

# The Participation of UPRONA Political Party in Legislative Elections Held in Burundi from 1961 to 2020

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**How to cite this paper:** Ndikumana, L. (2022). The Participation of UPRONA Political Party in Legislative Elections Held in Burundi from 1961 to 2020. *Open Journal of Social Sciences*, 10, 186-200. <https://doi.org/10.4236/jss.2022.105014>

**Received:** March 31, 2022

**Accepted:** May 17, 2022

**Published:** May 20, 2022

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## Abstract

UPRONA party was weakened by the death of its charismatic leader prince Louis Rwagasore, on October 13, 1961, one year before the independence of Burundi. The crisis which occurred in this country on October 21, 1993 had a negative impact on the ideological stability of this party. In the beginning, it was observed that UPRONA party was united and made of inseparable supporters as its name ABADASIGANA (people who can never be separated) indicates. However, the disorder which was observed in the country proved that within that party named UNION FOR NATIONAL PROGRESS, there was no real union. The problem of division began in 1998 when Arusha negotiations started. Some supported negotiations, whereas others wanted to continue the war arguing that it was no use negotiating with the rebels. It is in such a context that UPRONA began to lose a part of its electorate notably because it had opted for joining G10 group, which was pro-Tutsi during those negotiations. In this research, our main question was to know the size of the outcome of the participation of UPRONA party in legislative elections which took place in Burundi from 1961 up to 2020, with the aim of showing the level of performance of that party in those elections. In order to answer that question, the researcher used ICT, interview, the reading of the physical documentation, and participant observation. The results which were found showed that in 1961, UPRONA got a score of 90% in legislative elections, 63% in 1965, 100% in 1982; 21.86% in 1993, 10% in 2005, 11% in 2010; 2.49% in 2015, and 2.43% in 2020.

## Keywords

Participation, Political Party, UPRONA, Legislative Elections, Burundi

## 1. Introduction

Schlesinger, J. A. (1985) says that “a political party is a group organized to gain

control of government”. The concept of political parties is a new notion which causes many ambiguities in Burundi. Some (the elites) take them, and they are right, as the right path to reach political power, with all the social, political and economic advantages which they confer, whereas others (the illiterate people) see them as the causes of their various calamities. In Burundi, those political parties often cause misunderstandings between the supporters of various political movements until they reach physical fights, notably before the electoral campaign, during the electoral campaign, and immediately after elections. Thus, the period of elections is not only an opportunity of the revelation of political ideologies<sup>1</sup> of different political parties, but it also becomes the source of hard times and national socio-economic instability. In Burundi, since 1961, the setting up of democracy and democratic institutions has been marked by elections in general, and legislative ones in particular, and UPRONA (Union pour le Progrès National = Union for National Progress) political party has always been involved until 2020.

Political parties play a major role in democratic nations. Schattschneider, E. (1942: p. 1), the main 20th century author of the study of parties in the United States, in his famous citation, if it is thoroughly read, asserts that “the emergency of political parties undoubtedly constitutes one of the distinctive characteristics of modern governments. Parties have played the central role of government makers, and more specifically of democratic governments”. The parties’ struggle for reaching power and making the government is openly done through elections which are very important in a democratic system. According to Waldemar Wojtasik (2013), “elections fulfil seven basic functions, namely delegation of political representation; selection of the political elite; legitimisation of those in power; control over authorities; political accountability; creation of political programmes; recreation of public opinion image”. In the opinion of Hooghe, M., & Stiers, D. (2016), “Elections offer a privileged moment in representative democracy, when citizens have the opportunity to express their views, both on the track record of the incumbent government, as on the way the country should be governed in the future”.

In any political system, elections play a major role. They are a good opportunity offered to the citizens of a nation so that they may choose their leaders during the following term. In Burundi, UPRONA political party has been supporting elections.

UPRONA political party was created in Burundi by Prince Louis Rwagasore<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>A political ideology is a set of ideas, beliefs, values, and opinions, exhibiting a recurring pattern, that competes deliberately as well as unintentionally over providing plans of action for public policy making in an attempt to justify, explain, contest, or change the social and political arrangements and processes of a political community.

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/psychology/political-ideology> Visited on Monday March 28, 2022 at 4:34 p.m.

<sup>2</sup>Hero of Burundi liberation, assassinated in 1961 some days before the victory of his political party, and on the eve of the independence, prince Rwagasore is one of the rare politics from an unstable country to be accepted by all the citizens, until he has become the symbol of the national unity. He died before seeing the misdeeds of people on power in his country. Therefore that heroic prince did not witness the political (from monarchy to republics, from military coups to multipartism) and ethnic (mass murders and civil wars) crises which have been tearing Burundi since fifty years, without losing his charisma nor undergoing historical depreciation.

