parties for a return to a constitutional order. Also, international donors' organizations suspended technical and financial assistance to Burundi in response to Buyoya back to power (Joseph Gahama 2002:

15-16). This economic sanction hit hard Burundi regime, and President Buyoya ended up by initiating talks with the opposition under the auspices of Julius Nyerere and the peace process started in June 1998 (Vandeginste 2009:71). After Nyerere died in 1999, former South Africa president Nelson Mandela was appointed as facilitator of Burundi talks. The aims of those peace talks were twofold: 1) finding a lasting solution to the violent civil war between Hutu and Tutsi and; 2) redressing the ethnic inequalities and political exclusion of the Hutu community through the use of power sharing (Le Marchand 2006:10; Vandeginste 2009:71). During the negotiation process, Burundians stakeholders were again grouped into two blocks based on ethnic lines: The G-10 block composed dominantly by Tutsi parties led by UPRONA and the G-7 block composed of parties dominantly Hutu led by FRODEBU (McClintock &Nahimana 2008:78).

4.3. Arusha agreement and the Power-sharing arrangement

Under pressure exerted by the international community and the regional embargo, an arrangement between the parties to the conflict namely the G10 and G7 was reached and a peace agreement was signed on the 28th of August 2000, in Arusha (McClintock &Nahimana 2008:79& Vandeginste 2009:72). The parties to the conflict highly recognised the ethnical and political character of the Burundian conflict. In Protocol I, Chapter I, Article 4 of Arusha Agreement, the inter-Burundian conflict was defined as 'fundamentally political, with extremely important ethnic dimensions and stems from a struggle by the political class to accede to and/or remain in power' (Arusha Agreement). In order to redress the ethnic inequalities and ensure an equal participation of both ethnic segment of the population in the political institution and army, Arusha Agreement proposed a power sharing system between the two main ethnic groups, Hutu and Tutsi. The Agreement guaranteed the adequate representation and participation of both ethnic segment of population in the political institution and an ethnic parity in the army and the security forces (Le Marchand 2006: 8; Vandeginste 2009:74-75)

With this power sharing deal, the president was to be assisted by two-vice president that belonged to a different ethnic group. Regarding the composition of the government, the agreement stipulated that no more than 60% of Hutu and no more than 40% of Tutsi shall take part in the government with a minimum of 30 % of women. The Minister of National Defence and the Minister in charge of National Police must belong to different ethnic groups. For the National Assembly, it must be composed 60% of Hutu and 40% of Tutsi and 3 members are Twa. A minimum of 30% of MPs must be women. In the senate, it requires an equal participation of Hutu and Tutsi with each province represented by two senators belonging to different ethnic groups. In addition, three senators must belong to Twa community and former heads of

State. At the communal level, no more than 67 percent of the commune administrators are to the same ethnic group (Le Marchand 2006:8; Schraml 2011:57; Vandeginste 2009:75,).

Although the Arusha Agreement created the conditions to end the violent decade of civil war, the agreement contained some flaws. The main shortcoming of Arusha Agreement was that the two main rebels' groups predominantly Hutu, the CNDD FDD and FNL-Palipehutu were excluded from the peace deal. As a consequence, the Arusha Agreement did not end the war as fighting between the army and the two rebel groups in the countryside continued in the period that followed the signature of the agreement between political elites. The other defiance of the agreement is that it not a complete agreement in references to the series of reservations expressed by signatories of the agreement. The later was the result of the pressure exerted by the International Community and the Region, and as consequence, the parties made a series of reservation. In addition, the mandate and mission of the two mains commissions such the commission for truth and reconciliation and the commission of land and other assets remained unclear, and the protocol of their implementation wasn't discussed during the peace talks. Furthermore, the agreement left some key issues unresolved regarding the transitional period and the reform of security sector.

4.4.   Transitional Period and the Cease Fire agreement

The power sharing agreement signed in Arusha required the formation of a transitional government composed by the seventeen political parties that signed Arusha agreement and the reform of key institutions. The transition was divided into two periods of eighteen month each with the first period starting November 1st, 2001. The first period was led by President Buyoya (a Tutsi) assisted by Domitien Ndayizeye (a Hutu) and the second period was led by President Ndayizeye. It should be mentioned that the implementation of the agreement was weakened by the continuation of the fights between the army and the two Hutu rebels' movements CNDD FDD and Palipehutu FNL that didn't sign the agreement, and consequently not part of it.

Under intensive pressure from the international community and the regional peace initiative, a first ceasefire agreement was reached in December 2002 between the transitional government led by President Ndayizeye and the largest rebel group CNDD FDD led by Nkurunziza, the current president (Vandeginste 2009:78). But this initial ceasefire was violated by both parties as armed struggle continued until a global ceasefire agreement (GCA) was signed in November 2003. It was agreed that the global ceasefire agreement constituted an integral part of the Arusha agreement (Article 2 of the GCA). With this ceasefire deal, the CNDD FDD got four ministries in the transitional government, fifteen seats in the

National Assembly and three provincials' governors (Nindorera 2012:23, Vandeginste 2009:79). The main question during the peace talks concerned the integration of the CNDD FDD combatants in the army and the new police forces as well the demobilization and reintegration process of formers combatants. In this regard, the forces technical agreement stipulated that in the National Forces(army), the CNDD FDD will get 40% and 35% in the National Police and intelligence service (Ibid). It is important to mention that the parties to the global ceasefire agreement appealed the latest rebel group Palipehutu-FNL to suspend hostilities and accept to seat on negotiation's table with the government in order of achieving the lasting peace and security in Burundi condition sine qua non to prepare the 2005 election (Article 4 of the GCA). And during the transitional period, one of the main challenges of the government was the insecurity that prevailed in some parts of the countries due to the continuation of arms struggle by the only remaining rebel group, Palipehutu-FNL.

4.5.   UN Peace-keeping forces and the 2005 General Election

Following the Global Ceasefire Agreement between the largest rebel group CNDD FDD and the transitional government, African Union peace-keeping forces were deployed in Burundi in 2003 to ensure the respect by both parties of the agreement. In May 2004, the UN security council in resolution 1545 transformed the African peacekeeping forces into a UN peacekeeping operation, ONUB. The main tasks of this mission were the ensure the integration into army and police the former FDD combatants and prevent the escalation of conflict of former FAB and the ex-rebels. The other mission of the ONUB operation was to create a favourable climate that will pave the way to the 2005 election as agreed in Arusha and later in the global ceasefire deal.

In March 2005, a new constitution based on Arusha Agreement was adopted by referendum. This new constitution integrated the power sharing arrangement negotiated in Arusha which guarantee the proportionality and representation of Hutu 60% and Tutsi 40% in the government and the parliament, and parity in the army and the national police. Also, political parties that obtain 5% of the votes in the parliamentary elections participate in the coalition government. Also, the 2005 constitution stipulated that the president will be seconded by two vice presidents from different ethnic groups, 'a Hutu from a mainly Hutu party and a Tutsi from a mainly Tutsi party' (Reyntjens 2005:1993). It is important to stress that the political landscape of 2005 election differed considerably from the one that prevailed during the 1993 election. In 1993, the landscape was bipolar with two main political parties, FRODEBU and UPRONA, represented respectively Hutu and Tutsi electorate. In 2005 the landscape was more multi-polar with the CNDD FDD and FRODEBU fighting to convince the Hutu electorate and UPRONA and others Tutsi-led parties (PARENA and MSD) trying to gain Tutsi electorate.

The 2005 election was held in four stages, starting by municipal elections and was followed by legislative elections through direct election, then the senatorial and presidential election trough indirect mode. The 2005 election saw the participation of approximately 30 political parties (Sindayigaya 2018). The former rebel groups transformed into a political party CNDD FDD emerged as a largest winner of the election with 54% of seats in parliament and 62.6% in the communal election (Reyntens 2005, Vandeginste 2009). Regarding presidential election, article 302 of the Constitution stipulated that the first president of the post transition period will be elected by the parliament in a joint meeting as congress. Strong with its overwhelmingly victory in the communal and legislative election, the CNDD FDD's candidate Pierre Nkurunziza was approved as the President of Burundi by a joint session of the National Assembly and the Senate with a high score of 94% (Reyntens 2005:129). Following the validation of the presidential election by the constitutional court, Pierre Nkurunziza sworn in on the 26th of August as President of Burundi for the presidential term of 2005-2010 (Idem). Contrary to the 1961 and 1993 elections that were followed by widespread violence and hat speeches between Hutu and Tutsi, the 2005 elections were held in transparency and the results accepted by most of the parties that participated in the election (Palmans 2011)

During the first post transition period, internal dissident inside political parties has seriously undermined the effective functioning of the government and the parliament. The most illustrative case is the dismissal of the strongman of CNDD FDD, Hussein Radjabu at the head of the party. His dismissal was followed by internal dissentions inside the ruling party and the defection of 22 members of parliament which resulted in the paralysis of the National Assembly and government (Vandeginste 2009:77). The other challenges faced by the post transition government was the security instability in certain part of the country due to the continuation of hostilities by the latest rebel group, Palipehutu FNL. Initial talks initiated by the post transition government resulted into a ceasefire agreement in September 2006 between the government and FNL. But the implementation of this ceasefire agreement was problematic as the hostilities continued until 2009 when the FNL decided to lay down arms which marked the end of the violent decade of civil war. Following the ceasefire agreement, 3500 FNL combatants were integrated in the Army and the national Police and the demobilization of around 5000 ex combatants. On 22nd April, FNL was recognised as political party which marks the beginning of electoral marathon for the 2010 election (Reyntens 2016:72)

4.6.   The second election post-transition and the political vacuum

After the successful post transition election in 2005 that was seen by many actors as free, fair and democratic, the country held the second post transition election in 2010. Contrary to the 2005 electoral campaign that was relatively peaceful, the 2010 pre-electoral period was characterized by intimidation and political violence and intolerance between youth members of different political parties. In addition, there was disagreement between the ruling party and the rest of political parties regarding the modalities of designation of members of the electoral commission (CENI) and the sequencing of the elections (Vandegisnte 2010: 326). After a series of consultation between stakeholders of the electoral process and the pressure exerted by the international community, a compromise was found on the composition and functioning of the electoral commission. In addition, the electoral code was adopted by consensus in September 2009 which set the election's sequencing, starting with the communal election followed by the legislative and then the presidential election (Palmans 2011:10). The municipal election took place on the 24th of April and saw the participation of twenty-three party out of a total of forty-four parties registered (Vandeginste 2010:317). The results of the communal election presented the CNDD FDD as largest winner of the election with 64%, followed by the former rebel group FNL with 14 % on the third position comes the oldest party UPRONA with 6.25%, then FRODEBU (5.43%) and MSD (3.75%) (Palmans 2011:12; Vandeginste 2010:318).

Surprised by the outcomes of the communal election, the opposition parties rejected the results of the election that they denounced as a massive fraud and requested the annulment of the results as well the appointment of a new electoral commission (Reyntens 2016: 73; Vandeginste idem). The political parties which challenged the results of the electoral commission set up in the run up of the publication of the result an opposition front called Alliance des Democrates pour le Changement , ADC-Ikibiri (Alliance of Democrats in Burundi). This front (ADC) threatened to boycott the remainder of the elections in case their demands and revendications were not taken into consideration. Despite the rejection of the results by the opposition, the national and international observer missions declared the election to be free and fair but recognised some irregularities[5].

After the boycott of the ADC from the presidential election, five candidates' members of the front withdrew their candidacy and called their supporters not to participate in the presidential election. Consequently, to the boycott of the opposition, the electoral participation decreased gradually with only 77% compared to the communal election which saw a strong participation of 91% of population (Palmans

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[5] International Crisis Group: Burundi: From Electoral Boycott to Political Impasse. Africa Report No. 169

2011). Unsurprisingly, Pierre Nkurunziza who was the only candidate in the presidential race hold on the 27th of June was elected with 92% of the vote. The boycott of the opposition in the legislative and presidential election had seriously undermined the power sharing system stipulated by Arusha agreement. This political vacuum left the room to CNDD FDD to be established itself as a single political party which constituted the step backwards in the democratisation process of the country as it polarised the political landscape in Burundi. The ruling party increased repression on the opposition political parties that were left without any force to challenge the domination of the CNDD FDD.

In the aftermath of 2010 election, the CNDD FDD put in place a system of patronage and violence to strengthen its position at all levels of society and used all possible means to silence critical voices. It was in this line that members of the coalition ADC [6]were targeted by the police, the secret service and the youth wing of CNDD FDD, *Imbonerakure*. This security and political context that prevailed after the election forced the main leaders of the opposition to leave the country and went into exile claiming that their life was in danger (International Crisis Group Report 2011). In the period that followed their exile, several rebel groups that the government referred as 'bandit's groups' emerged in the western regions resulting in arms hostilities between those groups and the Burundian security forces (Van Acker 2015:2; Reyntjens 2016:74). In the meantime, the CNDD FDD accentuated its repression and launched a manhunt to the members of the opposition that are accused of being affiliated to those rebel groups.

With the absence of a functional parliamentary opposition, civil society and independent media emerged on the political scene and played a key role as political counter power, the role that used to be played by the parliamentary opposition. With its critical comments on the abuse of power by the ruling party civil society activists and independent media were increasingly targeted and threatened by the secret service and the security force (Idem). In order to limit their actions, new legislations that aimed to restrict the role and action of media and civil society were adopted in 2013 (Nshimirimana &Gatavu 2017:18). This part will be in depth developed in the following chapter that discussed the development and role of civil society before the April protest movement.

4.7.   The April protest and the political backlash

As expected, the CNDD FDD national congress that took place on the 25th of April 2015 designated Pierre Nkurunziza as its candidate for the presidential election. Following the announcement of his candidacy, civil society organizations regrouped in the campaign 'Halte au 3e mandat' (Stop 3rd Term)

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[6] ADC Ikibiri is a coalition of opposition political parties (Hutu and Tutsi based parties) constituted in the aftermath of the municipal elections and contested the results of the polls.

and the opposition parties called people to protest against this third term that was considered as in violation of the constitution and Arusha agreement. Nkurunziza was elected for his first term in 2005 by the National Assembly and the Senate in a joint congress and was re-elected in 2010 for the second term by population on direct suffrage. The protest took place in several neighbourhood of Bujumbura and others part of the country. To legitimize the contested candidacy, a group of CNDD FDD senators brought the case to the constitutional court which acknowledged the legality of the candidacy of Pierre Nkurunziza (Vandeginste 2015:626; Nshimirimana &Gatavu 2017). But the validity of the constitutional court's decision was strongly questioned as the vice president of the constitutional court fled the country claiming the pressure and intimidations that faced members of the court (Vandeginste 2015:626)

After two weeks of demonstrations, a group of militaries attempted a coup while the president was in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, for a regional meeting about Burundi crisis. In the aftermath of the attempt coup, four main independent radio stations (Bonesha, RPA, Isanganiro and Tele Renaissance) were destroyed by government security forces (Amnesty International annual report 2016). The failed attempt coup marked the end of the April protest as the government stated that the demonstrators will be considered as supports of the attempt coup (Nshimirimana &Gatavu 2017:2017:25). This attempt coup was followed by a violent repression against anyone seen by the regime as against the third term which resulted to arbitrary arrestations, extra judiciary killing, tortures, enforced disappearances and a massive number of people fleeing to neighbouring countries.

In this climate of violence, President Nkurunziza was re-elected on 21 July and sworn in on 20 August 2015. In the same time a platform of political parties and civil society organizations, CNARED (Conseil National pour le Respect de l'Accord d'Arusha) was created in July 2015 in Addis Ababa and reject the legitimacy of Pierre Nkurunziza. All the efforts made by the regional and international actors in finding a political solution to the ongoing crisis failed due to the radicalisation of position between Burundian key actors in the conflict.

4.8. Conclusion

After three decades of violent ethnic conflict that broke out with the assassination of the first elected Hutu president, a political arrangement was reached in Arusha (2000). This agreement stipulated a power sharing between the two main ethnic groups and contained the new blueprint for a politico-ethnic reconciliation, the minority protection and the institutional legitimacy. Despite some progress and changes in terms of security, political participation of all segments of population and institutional reforms, Burundian transition to democracy has remained fragile and marked by severe conflicts between and

within the Burundian political elite. During the civil war the main questions was how to stop the war and ensure a political participation of all segments of the population. In that period, the conflict was more ethnic and opposed the Tutsi dominated army against several Hutu rebel groups that fought for the rights of the majority Hutu community, victim of political discrimination and economic deprivation.

After the last rebel movement FNL laid down its arms and signed a ceasefire agreement in 2009, the main challenge was how to create conditions conducive to lasting peace and democracy. However, the pre-electoral period was characterized by intolerance and mistrust between the two formal rebels' groups transformed into political parties respectively CNDD FDD and FNL. The former saw the latter as a serious opponent for the 2010 elections as both parties presented themselves as representing the Hutu electorate. This period was marked by a shift in the dynamics of the political landscape as the conflict that used to opposed Hutu and Tutsi became more intra Hutu competition, fighting on the political space to win the mind and heart of the Hutu electorate.

The boycott of the opposition after the local elections left the room to CNDD FDD to dominate the political space and gained a three-quarter majority in the Parliament. This monopoly of the political landscape by CNDD FDD constituted a threat to the power sharing system that Arusha Agreement sought to address and resulted in the shrinking of the political space and increased the repression against the opposition and civil society.

5. Burundian civil society organisations from 1990 to 2015

The end of the Cold War and the fall of communism in late 1989 marked a big shape in the political landscape on the Africa continent. In many countries, a process of democratisation started in the early 1990s and saw the emergence of an active civil society. The latter started to hold the state accountable through the promotion of democracy, good governance and rule of law. The growth and emergence of civil society in Burundi started in the 1990s with the political liberalisation process[7]. ITEKA League and SONERA were the first officially recognized organisations in the country in 1991(Palmans 2006: 219; Omara & Ackson 2009:46). The civil war that followed the assassination of the first Hutu elected president in 1993 left the country in a political vacuum, with state institutions being absent in various regions. Many organisations were created during this period as a response to the inability of state institutions to provide services needed by the community and sought to fill the gaps left by the deficiency of the government institutions. In the period that followed the signature of the Arusha agreement (2000) some civil society organisations played a key role in reconciling the population and rebuilding the social structures that have been devastated by the conflict (Omara and Ackson 2009). In the period that followed the signing of Arusha Agreement until the protest movement that followed the announcement of the candidacy of Pierre Nkurunziza for a third term in April 2015, civil society played an active role for the strengthening democracy by providing a space to citizens to engage with the authorities and did advocate for the preservation of civil space in Burundi (Nshimirimana & Gatavu 2017).

The goal of this chapter is three-fold. First, it analyses the political context that facilitated the creation and the emergence of a vibrant and active civil society in Burundi and the legal framework within which civil society operates. Second, it exposes how the political context that prevailed since the democratisation process in the early 1990s until the protest movement in April 2015 influenced and shaped the emergence, development and the modus operandi of civil society organisations. Third, it explores how the relation between civil society and the government fluctuated depending on the political context and the topics raised by civil society organizations. Issues related to governance, corruption, respect for human rights and accountability was most of time source of conflict between civil society and the governance

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[7] Before the adoption of Iteka and Sonera as the first recognized civil society organizations in Burundi, there were some Catholic-based movements and others community-based organizations that operated countryside mainly in the field of service delivery by providing services to the population. Those organizations were not involved in any claim making or advocacy issues and were therefore not recognized officially by the government as civil society organizations.

5.1. Emergence and development of CSOs in Burundi (from 1990 to 2000)

In the aftermath of the massacres in the North communes of Ntega and Marangara in 1988 that saw the killing of around 150.000 people mostly Hutu, the international community raised voices and put pressure on Burundian regime to render the political space more liberal[8]. Because of this political liberalisation, a group of intellectuals alongside the Bishop of Bujumbura, Ntamwana, submitted in 1990 a letter requesting the approval of a Burundian League for Human rights (Iteka) with the objective to promote and prevent human rights violations [9]. This request was seen by the government as a threat to its power and ability to control the population. In the recent past (from 1966 to 1990), the regime denied any form of organizations that might mobilize people apart from the single party UPRONA (Palmans 2006: 216-217). As a response to this request, the government established its own human rights organisation, SONERA with an objective to compete with ITEKA league. The government had delayed the adoption of Iteka League as a self-contained organisation and imposed the fusion of the two leagues, SONERA and ITEKA, which the later turned down. The two organizations were officially recognized a year after on February 6th, 1991 (Idem) and a law regulating non-profiting organizations was adopted in 1992.

During the approval of the two organizations (ITEKA and SONERA), the country still had a one-party political system. With the adoption of the two human rights organizations, they became an important arena for claim-making and a canal to voice the discontent. Therefore, some members of ITEKA used this arena as a space to make claims for the democratisation process of the country and an arena to formulate comments and critics towards the single political party, UPRONA (Palmans 2006:219). On the other hand, SONERA league was the sphere of propaganda of the government policy by praising its action. This situation polarized the society as the sphere of civil society was dominated by ethnic tensions with ITEKA very close to the excluded Hutu community, while SOENRA was pro-government and the Tutsi dominant party, UPRONA.