<https://www.cairn.info/revue-vingtieme-siecle-revue-d-histoire-2013-2-page-15.htm#pa15> Visited on Monday March 28, 2022 at 3:30 p.m.

in 1958, in collaboration with Pierre Ngendandumwe and Paul Mirerekano. Since its approval, this party proved to be a strong political organisation. According to Damas, G. (1999: p. 61), “Since the approval of this political party on January 7, 1960, it was feared by Belgians because of its strength and its courage which were embodied and revealed by its leader Prince Louis Rwagasore”.

It has been among the first twenty-six political parties approved in Burundi during the Belgian colonial period. It has been the first political party to have been on power in Burundi after having won September 18, 1961 legislative elections, and it went on governing Burundi as a unique political party under the political systems of Captain Michel Micombero from 1966 to 1976, of Colonel Jean Baptiste Bagaza from 1976 to 1987 and that of Major Pierre Buyoya from 1987 to 1993 and again from 1996 to 2003. As Banshimiyubusa, D. (2018) puts it, “UPRONA came from APRODEBA (Association pour le Progrès et le Développement des Burundi = Association for the Progress and the Development of Burundians), then it was first often called UNIPRO (Unité et Progrès = Unity and Progress of Burundi), before becoming thoroughly UPRONA in 1958”. At the beginning, this party attracted a huge number of people. As Deslaurier, C. (2010) puts it, “UPRONA party grew rapidly since 1959 in urban areas as well as in rural villages, in Hutu places as well as in Tutsi ones. The meetings of Rwagasore, whose prestige was linked both to his royal family belonging and to his personal charisma, were attended by enthusiastic crowds”. The same Deslaurier, C. (2013: p. 3) adds that “Towns are also a space of forming new political identities”. UPRONA political party was created in the framework of the process of the democratisation of Africa in general, and of Burundi in particular. This process of the democratisation of Africa was mainly based on the creation of political parties.

In the context of this research, the attempts to set up a multipartism-based democracy started before Burundi independence which took place on July 1, 1962. As Guillaume, S. (2016: p. 89) puts it, “Democracy is a sine qua non condition so that the society may live well, and political parties play the main role in that”. Talking about that link between democratic politics and political parties, Johnston, M. (2005: p. 3) says that “strong political parties are essential to open, competitive democratic politics, particularly in emerging democracies”. Burundians had expressed early their desire to reach an ideal democracy so that all Burundians may be sovereign, and this had to be a reality through competitive elections.

According to Katz, R. S. (2005: p. 18), “More commonly, democracy equals a choice of government through competitive elections”. These ones give the power to the political majority which forms the government, but the rights of the minority ought to be protected. As Comme Prothro, J. W., & Grigg, C. M. (1960: pp. 282-283) put it, the fundamental principles of democracy are summarised in “The principle of the majority government in specific terms, and the principle of the minority rights in specific terms.” UPRONA political party has an original ideology of gathering people and its founder and charismatic leader Prince Louis

Rwagasore supported it much.

Prince Louis Rwagasore revealed his will to gather all Burundians by asserting that “all Burundians were members of the same national family, children of the same King”. He added that “Burundi needed all of them regardless of their political party belonging”<sup>3</sup>.

In its attempt to set up a political system of the gathering of all Burundians, UPRONA political party got into a hegemony characterised by a regionalist trend. [Kernalegenn, T. \(2017: p. 3\)](#) talking about regionalism tells us that “it is an ideological force of aggregation and of translation of sectorial problems on territorial bases of the regional level”.

For the case of UPRONA political party, that situation progressively imposed itself and almost unconsciously, the politics on power taking it as normal and honorable. This was notably observed when UPRONA was the unique political party in Burundi and functioning like a State-party. The three presidents of the Republic who followed one another on power in Burundi, and who were ipso facto presidents of that political party, namely Captain Michel Micombero, Colonel Jean Baptiste Bagaza, and Major Pierre Buyoya, were all born in the same Rutovu district in Bururi province in the Southern part of Burundi.

Regionalism and nepotism are some of the signs of the bad organisation of the majority of African political parties, and this causes them to lose the credibility of the electorate. [Onyinkwa, B. \(2017: p. 8\)](#) puts it saying that “the majority of African political parties are badly organised and miss the institutional capacity, their processes of decision making are not structured and the power is often put in the hands of the president of the party and a handful of some of his companions”.