When the multiparty system was officially adopted in 1992, many influential members of ITEKA migrated into politics to create new political parties that competed in 1993 electoral process (Ibid). The surprise victory of the new political party FRODEBU, defeating the powerful UPRONA that had been the only political party for almost three decades (1966-1993), saw an explosive growth of civil society organizations in Burundi. As emerging from a civil society organisation (ITEKA) in which many of its founding members played a key role for its creation, the new ruling party was in favor of an active and

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[8] See the background chapter for more information about the democratisation process in Burundi in the early 1990s.
[9] Author interview with the chairperson of ITEKA on 28th of March 2019 in Kampala

vibrant civil society and provided an environment that enabled civil society to operate. Because of this opening environment, many organizations were created in the aftermath of the victory of FRODEBU. Among those organizations, some were linked to political agendas. Therefore, some politicians, mostly the former political elite that lost their position with the 1993 election migrated to civil society and used this sphere to continue politics. These cross-overs had a negative impact on the perception of the role of civil society in the strengthening of democracy as the political space of civil society was used in a different way and did not resemble a more independent and autonomous civil society. The latter became a source of interest for the former political elite to continue politics through the structure of civil society.

During the war, there were also many organisations created with an objective to address the inability and incapacity of the state institutions to provide services to the community (Omara and Ackson 2009). The civil war that followed the assassination of the first president elected left the country in a political vacuum. Even though the civil society sphere was polarized along ethnic affiliations, there were some neutral organizations as well created to fill the gap left by the government incapacity to provide services to citizens and did advocate for the respect of human rights [10]. Those organisations also played a key role in supporting a reconciliation process and the restoration of trust between the various segments of the country's population for the maintenance of the social fabric destroyed by the conflict (Palmans 2006:220).

5.2. The role of Civil society during the peace process and transitional government (2000 to 2005)

The return to power of Pierre Buyoya in 1996 through a military coup which was condemned by the region and international community, exacerbated the political tensions and divisions in the country[11]. This military coup occurred a year after the Burundi's neighboring countries initiated the Regional Initiative for Peace in Burundi which aimed to find a lasting solution to the ongoing political violence and turmoil in Burundi (Omara &Ackson 2009: 26). As response to this military coup, the international community and the neighboring countries imposed an economic embargo that dramatically impacted the socio-economic situation in the country. Those sanctions hit hard the already fragile economy and had a significant, adverse effect on the civilian population. In such a situation, some civil society organisations pleaded for the lifting of economic sanctions on Burundi in which the population was victim. As conditions for lifting the economic sanctions on Burundi, the international community and the region

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[10] Author interview with a human rights activist in Brussels on 27th April 2019.
[11] See the background chapter for more details about the return to power of Pierre Buyoya

called for the immediate resumption of the political dialogue between different stakeholders to the conflict. Therefore, civil society organisations pushed the stakeholders to the negations table and claimed for inclusion throughout the process. [12]

At the beginning of the peace process in 1998, civil society organisations were not involved in the process. Some politicians argued that the negotiations and dialogue were a mere political affair and that the representation of civil society during the peace process was therefore unnecessary (Le Marchand 2006: 221). It is also important to mention that during the civil war; the civil society sphere was vigorously fragmented with some organisations carrying out ideologies and interests of politicians. In this regard, politicians portrayed the civil society as very young and too immature to bring a contribution to put an end to the ongoing conflict (Ibid). Still, the influence and status of civil society organisations slowly grew during the peace negotiations. Some highly respected organisations such as ITEKA, women organisations and religious organisations participated in different stages of the peace process with an observer status. [13]In addition, some organisations were created during the peace talks such as OAG (Observatoire de l'Action Gouvernementale) with the main goal to follow up and monitor the peace talks between the government and other parties to the conflict (Omara &Ackson 2009). The period that followed the signature of the Arusha Power sharing Agreement in 2000 saw a rise in number of civil society organisations as external aid flowed into the country. As Poplewell (2018:135) points out, support to civil society was an important aspect of international peacebuilding in Burundi in the aftermath of the Arusha agreement. Much of the financial support focused on building the capacity of civil society organisations to assist them with the implementation of the agreement as well strengthening the capacity of the young civil society to hold the government to account (ibid).

5.3.   Civil society during the first post transition period (2005 – 2010)

The civil war that broke out in 1993 had a negative impact for the development and emergence of the young civil society that was officially recognized just a year before the civil war started. With the Arusha Agreement in 2000, civil society re-emerged and started playing a key role in the implementation of the agreement and advocated for the respect of human rights. In this section I will explain the legal framework that regulated CSOs organisations in Burundi. The legal framework helps in understanding the political space for civil society and how the law regulating CSOs has an impact on the operation capacity of civil society in Burundi. Secondly, the section will also analyse the relation between civil society and

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[12] Author interview in Brussels on 6th of May
[13] Author interview with a human right activist in Kampala

the government during the first post transition period. Thirdly, the section will explore the role played by CSOs during that period in the arena of democracy, Human Rights and Rule of Law with a special focus on claim making and advocacy-oriented organisations.

5.3.1. Legal Framework of CSOs in Burundi

The first law regulating civil society in Burundi was adopted in 1992, a year after the officially recognition of the first human rights organisations, ITEKA and SONERA[14]. This law aimed to specify the context and legal framework in which civil society in Burundi operated (Palmans 2006:216; Omara & Ackson 2009:48). The registration of a non-profit organisation (NPO) required the fulfillment of the following elements: 1) the Ministry has the power to grant legal personality to an NPO upon request by its legal representative; 2) a Curriculum vitae and extract of criminal records of each member of the executive committee; 3) NPO's activity implementation program and action plan; 4) the field in which the applying organisation will work. (Omara &Ackson 2009:50). Furthermore, all organisations have to submit an annual report of their activities to the Minister of Internal affairs whose is responsible for the registration and functioning of CSOs. This law provide room to the Minister in charge of Internal affairs to exercise oversight over the activities of civil society and to interfere in the functioning and practice of CSOs in Burundi. This means that organisations that fail to produce a satisfactory report as the government want might be deregistered. In addition to the law regulating civil society, the Constitution that was adopted by referendum in March 2005 guarantees freedom of association and freedom of speech, which provided room and opportunities for civil society to operate.

One of the main shortcomings of the law regulating CSOs in Burundi is that it considers federation and coalition of NGOs as any civil society organisation (Idem: 57). However, the law doesn't clearly specify the functioning of coalition of civil society which joined together for a particular event or activities to be executed for a described period. Therefore, civil society organisations were not allowed by the law to come together and stage common protest. In many cases, those joints coalitions have been forbidden to organize meeting or demonstration that aimed to raised awareness on issues that were considered by the powerful elite as challenging its interests. For instance, in 2013 was launched a campaign against the high cost of living comprised of trade unions organisations, journalists and Human rights organisations. This coalition sought to organise a demonstration to raise awareness, but their request was rejected by the Mayor of Bujumbura on the ground that such coalition is not authorized by

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[14] The law regulating CSOs in Burundi is Décret loi N0 1/011 du 18 Avril 1992 portant Cadre Organique des Associations Sans But Lucratif.

the law regulating civil society organisations The other shortcoming is that the law regulating civil society in Burundi doesn't stipulate any modalities regarding the funding aspect for the activities of civil society organisations in Burundi. As consequence, many CSOs organisations depend on externally funds which affected their autonomy and operational capacities.

5.3.2. CSO's contribution during the first post transition period

As preparation to the post transition democratic election in 2005, Civil society organisations played a key role specially in disseminating the electoral code which was widely unknown for a large segment of the population. Some organisations such as ITEKA, APRODH and OAG organised training sessions for the electoral observers. Different workshops of civic education that aimed to raise public awareness about the necessity to participate in the election and how to choose political parties that fit the interests and needs of the population were organised by civil society organizations prior to the electoral period. [15]

To better ensure the supervision of the 2005 general election, a coalition of civil society organisations (COSOME) was set up in 2005 to promote the culture of peace and democracy in Burundi through education on democratic values. This coalition conducted close monitoring of the electoral campaigns and covered the 2005 election at different level (local and legislative). The monitoring of the election by civil society contributed to the transparency and the legitimacy of the result (Omara & Ackson 2009: 116). Unsurprisingly, the candidate of the CNDD FDD (former rebel group that entered into government after laying down arms in 2003 and the signature of the global ceasefire agreement with the government) was elected as president by the parliament in a joint session.

The government that took office following the 2005 election was more open to the emancipation of civil society and was in favor of a participative civil society for the consolidation of peace and democracy in Burundi. Whereas during the civil war, international development initiatives were focused on finding a sustainable solution to the crisis and were more visible in areas of services delivery to the population, this changed after the elections of 2005. After this year, they boosted their involvement in strengthening the capacity of civil society in Burundi. They were convinced that a strong civil society was a necessary precondition to strengthen democracy and to hold the government accountable for its action (Popplewell 2019: 134). Therefore, many programmes of international organizations and donors focused on capacity building of the young civil society. Those international actors aimed to make civil society vibrant and active in order to preserve the young democracy and the fragile lasting peace (idem 130). It should be noted that the majority if not all claim making organisations in Burundi (mostly urban-based)

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[15] Author interview with the chairperson of FORSC on the 28th of April in Brussels.

highly depend on external aids. As the study by Van Der Borgh and Terwindt (2014:99) on pressure on civil society pointed out, NGOs involved in the arena of Human Rights, governance and Rule of Law are generally connected to international networks of NGOs that support their activities and functioning. As a result of this technical and financial support, those NGOs emerged as monitoring forces to control the government action and hold it accountable towards citizens.

5.3.3. Civil Society relation with the government during the first post transition period (2005-2010)

As noted above, in the first year of the transition period (2005-2006), the government was receptive to the claims made by civil society organisations and the role played by the latter was appreciated[16]. Some well-structured organisations such as ITEKA, APRODH and OLUCOME actively reported cases of corruption and human rights abuse in which some government agents were involved but at the lowest level. As response to the reports produced by civil society, the government in some cases hold to account the authors of those violations. For instance, in 2006 after the anti-corruption organisation OLUCOME raised concern about the misappropriation of funds in the illegal sale of the Falcon 50 presidential jet led to the establishment of a committee of the National Assembly to investigate the matter (Omara &Ackson 2009: 99). However, the collaboration between the government and civil society organisations became conflictual when those organisations touched upon vested interested of the powerful groups. This is supported by van Der Borgh and Terwindt (2014: 115) in their study about political space for claim-making NGOs in Guatemala and Indonesia that the pressure towards NGOs working in the arena of contestation increased when their actions and activities are seen as challenging the interests of the powerful groups or when those NGOs exposed cases of human rights and corruption in which the powerful elite and persons are involved.

Therefore, as an illustration, the president of Olucome was jailed in 2006 and some members of the staff fled the country after the organisation accused the powerful Minister of Security of being involved in case of corruption (Omara & Ackson 2009:98). In addition, in 2006, APRODH exposed the extrajudicial killing of around 30 supporters of the latest rebel group FNL (the National Liberation Front) by security forces in the Northern province of Muyinga.[17] After drawing the attention about those extrajudicial executions, members of APRODH that were investigating those massacres were victims of intimidations and harassment by members of the security forces and members of the Administration in Muyinga. From 2006, the political space for NGOs specially those working in arena of governance,

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[16] Author interview with Human rights activists in Uganda and Rwanda.
[17] Idem

human rights and democracy started shrinking and the relations between the government and the claim-making and watchdog NGOs gradually deteriorated. On the same time, the organisational legitimacy of those organization with the government declined which was most of time followed by stigmatization and negative label of those organizations.

The relationship between the government and the organizations that conducted advocacy on claim-making issues became very critical in April 2009 with the assassination of the vice president of OLUCOME when his organisation was conducting investigation on illegal arms transfers to foreign rebels carried out by Burundi's security services. In the months prior to his murder, Ernest Manirumva and other staff members of OLUCOME were victims of death treats over phone called (Amnesty International, annual report 2009). This assassination saw a large mobilization of civil society organizations under the umbrella of FORSC, the main platform for civil society and launched the campaign" justice for Manirumva" calling on the government to identify and hold to account the perpetrators (whom civil society organisations suspected to be high ranked state agents) [18]. Following the launch of this campaign and demonstration and activities organized by FORSC calling justice for the murder of the vice-president of OLUCOME, the Minister of Interior took a decision to suspend the activities of FORSC in November 2009, becoming the first civil society organisation to be banned in Burundi since the adoption of the law regulating CSOs in 1992. Prior to the ban of FORSC, human rights activists that took the lead in this campaign were victims of intimidations, harassment and death threats (Omara & Ackson 2009:125). For instance, the chairperson of FORSC fled the country in October 2009 and exiled in Kenya after being victim of an assassination attempt. [19]The Ban of FORSC was followed by the development of an anti- civil society discourse linking some organisations to political opposition parties and activists of those organisations were labeled by the government as opposition in disguise or working for foreign countries that seek to destabilize the country (Poplewell 2018). This stigmatization aimed to discredit the organizational legitimacy of some organisations and to justify the restriction of the political space of those NGOs.

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[18] Author interview with the chairperson of FORSC on 28th of April in Brussels
[19] Author interview with a human right activist in Kampala, Uganda

5.4.   From collaboration to Confrontation (2010 to 2015)

The end of the first transition period was marked by an increasing tension between civil society organisations and the government. This tension led to the shrinking of the public space and the limitations of political opportunities for civil society organisations considered as a challenger by the regime. The ability for claim-making organisations to operate freely as well the control of the government action to hold it accountable became restrictive. Despite those restrictions and reprisals against civil society activists, some civil society organisations mainly the claim-making and advocacy-oriented were again regrouped in a coalition (COSOME) for the monitoring of the general election in 2010.

Contrary to the 2005 electoral campaign that was relatively peaceful, the 2010 election was organised in a climate of violence and intolerance between youth members of different political parties (International Crisis, Africa Report No 69). After the Independent National Commission (CENI) announced the result of the local elections in which the ruling party CNDD FDD received 64% of the vote, the opposition confident of the victory, judged the result as massive fraud and called for the annulment of the results (Vandeginste 2010:318). Despite the rejection of the election by opposition, the international observers as well the national coalition of civil society (COSOME) who deployed together more than 5000 observers declared the election to be free and fair but recognized some irregularities (International Crisis Africa Report 2011; Reyntens 2016). After the officialisation of the result of the local election by the constitutional court, the opposition grouped in coalition ADC-Ikibiri (Alliance of Democrats in Burundi) boycotted the parliament and the presidential election (Ibid). The boycott of the opposition for the rest of the electoral gave room to CNDD FDD to get a full control of the parliament with a wide margin of 81 % of seats (Vandeginste 2010). In the aftermath of the election, the government imposed and intensified restrictions on freedom of opinion and freedom of association. A ban on meetings for the political opposition parties was issued in June after they boycotted the legislative and presidential elections (Amnesty Annual Report 2011). This ban was followed by arbitrary arrests of members of the opposition accused of holding illegal meetings. In addition, the staff member of Human Rights Watch was expelled from Burundi. This ban was followed by arbitrary arrestations and intimidations towards members of the opposition.

In this context of political violence and the marginalization and harassment of political opposition members combined with the absence of a real parliamentary opposition, civil society organizations that operate in the arena of democracy, human rights and governance took an explicit political role that used to be played by the parliamentary opposition and made claims vis-à-vis the state for the respect of human

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rights and the preservation of the public space. Following these political developments, civil society organisations became more politically involved. They started operating as Watchdogs; documenting human rights violations and abuses. Through raising awareness about these events, they tried to influence government actions. Despite being frequently faced with harassment and intimidation, the claims making organisations continued advocating for the preservation of civil space and public liberties that were threatened by the restrictions imposed by the quasi political party, CNDD FDD. The absence of a parliamentary opposition made the regime more authoritarian, as it provided the golden opportunities to strengthen its position in all domains and had the quasi majority in the parliament for the adoption of laws and regulate all aspect of life.

To undermine the actions and activities of the outspoken civil society organisations considered as challenging the power and political legitimacy of the ruling party, the government established its own organisations that shadow the work of the prominent organisations. The main goal and mission of those shadow organisations were to challenge the actions of the prominent ones through contradicting their statements and spreading anti-discourse towards claim making organisations (Polpwell 2018: 400). This strategy to create government-owned nongovernmental organisations (GONGOs) was not new in Burundi. For instance, 1990 following the creation of the first Human Rights organisations (ITEKA League), the single political party of that period, UPRONA established its own organisation (SONERA) with the aims to shadow the work and activities of ITEKA.

Another strategy adopted by the government to limit the action of civil society was the adoption of two laws that restricted freedom of assembly and freedom regulating the press in 2013. The new law on assemblies prevented civil society to organise meetings, campaigns or demonstrations that aimed to denounce the abuse of power by the ruling party or calling for the respect of human rights. Article 10 of this law stipulates that 'the administrative authority can, even though a regular declaration has been done, defer or cancel any meeting, procession, parade, assembly on the public road and in public places, if the maintenance of public order is necessary'(law No. 1/28 on Demonstrations and Assemblies). The new law on assemblies allow the administration to ban any peaceful assemblies on the ground that it might jeopardize the public order. However, it does not clarify circumstances under which the administration can ban an assembly claiming that it might disturb the public order. This provide the right to administrative authorities to rely on the concept of public order to ban unwanted meeting that can challenge the legitimacy of the authority. In the context of political tension and restriction of public space coupled with the absence of a parliamentary opposition, civil society faced tremendous challenges and obstacles to continue its missions and activities in such political environment.

5.5. The catalyst: the controversial third term of Pierre Nkurunziza and the 2015 Protest movement

As the political space for the watchdog and claim-making CSOs increasingly shrined which was coupled with the harassments, intimidations even killings drove those organisations to adopt a confrontational advocacy strategy as response to the pressure that the government exerted to them (Polpwell 2018: 402). In late 2013, another big issue arose and increased the already existing tensions between the government and more prominent human rights organisations with the unilateral attempt by the ruling party CNDD FDD to amend the 2005 constitution in order to allow President Nkurunziza for a third term (Nshimirimana &Gatavu 2017:15). It should be noted that Pierre Nkurunziza was elected in 2005 by the parliament in a joint session and was re-elected in 2010 by universal suffrage. The Arusha agreement and the 2005 constitution stipulate that no one can seek the position of President of the country for more than two terms of five year each.

Following this attempt to amend the constitution, CSOs organisations (mostly claim-making) launched the advocacy called 'Don't break the Arusha consensus' to protest against this unliteral attempt to amend the constitution (Ibid 21). This attempt failed to pass as the required quorum to amend the constitution was not met. After the failure to amend the constitution, the ruling party began a biased interpretation of the constitution claiming that Nkurunziza is allowed to run for the 2015 election as he was not elected by universal suffrage in 2005 election. Following this biased interpretation, those organisations went further and launched in January 2015 the campaign 'Halte au troisième mandat (Stop 3rd Term) and called president Pierre Nkurunziza to step aside at the end of his second and last term in office. [20] This campaign brought together 519 CSOs (ibid).

As predicted, the national congress of CNDD FDD that took place on the 25th of April 2015 designated Pierre Nkurunziza as its candidate for the June presidential election. Subsequently to the announcement of the candidacy of Pierre Nkurunziza for a third term, civil society organiations grouped in the campaigns 'Halte au troisième mandat' called people to street to protest against this illegal candidacy. Demonstrations broke out in Bujumbura on the 26th of April 2015 and was spread to several parts of the country. It should be noted that before the protest started, the Minister of Interior issued a ban on all kinds of demonstrations on the 24th of April (Nshimirimana & Gatavu 2017: 23) arguing than any demonstrations in this electoral period will be considered as an attempt to undermine the security of the country. The protest movement was considered by the government as an insurgency which authorized the

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[20] Author interview with the chairperson of FORSC in Brussels on 28th April 2019

government agents to use all means to stop it. Following the orders received from the government and the ruling party CNDD FDD, security force in collaboration with *Imbonerakure* used extreme violence towards protesters and didn't shied away to open fire on protestors with reel bullet.[21]

After more than two weeks of demonstration in several neighbourhood in the capital Bujumbura, a group of militaries attempted a coup while the president was in a regional summit that aimed to find a solution to the Burundi crisis (Van Acker 2015). This failed attempt coup resumed the protests movements as the government warned that the demonstrators will be considered as supporters of the coup (Nshimirimana & Gatavu 2017: 25). Following the failed attempt coup, civil society activists that took the lead during the protest movement were targeted by security forces and the secret services. They were victims of harassments, intimidations and even killing. For instance, on 3rd of August, the leading human rights activists Pierre Claver Mbonimpa [22]survived an attempted killing by unidentified persons (Amnesty national report 2015/2016). Many activists reported to have received unknown calls and were victims of surveillance by the secret services.

In August 2015, a report of a commission established by the Attorney General to investigate on the damage of the protest was released. Based on the conclusion of that report, 11 civil society organisations that took the lead in the protest were suspended from operating in Burundi and an arrest warrant was issued against leaders of these organisations.

5.6. Conclusion

This chapter analyses the evolution of civil society from the democratisation process in the early 1990s until the protest movement initiated by a coalition of civil society organisations in April 2015. This chapter shows how the nature and characteristics of civil society are highly connected and shaped by the socio-political context that prevailed in Burundi during that period. The development and emergence of civil society has remarkably influenced the political context in Burundi. The Arusha Agreement for peace and reconciliation signed in 2000 and the 2005 constitution both provided framework and opportunities that enable civil society to carry out their activities without any state interference.