On October 13, 1961 UPRONA political party missed Prince Louis RWAGASORE who was its most attractive candidate. This is seen as one of the causes of its loss of votes in the elections. According to [Juan J. Linz, Cyril Gispert \(2004\)](#), “In general, it is observed that voters tend to vote for the most attractive candidate”. UPRONA political party did not have right leaders for replacing Prince Louis Rwagasore adequately. If political parties want to be sustainable, they must be able to keep their acquired members, regardless of who the leaders are. This has not been the case for UPRONA party.

After the death of prince Louis Rwagasore, his successors at the head of UPRONA political party failed to reveal themselves as people who were able to gather the whole Burundian people. Thus UPRONA party revealed its weaknesses and lost a big number of its members as it has been the case for many African political parties. According to [Mamoudou Gazibo \(2006: p. 10\)](#), “African political parties are weak indeed. This means that their influence on the life of the nation is not being observed. Some of them exist in letters, and when the people seek for them in action, they do not find them on the field”. As an illustration of UPRONA’s weakness, during Arusha peace talks, this political party

<sup>3</sup>Speech of Prince Louis Rwagasore (September 19, 1961).

was placed by its leaders in G10 (Group of 10 parties), which is a group that was trying to defend the interests of the Tutsi ethnic group. Thus, ethnicity was accepted by this former gathering party as a main factor in the conflict between Burundians.

The problem of this research has been put around the main question which follows: “What is the size of the outcome of the participation of UPRONA political party in legislative elections which have been held in Burundi from 1961 to 2020”? This question was asked because the researcher had a purpose that he wanted to reach. The aim of this research was to show how UPRONA political party performed in legislative elections which took place in Burundi from 1961 to 2020. In order to reach this target, a methodology had to be resorted to.

## 2. Methods

### 2.1. Research Instruments

One of the major research instruments which have been used in this research has been the use of ICT, that is Information and Communication Technologies. Their group is “a set of tools, services and techniques used for the creation, the recording, the treatment and the transmission of information”.<sup>4</sup> In this research, there has been use of information provided on radio and television. The Internet was much resorted to notably Google, Google Scholar and ResearchGate for having access to useful information for this research. Another research instrument which has been used in this research is interview.

It is not easy to conduct an interview, although it is very useful in research. Fontana, A. and Frey, J.H. (2005) say that “asking questions and getting answers is a much harder task than it may seem at first, and they add that yet interviewing is one of the most common and powerful ways in which we try to understand our fellow human beings”.

This research instrument has been of great use inasmuch as the face contact sets up an atmosphere of confidence between the researcher and the respondent. The possibility of asking extra questions from the given answers or even the possibility of modifying the put questions have been another advantage during this research. In addition to interview, the reading of the physical documentation was also resorted to.

It has been asserted by CH, E. (2017) that research is one of the engines of the development of a field. For this research many publications were read in physical libraries in order to have enough information on political parties and democracy in Africa in general, and in Burundi in particular. Notes concerning some useful information were taken in order to facilitate the production of this scientific paper. Another research instrument which has been used is the participant observation.

On the website <https://study.com/academy/lesson/participant-observation-https://junior.universalis.fr/encyclopedie/technologies-de-l-information-et-de-la-communication-t-i-c/> Visited on Tuesday December 15, 20 21 at 13:30.

[definition-and-examples.html](#)<sup>5</sup>, it is stated that “participant observation is a qualitative research method in which the researcher not only observes the research participants, but also actively engages in the activities of the research participants”. The starting point has been an observation which was the result of the researcher’s experience towards the situation of UPRONA political party in legislative elections which took place in Burundi from 1961 to 2020: The researcher is a Burundi national who has been dwelling in the society in which UPRONA party is daily operational, and he has been in regular touch with some members of this political party. He has observed this party’s behavior on the political ground during 2005, 2010, 2015 and 2020 electoral campaigns; and he has followed how legislative elections occurred and the official results provided by the concerned State institutions.

## 2.2. Method of Data Analysis

Data collected from various sources were gathered, checked and then analysed in order to reach the results, the conclusion, and the recommendation. In producing this paper, the analysis of data has primarily been narrative, based on the textual interpretation of collected data.

## 3. Results

### **The scores of UPRONA political party in legislative elections held in Burundi from 1961 to 2020**

From 1961 to 2020, UPRONA political party has been taking part in legislative elections held in Burundi. The results have been as follows: On September 18, 1961: 90%; on May 10, 1965: 63%; on October 22, 1982: 100%; on June 29, 1993: 21.86%; on July 4, 2005: 10%; on July 23, 2010: 11%; on June 29, 2015: 2.49%; on May 20, 2020: 2.43%. From these results, one can see how UPRONA political party has been performing in legislative elections from 1961 to 2020.