The relationships between civil society depended on the nature of activities carried out by CSOs. The relation was good when CSOs complement the government in certain areas by providing services to the

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[21] Author own experience during the protest movement.
[22] Pierre Claver Mbonimpa is the chairperson of the Association for the protection of Human Rights and detained persons (APRODH). His son-in-law was shot dead on 9 of October and his son, Welly Fleury Nzitonda killed on 6 November after being arrested by the police in Mutakura neighbourhood.

community. However, because of its critical comments on massive human rights violations, corruption and unlawful arrests, the relationship between government and civil society became increasingly conflictual especially after 2010 with the former accusing the latter as opposition in disguise. This resulted to the harassment, intimidations and even murder of some members of civil society organisations. As a response to the pressure exerted to them by the government, they opted to cooperate in synergies of organisations to continue their missions of monitoring the government action to hold it accountable.

6. Burundian NGOS in exile (Rwanda, Uganda and Belgium)

In November 2015, eleven leading human rights organisations were suspended by the interior minister of Burundi.[23] The decision was based on a report produced by a commission established by the attorney general to investigate the damage caused by the April 2015 protest movement described by the commission as an 'insurgent movement'. After warrants for the leaders of those organisations was issued and their finances were frozen, the staff of those organizations were victims to intimidations and death threats [24]. For security reasons, they left the country one by one and sought exile in neighbouring countries specifically   Rwanda and Uganda and even in other continents, mostly Belgium[25]. Forced to leave the country, Burundi human rights activists strived to rebuild their organizations and to continue their vital work of reporting and exposing ongoing human rights violations committed in Burundi.

This chapter analyses how Burundian human rights activists have managed to reinvent themselves and rebuild their organisations in exile. The chapter is based on fieldwork conducted between March and May 2019 in Uganda, Rwanda and Belgium with eight human rights organisations operating in the aforementioned countries. For additional information, I consulted the websites of the organisations, and secondary sources including reports published in the organisations' newspapers, articles and annual reports of international human rights organisations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch amongst others. The discussion in this chapter is limited to three organisations that have seemingly been successfully in their attempts to adapt to these new circumstances and have managed to obtain access to funding to continue operating from abroad. These organisations are: the ITEKA league, the Burundian Association for the Protection of Human Rights and Prisoners (APRODH), and the Forum for Self-Consciousness and Development (FOCODE). The operational capacities of the others organisations have been discussed in the previous chapter that analysed how Burundi CSOs operated before their suspension by the regime in 2015.

The initial finding of my research concludes that while in exile, these organisations had to adapt to the new context and political environment of the countries they were exiled to. Prior to their suspension, these organisations were externally funded and depended on external aid to carry out their activities and programmes. The relationship between these organisations and the donors changed once they were suspended by the Burundian government and fled the country, as some of their economic

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[23] https://reliefweb.int/report/burundi/burundi-suspension-provisoire-des-activit-s-de-10-ong-de-d-fense-des-droits-humains
[24] Human Rights Watch annual report 2016
[25] Belgium is former coloniser of Burundi from 1916 until 1962, year of Burundi independence

partners stopped supporting them on the ground of the lack of a legal personality. In order to reinvent and reorganise themselves, these organisations had to look for new opportunities to remain operational in a setting where their operational capacities are limited by the restraints on access to financial resources from donors and economic partners.

To obtain access to such support, these organizations had to develop new strategies and create meaning (frames alignment) to guide action. Moreover, the organisations focus on issues that might attract the attention of donors and international actors, such as violations of basic human rights, enforced disappearances, unlawful arrests, torture, human trafficking, hate speech and genocidal rhetoric. The most successful organisations managed to get financial resources from donors and economic partners that allowed them to continue documenting and reporting cases of human rights abuses committed in Burundi. Those reports are used in the international arena to persuade and put pressure on powerful actors to take actions in Burundi to address the ongoing human rights violations.

This chapter is divided into two main sections: The first section discusses the profile of the more successful Burundian human rights organisations. It analyses the way they were organised in Burundi prior to their suspension, examining their goals, their missions, the activities and projects they carried out. Furthermore, it inspects how they continue to document and expose human rights violations while in exile. In doing so, this thesis pays special attention to their operational capacities and the activities they are or are not able to do. The second section explores the current modus operandi of three organisations in exile. Through the analytical concepts of framing, opportunities and mobilising structures this chapter will inquire how Burundian human rights activists in exile have managed to adapt their organisations to operate from abroad.

6.1. Profile of the most successful NGOs in exile

6.1.1. Burundi Association for the Protection of Human Rights and Prisoners (Association Burundaise pour la protection des Droits Humains et des Détenus- APRODH)

APRODH was founded in 2001 to protect human rights, particularly those of detained persons, in Burundi. The organisation sought to assess the status of human rights and, in particular, the rights of persons deprived of freedom (detainees and prisoners). Amongst their activities, APRODH opposed torture and all kinds of violence and abuse, advocated for victims of human rights violations, assisted vulnerable people in accessing fair justice, and disseminated information on national and international human rights issues with the government institutions. The organisation was created in response to

overcrowding in prisons, where most prisoners were held because of their (alleged) participation in the political violence that followed the assassination of the first elected president in 1993. When first created, APRODH was criticised by the government and the ruling party for defending those they labelled "criminals and 'terrorists'. Indeed, APRODH provided detained persons with legal and medical assistance and continued to advocate for the improvement of prison conditions and the protection of detainees and prisoners' human rights.

APRODH's main activities, when operating in Burundi, included the follow: visits to the prisons (Bujumbura and Gitega) to monitor the conditions of prisoners and detainees; counselling sessions with prisoners and detainees; production of advocacy reports for government organs dealing with the issues/cases; providing legal and medical assistance to prisoners and detainees; and ensuring the transportation of prisoners.

6.1.1.1.   Structures of APRODH

APRODH was established in all provinces of the country with a focal point that was responsible for following up on the activities of the organisation. In each province, there was a network of volunteers that provided legal assistance to prisoners and detainees; and observers that monitored and investigated cases of human rights violations and reported them back to the focal point.

At the national level, the organisation was composed of the general assembly and the executive committee which included the president, the vice president, the executive secretary and a paid staff member recruited on the basis of their skills and competencies that were responsible for the projects implemented by the organsation. APRODH depended highly on external funds to be able to undertake various different projects and activities. As such, the funds served as an obstacle to the organisation as they were obliged to follow the priorities and exigences of the donors, which were sometimes in contradiction to the strategic plan of the organisation.

At the local level, APRODH enjoyed increased credibility stemming from the local population that benefited from the activities implemented by the organisation. This credibility enabled APRODH to gather information on human rights violations directly from the local population that witnessed violations, as well as family members of the victims of those violations.

To better guarantee the implementation of their activities, APRODH would occasionally collaborate with the local administration and judicial police in situation that called for legal and medical assistance to

detainees and prisoners. The organisation also provided some facilities in prison such as food and furniture.

6.1.1.2.   *Main pressures faced by staff members of APRODH*

Many staff members and observers of APRODH were victims of intimidations and harassments after investigated serious human rights violations that involved high ranking individual. For example, in 2006, after APRODH raised awareness about the extrajudicial killing of FNL[26] supporters in Muyinga in which a high-ranking police officer and an administration agent were involved, APRODH headquarter in Muyinga as well as staff members that were investigating the case, were faced with intimidations intended to discourage them from following the case. Similarly, in 2011, when the president of APRODH, Pierre Claver Mbonimpa publicly denounced horrific government plan ("Safisha[27]") to assassinate supporters and members of the FNL, he became a victim of harassment and intimidations by members of the security force and secret services. Nevertheless, APRODH continued to report about the killings and expose the government in those killing. This led to a decrease in extrajudicial killing as the government received many criticisms from international community and financial donors supporting the government. Moreover, the advocacy campaigns conducted by APRODH in 2012 about the overcrowding in prisons and the deplorable living conditions of prisoners led to the release of over 7000 detainees who had been incarcerated for minor crimes.

In 2014, Pierre Claver Mbonimpa publicly revealed that the youth branch of the CNDD FDD, *Imbonerakure*, were undergoing military training consequently resulting in his arrest and imprisonment.Prior to his arrest, however, he received death threats ordering him to stop investigating the case. During an interview, Mbonimpa claimed that 'the president of the country himself, ordered my imprisonment. And before I got arrested, my room was prepared in the prison'.

Furthermore, when president Nkurunziza and his ruling party attempted to unilaterally modify the constitution, APRODH joined with other organizations 'Halte au 3e mandat' campaign that aimed to prevent the president from running for a third term as many considered it to be in violation of the Arusha Agreement and the constitution. Moreover, when Nkurunziza's candidacy was officialised, APRODH took the lead in the protest movement that broke out in Bujumbura and other parts of the country on 26 April 2015. In August 2015, APRODH's president survived an assassination attempt and went to

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[26] FNL Palipehutu (Party for the Liberation of Hutu People) was the last rebel group to lay down its arms and sign a ceasefire agreement with the government in 2009. The movement was created in the early 1980s and stood for the rights of the Hutu community which constitutes around 85 percent of the total country's population
[27] For more information about the plan Safisha visit the link below https://www.refworld.org/docid/530377c84.html

Belgium for medical treatment. During the same period, the Minister of Interior made the decision to suspend the activities of APRODH and other organizations that led he protest movement. APRODH staff members that were still in Burundi were victims of intimidations and harassment by members of the security forces. For their own protection, they fled the country one by one and sought exile in neighbouring countries mainly Rwanda and Uganda.

6.1.1.3.   *Operational capacities of APRODH in exile*

While in exile, staff members of APRODH sought to reorganise to be able to continue documenting and exposing human rights violations committed in Burundi. Prior to the suspension of their activities in Burundi, APRODH provided counselling, legal and medical assistance to prisoners and detainees. APRODH also engaged directly with government institutions on issues relating to human rights. However, due to the lack of funds and the inability to provide services to the victims of human rights violations and detainees, their core activities have changed. Their focus while in exile has shifted into monitoring and reporting of human rights violations committed in Burundi and advocating to international actors using reports produced monthly human rights regarding human rights situation in Burundi.

The main challenge in monitoring human rights abuse is verifying the validity of the information and protecting the observers that are still operating in Burundi. Some monitors and observers had stopped working for APRODH out of fear of being intimidated or harassed like the staff had been. This situation makes it difficult for APRODH to collect accurate information relating to human rights violations in the entire territory as some areas no longer have active observers. To cover this gap, information related to human violations is provided by normal citizens that witnessed human rights violations in their respective localities and wish to expose those violations to APRODH. As an interview with the chairperson of APRODH, I was told that: "The contribution we made in the recent past by documenting and exposing cases of human rights violations led to the reduction of those violations as we denounced the authors and strived to hold them to account. For that, we still enjoy the credibility of local population. Even though we operate from exile, they know that our contribution can help in the reduction of human rights violations". [28]

While still operating within the Burundi, APRODH maintained good alliance with other local organizations that similarly promoted human rights, such as ITEKA league and ACAT-Burundi (specialised on issues relating to torture and ill-treatment). This network was used to share information on

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[28] Author interview with the chairperson of APRODH in Brussels.

human rights violations as well to advocate and provide information and recommendations to the government and other actors at local and national level imploring them to address the human rights violations in the country and hold those responsible accountable. Forced into exile, APRODH was required to develop new partnerships with regional organizations, such as the East and Horn of African human rights defenders and the Burundian Coalition of Human Rights Defenders. Those networks provide APRODH the possibility of sharing information and advocate to influential actors, including international community, and donors that are able to influence or pressure the Burundi government to address the human rights violations.

6.1.2. ITEKA League

ITEKA was the first human rights organisation to be officially approved by the government of Burundi by Order No. 550/029, on 6February 1991[29]. It was an initiative of a group of executives from various socio-professional categories including university professors, lawyers, religious and Abashingantahe [30]. The organisation was created at the context of political turmoil, ethnic tensions and restricted freedom of expression and political space. It was in response to this lack of political pluralism and the desire for rule of law, governance, and respect towards human rights that the organisation was created. It should be noted that the organisation was created before the adoption of the law regulating the multi-party system in Burundi. As a result, when the organisation requested official recognition in 1990, it was seen by the government ideologically in line with the opposition to the single ruling party, UPRONA. Therefore, it took a year before the organisation was officially recognised.

6.1.2.1. Vision, Missions and Objectives of ITEKA

The vision of the ITEKA League is to contribute to building a united and democratic country where everyone enjoys peace and security; a country based on the rule of law, social justice, prosperity and common interest; and a society where every citizen enjoys their most fundamental rights.Its main mission is 'the defense, promotion of human rights and the prevention of its violations'.[31]The main objectives of the organisation are the following: The defense of human rights against its violations particularly his freedom and fundamental rights; to prevent the violation of human rights and freedoms; to develop the capacity of every citizen to defend and promote their rights regardless of their sex or regional, ethnic,

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[29] See Palmans 2006, "Evolution de la Société civile au Burundi''
[30] Abashingantahe is a traditional council of elders that emerged in the precolonial period. It was a critical pillar of the socio-political system that governed pre-colonial Burundi. See Rowan Popplewell (2019) Civil society, hybridity and peacebuilding in Burundi: questioning authenticity
[31] Author interview with the chairperson of ITEKA League in Kampala, Uganda

political or religious affiliations; to ensure everyone is able to fully participate in an active and responsible way to the edification of the rule of law; to update the national and international community on the human rights situation in Burundi.Before the suspension of the activities of the organisation by Burundian regime, the main programs of ITEKA were threefold: 1) the protection of human rights; 2) the promotion of good governance and 3) the strengthening of democratic culture.

Regarding the protection of human rights, ITEKA had a strong network of around 3000 members across the country that investigated and collected information related to human rights violations. It was based on the information collected by observers that ITEKA was able to produce weekly and monthly reports to inform the national and international public opinion on the human rights situation in Burundi. Those reports were also used to put pressure on the state institutions to hold authors of those violations accountable. In pursuit of promoting good governance and the rule of law, ITEKA established local committees of participative governance which are apolitical frameworks that allow the local communities to engage in a constructive dialogue with elected locals on issues that affect their daily lives. Those committees were highly appreciated by local authorities as it provided them opportunity to be closer to the communities and increased their perceived legitimacy towards them. In regard to strengthening democratic culture, ITEKA was at the origin of the creation of a coalition of civil society organizations that monitored the 2005 and 2010 general elections (COSOME). The monitoring of the election by civil society organizations contributed to the transparency and legitimacy of the election results.

6.1.2.2. *Structure of ITEKA and its main activities before suspension*

The ITEKA league was one of the most well-structured civil society organisation in Burundi prior to its suspension with representatives at all levels: national, provincial and local.At the national level, the main organs of the organisation were: the general assembly (which is the supreme body of the organisation), the executive committee (composed of the president, vice president, the general secretary and the treasurer) and different commissions in accordance with various subjects' areas.At the provincial level, the organisation was composed of federations which were established in 2010 in line with the decentralisation process of the organisation. The federation serves as the representative of the organisation at the provincial level with the main task of coordinating activities of the organisation in each province. At the local (municipal) level, a network ITEKA members operated over different sessions.

When the political crisis broke out in April 2015 in the aftermath of Nkurunziza candidacy for a third term, ITEKA activities focused increasingly on monitoring of human rights violations related to the

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protest movements and strongly denounced the use of excessive force towards the protestors. These reports were shared with government institutions as well as to international actors with the hopes that they would address those violations.

However, it should be emphasised that ITEKA was not part of the campaign 'Halte au 3è mandat' launched by a collective of civil society organizations to protest Nkurunziza third term. The president of ITEKA justified the organisation absence in this campaign by the fact that the organisation always sought to develop a less confrontational approach with the government, striving to remain as neutral as possible. As a result, the organisation was less a target of governmental pressure in comparison to other claim-making organizations working on issues relating to human rights and governance in Burundi. Moreover, the ITEKA league was not included in the eleven civil society organisation that were suspended by the minister of interior following the April protest movement.

6.1.2.3. *Pressure on staff members of ITEKA*

After the publication of a semi-annual report, which described the human rights violations committed by the security forces and secret services during the protest movement and the period that followed the attempted coup (mainly towards members of opposition and human rights activists), the president of the ITEKA league was victim to intimidation and surveillance at both his residence and office. For security reasons, he fled the country and sought exile in Uganda. In addition, in December 2015, the Burundian attorney general instructed the bank account of ITEKA to be frozen. [32] The move was followed by intimidations and deaths threats sent to ITEKA staff members that were still based in Burundi. For instance, the treasurer of ITEKA, Marie Claudette Kwizera was abducted in Bujumbura on 10 December and forced into a vehicle belonging to Burundian secret services. A member of the secret service asked members of her family for a ransom of €2050 in exchange for her release. But despite the payment of the ransom, no information about Kwizera's location was provided[33]. Following the disappearance of the treasurer, the remaining staff members fled the country and joined the president of ITEKA in Uganda.

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[32] https://www.fidh.org/fr/themes/defenseurs-des-droits-humains/burundi-gel-des-comptes-de-trois-nouvelles-organizations-de-defense
[33] Enforced disappearance of Marie Claudette kwizera, treasurer of ITEKA League in December 2015https://www.fidh.org/en/region/Africa/burundi/burundi-no-news-from-marie-claudette-kwizera-since-her-kidnapping-the?fbclid=IwAR1Czcm4CLSlhLK-mgyeO20ikNqe1p-BHjRDmrhfCEJi3QqA2A0lQLExkqg

6.1.2.4. *Operational capacities of ITEKA in exile*

In Kampala, the exiled staff members established a small team to continue producing monthly reports related to the human rights violations committed in Burundi, relying on a network of grassroots observers working clandestinely on the ground. Thanks to its established reputation and long experience in the realm of human rights activism, the organisation managed to reorganise while in exile and developed partnerships with new donors to financially support their activities. Since March 2016, a weekly newspaper entitled 'ITEKA N'IJAMBO' has been published by the organisation based on information collected by observers operating on the ground. In addition, ITEKA produces monthly, quarterly, semi-annual and annual reports that are aimed at informing national and international audiences about the human rights situations that prevail in Burundi.

In January 2017, ITEKA published a joint report with the international federation for human rights (FIDH) [34] entitled 'Repression and Genocidal Dynamics in Burundi' denouncing the large-scale human rights violations committed in the country since the beginning of the crisis that erupted in April 2015, Consequently, ITEKA was banned from the list of civil society organizations allowed to operate in Burundi. Minister of Interior Pascal Barandagiye justified the ban by arguing that ITEKA had tarnished the image of the country and sought to divide the Burundian society[35]. Despite the ban, the organisation continued documenting, and reporting cases of human rights violations. Those reports are still used to conduct advocacy work aimed at regional and international actors to raise awareness about the human right situation in Burundi. In addition, the committee established by the UN to investigate the human rights violations committed in Burundi since the beginning of the political backlash sought to collaborate with ITEKA and continues to use their reports. It should be similarly noted that ITEKA is a member of the Inter-African Union and People's Rights and is an affiliate member of the FIDH). Moreover, the organisation has an observer status to the African Commission on Human and People's Rights. Those transnational mechanisms are used by ITEKA to conduct advocacy work and enable access to international actors to make their claims resonate and influence international parties to take action.

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[34] FIDH is an international human rights NGO federation of 184 organizations from 112 countries. Since 1922, FIDH has been defended all civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights as set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

[35] Ban of Iteka League: another blow to Burundian civil society https://www.fidh.org/en/region/Africa/burundi/ban-of-the-iteka-league-another-blow-to-burundian-civil-society

6.1.3. FOCODE (Forum for self-consciousness and development)

FOCODE is a non-profit organisation created in 2002 by a group of students at the University of Burundi. At the time of creation, there were intense ethnic tensions and divisions among students at the university. The civil war that had broken out in 1993 had divided the student community. Specifically, the massacre of students in the university building in 1996 served to increase distrust and suspicion between students of various ethnicities. FOCODE was created with the objective to reconcile and unify the various ethnic components within the student community at the University of Burundi. The vision of FOCODE is a reconciled, just and prosperous society that respects democratic values and human rights. Regarding its missions, FOCODE aims to engage leaders at different levels with local community through advocacy, trainings, awareness-raising and mobilization of ideas of peace, democracy, good governance, inclusive social justice, and the development and well-being of citizens. The main strategic action area of the organisation are peace and reconciliation, democracy and good governance, development and social justice, rule of law and human rights and building the internal capacity of its members.

6.1.3.1. *Structure and main activities of FOCODE*

Prior their suspension in 2016, FOCODE counted around 2000 members. At the national level, the highest decision-making body of the organisation was the general assembly. There was also a monitoring committee whose main tasks was to regulate the organisation's actions as well as the activities they carried out. The executive committee implemented the activities and actions of the organisation and was composed of a president, his vice, the general secretary and his vice. It should be noted that the president and the vice and the general secretary and his voce were required to be from different ethnic group (if the president is Hutu, the vice president has to be a Tutsi). Since its creation in 2002, FOCODE organised numerous training sessions with themes relating to governance, human rights, and electoral education programmes. The intended target group of the programmes and activities were the youth. FOCODE sought to raise awareness in the country's youth to be more involved on issues that affected their lives. It was in this regard that the organisation sought to collaborate with the University and various secondary schools to reach larger audience. In 2004, the organisation created its own secondary school and active FOCODE members held role as teachers. The school closed its office in 2015 following the decision of the attorney general to freeze all FOCODE accounts and the temporary suspension by the minister of interior.

6.1.3.2.   *Pressure on staff members of FOCODE*

Following the assassination of the vice president of an anti'-corruption organisation (OLUCOME), Ernest Manirumva in April 2009, FOCODE took the lead in the campaign movement called 'Justice for Manirumva', which demanded the government shed the light on information surrounding his murder and to hold those responsible accountable for their actions. As a result of his active role during this campaign, the president of FOCODE found himself a victim of intimidation and received many death threats sent from secret services agents. Worried for his safety, he ended up and he ended up by fleeing the country.

Furthermore, following the lobbying activity in Europe in early 2014 by FOCODE's president where he denounced the restriction of the public space in Burundi as well as the harassment and repression of members of the opposing political party by secret services and the youth branch of the ruling party (Imbonerakure), his organization and the staff members were targeted by the government and security forces.[36] Additionally, FOCODE was one of the leading organizations in the campaigns 'Halte au 3è mandat' campaign. Following the attempted coup in May 2015, the leader of FOCODE and some members of the executive committee faced intimidations and death threats. The most targeted person, however, was the president of FOCODE, whom the regime considered to be the mastermind of the protest movement.

The organization was temporarily suspended in October 2015 along with then other organisations. FOCODE was accused of collaborating with the military in the attempted coup and an arrest warrant was issued for the president of FOCODE. Moreover, the attorney general froze not only FOCODE's bank account but also that of its president. The suspension was followed by intimidations and repressions of the staff, as was the case with many organisations, many of whom fled the country and sought exile in the neighbouring countries of Rwanda and Uganda.

6.1.3.3.   *Operational capacities of FOCODE in exile*

Forced into exile, the staff members strived to reorganise with the help of their economic partners. However, during my interviews with the staff members of FOCODE, they preferred not to talk about their economic partners while in exile. In February 2016, the organization launched the project 'Ndondeza' (help me to find) that aimed to investigate cases of enforced disappearances committed in Burundi since the April 2015 protest movement. The repression targeted members of the opposing political parties, civil

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[36] Burundi: Serious threats to FOCODE and its president.https://www.protectioninternational.org/en/node/251

society activists, journalist and former Burundian armed forces. Through this project, FOCODE has investigated around 62 cases of enforced disappearances in which members of the security forces, the secret service and *Imbonerakure* are reportedly the perpetrators[37]. FOCODE gathered information relating to cases of enforced disappearances from witnesses, family of the victims and from members of security forces and *Imbonerakure.*

In attempt to persuade international actors to take action, FOCODE used the finding of its investigations to attract their attention. In an interview with a staff member of FOCODE, they argued that 'the aims of the advocacy is to mobilize the international community to take action and redress the ongoing human rights violations committed in Burundi and hold the authors to account' Because of their campaign on enforced disappearances, the organization was permanently banned from operating in Burundi in October 2016. Minister of interior, Pascal Barandangiye justified the suspension of FOCODE and other human rights organizations that took the lead in the April protest that they deviated from the goals sets in their statutes and are 'rather busy tarnishing the image of the country and stirring up hatred and division among the population'[38]

6.2.   Discussion and Analysis of the Modus Operandi of Burundi CSOs in exile

This section will inquire into the priorities and operating capacities of APRODH, ITEKA and FOCODE while in exile and examine the ways in which the exiled human rights activists have rebuilt their organisations and regained the capacity to investigate and expose human rights violations committed in Burundi. After giving a brief overview of the political space in which these organisations operated prior to April 2015, this section will analyze how these organisations adapted their core activities and the mobilization of their resources following their suspension through the use of three concepts derived from the literature on social movements: political opportunities, mobilizing structures and framing.

6.2.1. The exile of the leading human rights organizations

The previous section of this thesis analyzed the restriction on the political space of human rights organisations that assumed the role of watch dog and sought to hold the government and state officials accountable on issues of democracy, human rights and rule of law. Due to the sensitivity of these issues,

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[37] FOCODE published the findings of its investigations on cases of enforced disappearances on this website: www.ndondeza.org

[38] See the blog published by Human Rights Watch "Fearing dissident, Burundi's government clamps Down" (Carina Tertsakian, a Senior Researcher for Africa division)
https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/10/26/fearing-dissent-burundis-government-clamps-down

their relationship with the government grew from complementary to contentious. The government came to view some civil society organisations confronting these sensitive topics as opposition in disguise, challenging the government authority and interests. The government gradually limited the political space of these organisations through a combination of restrictive laws and intimidation, harassment and even the murder of staff members of these organisations. The government justified the restriction of the activities of human rights organisations through stigmatisation (Popplewell 2018:402), labelling them, for example as the 'enemy of the country, working on behalf of foreign actors seeking to destabilise the state's institutions'[39].

The political space in Burundi for human rights NGOs continued to decrease until eleven of them were suspended at the end of 2015 for having played a leading role in the protests – or 'insurrection' – of April 2015. The decision of the minister of the interior to suspend these organisations took effect immediately and the bank accounts of these organisations were frozen without notice. The intimidation of and death threats against the staff of the organisations intensified. Staff member, one by one, decided to leave the country, resettled in Rwanda, Uganda and Europe (mainly Belgium) where many were granted refugee status.

6.2.2. Political opportunities

Such considerable changes in the context in which a social movement is embedded influence its ability to mobilise for contentious collective action. Meyer (2004:126) points out that 'activists prospects for advancing claims, mobilizing supporters, and cultivating influence are context-dependent'. Having resettled abroad, staff members of these organisations were obliged to navigate into the new context and environment of the country in which they were embedded. Being unable to send their staff into Burundian territory due to safety concerns, and lacking formal incorporation as an organisation in any state's laws, the organizations' opportunities to do so were significantly narrower than they were when the organisations were still operating in Burundi. This section will now examine in turn how the opportunity structures in Rwanda, Uganda and Belgium affected the organisation's capacity to advance claims, mobilize supporters, and cultivate influence through their respective organizations, and what adaptations they had to make to their organisation and strategies.

Most of the staff of the suspended human rights organisations resettled in Rwanda due to the geographical and cultural proximity of Rwanda: Rwanda and Burundi share a border as well as a history,

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[39] Author interview with Human rights activists in Belgium, 27of April 2019.

culture and language. While Rwanda granted the staff members of the exiled organisations a refugee protection and allowed them to reside in Rwanda, they are not legally allowed to proceed with their organisation's activities. Attempts to incorporate their organisations formally in the domestic laws of Rwanda failed, as Rwanda refused to grant their organisations legal personality for 'diplomatic reasons'. Since the beginning of the backlash in April 2015, Burundian officials repeatedly accused Rwanda for giving shelter to persons Burundi is seeking to arrest for their attempts to destabilize Burundian political institutions. Formally incorporating the suspended organisations in the Rwandan legal order would be viewed by Burundi as confirmation of their allegations and as a formal stance against the current government of Burundi.

In Uganda, Burundian human rights activists faced similar constraints. The political opportunities of the suspended organisations were equally limited in Uganda as he organizations have not obtained legal personality under Uganda law. Contrary to Rwanda, however, Uganda allows civil society to flourish and play a watch dog role vis a vis state actor. This provided the exiled Burundian Human Rights organisations more space to continue their organisations activities in Uganda and they found new opportunities to operate. The network DefenderDefenders" [40]"provided them resources and assist them in continuing their activities abroad. Moreover, the coalition of Burundian Human rights defenders (CBDDH) [41] which is based in Uganda allowed the exiled human rights activists to maintain connected and share information regarding the human rights situation in Burundi. For instance, the oldest human rights organisation in Burundi – league ITEKA – relocated in Kampala with its complete staff and continued to produce reports on the human rights violations committed in Burundi. One human rights activist in Kampala explained that 'although they have issues regarding the lack of legal personality, the regime is more tolerant towards our activities and is aware that they continue producing and publishing reports regarding human situation in Burundi from here".[42]

Staff members who relocated to Belgium had more leverage and opportunities to mobilize than those who resettled in Rwanda and Uganda. Brussels is a strategic place for advocacy as powerful actors are located there. Leaders of the larger organisations that were suspended were mostly based in Belgium, which allows them to continue lobbying international human rights institutions based in Europe. For instance, the chairperson of APRODH and some members of the APRODH's executive committees are

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[40] DefendDefenders (the East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project) seeks to strengthen the work of HRDs throughout the sub-region by reducing their vulnerability to the risk of persecution by enhancing their capacity to effectively defend human rights
[41] CBDDH is a platform established to promote synergy, cooperation, collaboration, and sharing of best practices among HRDs at the national and international levels, to overcome the challenges encountered.
[42] Author interview with a human rights activist in Kampala on 26th of March 2009

based in Belgium, enabling them to reorganise and continue carrying out their activities, which mostly focused on monitoring human rights violations and advocacy. Similarly, the chairperson of FOCODE and the executive secretary are likewise based in Belgium. Thanks to the credibility they accumulated towards international actors before they fled Burundi, the leaders of these organisations have been offered opportunities to participate in several sessions of the UN Human rights council hold in Geneva where the human rights situation in Burundi was on the agenda. Participation in those sessions has enabled them to lobby international actors and pressure them to take action, while simultaneously increasing their visibility, thereby strengthening their respective organizations.

6.2.3. Mobilizing structures

The key strategies developed by the exiled human rights activists to rebuild their organisations were the mobilizing of resources and the development of strategic alliances with transnational actors. Prior to their suspension by the regime in Burundi, these organisations were externally funded and depended on financial support from donors to carry out their activities. The freezing of their assets and the loss of legal personality in Burundi complicated the process of receiving funds from donors. Some of their economic partners stopped supporting them on the ground that they were no longer held legal status in the countries they were exiled in. But those organisations that were well established prior to their suspension managed to secure funding from donors allowing them to continue carrying out activities.

Moreover, the channels between these human rights organisations and the government were blocked after the staff members left the country. In order to continue exerting pressure on the government from the outside, these organisations had to adapt their lobbying strategies. Instead of directly lobbying the government, they fostered alliances with transnational human rights organisations and intergovernmental institutions in order to put pressure on the government indirectly. Their ability to generate these alliances was facilitated by the fact that the staff members could now publicly speak about human rights violations committed by state actors without fearing reprisals. These transnational networks around which their lobbying now centered, provided the human rights organisations with access to international arenas and increased opportunities to make their claims heard. Thus, these transnational networks, as networks of 'political entrepreneurs that enable domestic organisations to attain greater visibility and gain access to wider publics' (Keck and Sikkink 1999: 22) allowed the organisations to gain legitimacy as well as visibility. The boomerang pattern put forward by Keck and Sikkink, however, was of limited use regarding the case of Burundian human rights organisations. The boomerang model centers around domestic organisations that operate within their country and which use transnational networks to

exert (additional) pressure on their governments. In the case of Burundi however, the human rights organizations themselves now operate transnationally.

The main obstacle presented by the newly transnational context in which the organisations operate was the limitation of their access to information and their ability to verify the accuracy of their sources. As strategy developed to overcome this limitation is that they adapted the structure of their organisations: staff members of these organisations managed to maintain contacts with observers based still within Burundi. These observers work clandestinely to monitor human rights violations and report those violations to the staff of the human rights organisations based in Rwanda, Uganda and Belgium. As some areas are too dangerous to collect information in this manner due to the harassment and intimidation faced by observers, the internet is used as a secondary channel to gather information. A third source of information are the reports of victims, victim's family members and witnesses of human rights violations.

6.2.4. Framing

As previously discussed, access to resources and funding from donors are a significant factor in the ability of exiled human rights activists to re-establish their organisations and continue reporting human rights violations from abroad. In order to continue to receive funds, these organisations have changed their mandates and core activities, and had put emphasis on new issues that might convince donors to provide them with financial resources. The core activities of the organisations in exile mostly focus on monitoring for human rights violations and advocating towards international actors. The organisations that managed to secure funding from donors were able to combine framing issues relating to the ongoing human rights violations committed in Burundi in a new way that might attract powerful groups and persuade them to take action. As Keck and Sikkink (1999:95) point out, the domestic organisations framed old problems in new ways, creating new issues that were able to provide convincing and strong arguments that would garner the attention of powerful groups. As a result, many of the issues exiled organisations focused on were of sensitive nature, such as enforced disappearances, torture, genocidal rhetoric directed at Tutsi and moderate, dissident's Hutu. By focusing on such sensitive issues, the organisations hoped to persuade powerful actors of the gravity of human rights situation in Burundi in order to incite them to take action. The exiled organisations were successfully able to pressure the international criminal court to open investigations regarding the human rights violations committed in Burundi since April 2015. [43] In addition, the Burundi has been on the agenda of the topic discussed at many sessions of the Human Rights Council and UN Security Council. Leaders of the exiled organisations have been invited to speak during

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[43] ICC authorization to open investigation on Burundi situation https://www.icc-cpi.int/Pages/item.aspx?name=pr1342

these sessions providing them the opportunity to attract a larger audience and increase the visibility of their plight. Furthermore, in 2016, the Human rights council set up a commission of inquiry to investigate the violations committed since April 2015.[44] The particular framing of issues relating to human rights violations is an important tool used by exiled organisations to put increase pressure on Burundi government through international actors. This has enabled the organisations to attain a large audience and has strengthen the capacity of the organisations survival, as their action became more visible, both at the local and international level.

6.3.   Conclusion

This chapter illustrated how Burundian human rights activists were able to continue operating from abroad after the Burundian government suspended their respective organisations and they were forced to leave the country, seeking exile in neighbouring countries where they strived to reinvent and rebuild. While in exile, these organisations were looking for new opportunities which were very limited due to the lack of a legal personality. However, some organisations have more successfully managed to maintain their operational capacities and the ability to create new opportunities and attract donors. This chapter examined the profile of those more successful organisations that made progress and analysed what made them more successful than other exiled, Burundian human rights organisations.

Although their operational capacities were severely limited due to the lack of a legal personality, the most successful organisations managed to reinvent themselves and attract economic partners that enabled them to continue investigating and exposing human rights violations in Burundi. While in exile, the core activities of these organisations focused both on the monitoring of the ongoing human rights violations and advocacy intended to mobilize the international community to address the human rights situation in Burundi. To bring their advocacy work fruitful, these organisations made use of the expertise of transnational networks. These networks provided them with access to international arenas offering the potential that their claims would be heard. This has enabled them to increase their legitimacy and visibility. However, these organisations have had difficulties in developing new frames through which to attract such new economic partners. While calling out severe human rights violations such as enforced disappearances, torture and the risk of genocide of Tutsi's and moderate Hutu is instrumental in framing the situation for an international audience, publicly denouncing these violations will inevitably be viewed as opposition to the ruling party.

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[44] Commission of inquiry on Burundi
https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/CoIBurundi/Pages/CoIBurundi.aspx
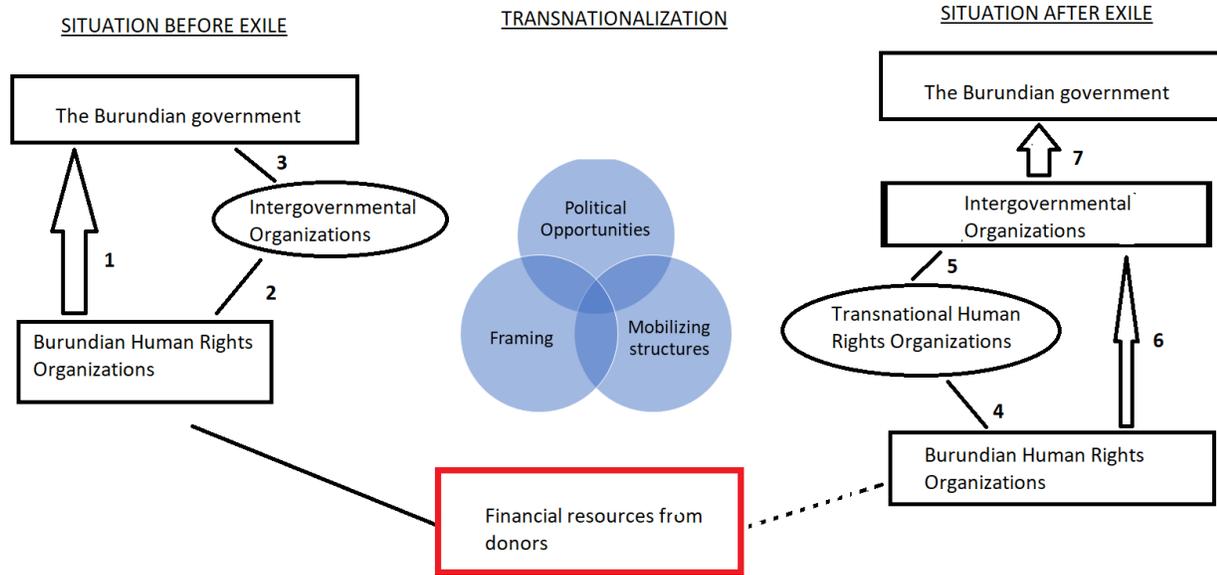
7. General conclusion

This thesis sought to examine how Burundian human rights activists that were pressured to leave Burundi after the suspension of their organisations in the aftermath of April 2015 protest movement managed to re-establish their organisations as well as rebuild the capacity to document and make public the ongoing human committed in Burundi. It did so through concepts derived from social movement theory: political opportunities, mobilizing structures and framing processes. As the framework of social movement theory seeks to explain how social movements mobilize and operate within a country, it is not fully suited to analyze the particularities of mobilization processes of human rights organisations in exile. For the purpose of accounting of the newly transnational context in which these organisations operate, this thesis drew on the literature on transnational networks. Through semi-structured interviews guided by a questionnaire informed by these two bodies of literature, I sought to explore how Burundian civil society shifted their strategy to the drastic change in political opportunities after the events of 2015 forced them to operate from abroad. I was particularly interested in examining how, absent the possibility to directly pressure the Burundian government, these organisations managed to mobilize international and transnational human rights groups and institutions, and how they adapted their framing to this new strategy.

In order to describe how these organizations adapted their framing and mobilizing structures in response to the shift in political opportunities that took place in 2015, I inquired into their relations with other actors, the challenges they faced, and the strategies developed to overcome those challenges before and after the key events in April 2015. In order to make sense of the changes in these organisations strategies, it is important to know what opportunities and restrictions informed their strategies previous to their exile. This thesis found that in 2005, when the first democratic elections after the civil war where held, the role of civil society shifted from delivering public services in the absence of fully functional state institutions to holding the newly elected government accountable with respect to contentious topics such as human rights, democracy, governance, corruption, and the rule of law. In response to what the government perceived as growing intrusion of civil society in spheres of operation that should be exclusive to the state, the government started to curtail civil liberties, causing the political space for civil society organisations to shrink.

The polarization of the Burundian political landscape and the de-facto single party rule of the CNDD FDD that followed the opposition's boycott of the 2010 elections exacerbated this dynamic. In the absence of an opposition party in parliament, civil society organisations placed even more emphasis on their task of keeping centralized power accountable, causing the government in turn to label them as one

with the defeated political opposition and as a threat to the elected government. The previous trend of curtailing civil liberties through intimidation, abuse of police power and restrictive laws intensified as a result. The widespread protests in response to Nkurunziza's candidacy for a third presidential term – in violation of the Arusha agreement – and the role civil society organisations had played in them enabled the government to frame eleven human rights organisations as leaders of an "insurgency". The government subsequently employed this narrative of civil society organisations as threats to legitimate power in order to move from restriction of these organisations to suspension. The bank accounts of the organisations were frozen and its staff was intimidated through death threats and displays of abuse of police power. Staff members started to leave Burundi due to safety concerns and resettled in Rwanda, Uganda and Belgium.

The second part of this research analysed how the exiled human rights activists navigated the new context and adapted to it in order to rebuild their organisations. This research found that three organisations - APRODH, ITEKA League and FOCODE - were more effective than others in rebuilding their organisations in exile. The key factors in re-establishing their organisations in exile was the capacity to maintain connections with their donors and their ability to build strategic alliances with international actors. The relations with economic partners were of increased importance in exile as the organisations were not formally incorporated as an organisation in the countries in which they now operated. The strategic alliances with international actors were of importance as it was now through mobilization of international organisations and institutions that these organizations could exert pressure on the Burundian government. A challenge that operating from abroad presented was that these organisations had to adapt from directly lobbying the government to building alliances with international human rights institutions and transnational human rights organisations. The organisations that succeeded in adapting from lobbying Burundian actors to building alliances with international actors benefitted from increased legitimacy, visibility and access to the international arena. An opportunity that arose from operating from abroad was that the staff or the organisations could speak out against human rights violations without fear of reprisals from the government, allowing them to explicitly point to human rights violations committed by the government to mobilize international actors in the area of human rights. These organisations became transnational as their staff members who are based in different countries had to adapt their frames to the new settings in which they operate now and aimed to mobilize international actors in order to put pressure on Burundi regime.

This thesis did not explore the role that the characteristics and leadership style of the organisation's chairperson had on their relative success in shifting their strategy to respond to the new

context in which they operate. It may be the case that some leadership styles or some individual leaders are better suited to build alliances with international institutions and transnational organisations, while others are better suited to lobby the domestic government. The effect of the leadership styles and individual characteristics could be significant especially since these organisations did not possess formal legal personality in the countries they operated in after 2015, which increased their informality and emphasized the role of individual activists. Further research could examine what skills and competencies are required to successfully adapt from lobbying the domestic government to building alliances with transnational NGO's and intergovernmental human rights institutions. In addition, as the starting point of my research is the April 2015 protest movement in which civil society organizations called people to protest, it would be interesting to analyse the mechanisms and process that led to the 2015 protest movement as well as the role of leaders in the mobilization process.

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