The results have already been provided above. It is high time the researcher shifted to the discussion.

## 4. Discussion on Results

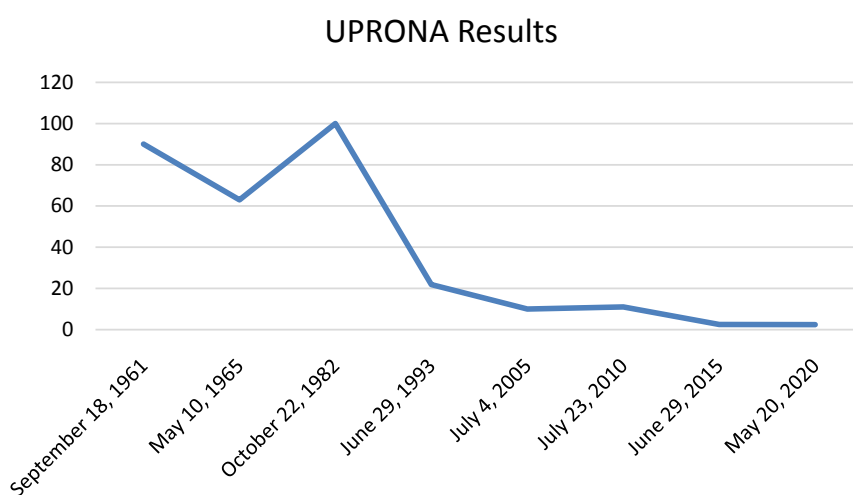
In dealing with the results, it seems to the researcher better to display them in the form of a graphic. That is why a graphic representation of the overall performances of UPRONA political party in legislative elections held in Burundi from 1961 to 2020 is first given. The advantage of this graphic representation is that it highlights how UPRONA political party has been going up and down in legislative elections which have taken place in Burundi from 1961 to 2020 by using a curve.

By observing **Figure 1**, one can say that the appearance of the successive results of UPRONA political party in legislative elections held in Burundi from

<sup>5</sup>This website was visited on Saturday April 9, 2022 at 12:40.

**Table 1.** The results of UPRONA political party in legislative elections from 1961 to 2020.

DATE AND YEAR	RESULTS IN %
18 September 18, 1961	90
May 10, 1965	63
October 22, 1982	100
June 29, 1993	21.86
July 4, 2005	10
July 23, 2010	11
June 29, 2015	2.49
May 20, 2020	2.43

**Figure 1.** The results of UPRONA political party in legislative elections from 1961 to 2020.

1961 to 2020 gives the idea of a serious collapse, except the case of legislative elections held on October 22, 1982. An explanation to this phenomenon is going to be attempted in the following points, so that the reader may be able to understand what happened from one legislative election to another.

#### 4.1. September 18, 1961 Legislative Elections in Burundi

On September 18, 1961, UPRONA political party wins legislative elections which are the first of this kind to be held in Burundi. At that moment, Burundi was still under the Belgian colonial rule. UPRONA wants the immediate independence of Burundi, unlike PDC<sup>6</sup> (Parti Démocrate Chrétien: Christian Democratic Party) political party and its allies which want it a bit later. The attractive stand of its

<sup>6</sup>PDC was run by brothers Ntindereza and Biroli, from a branch of Baganwa (Abatare) who had been in conflict with the *mwami* Mwambutsa's family (Abezi). Far cousins of Rwagasore, they were sons of chief Pierre Baranyanka, known for his attachment to colonial projects since the German rule and to whom some colonial leaders would have willingly handed the kingdom.

<https://doi.org/10.3917/ving.118.0015> Visited on Monday March 28, 2022 at 4:21 p.m.

charismatic leader and founder chairman Prince Louis Rwagasore, added to the longing for independence of the majority of Burundians, caused UPRONA political party to win those legislative elections held on September 18, 1961 with an overwhelming victory of 90%.

Although he was known to be a charismatic leader of Burundi independence, Prince Louis Rwagasore was not in good terms with the Belgian colonial rule, neither with the metropolitan settlers. His unitarian speech is going to remain until his death on October 13, 1961, maybe in order to help legitimate the keeping of the power by his successors within UPRONA political party. As if the name alone is enough, leaders of UPRONA party always mention the personality of Prince Louis Rwagasore, founder of that party and his achievements so as to gain the sympathy of the peasant mass only for electoral purposes. A Burundi political analyst *Nindorera, W. (2012: p. 10)*, asserts that “the October 13, 1961 assassination of Prince Louis Rwagasore, son of the King and leader of UPRONA party that had won the September 1961 legislative elections, was the first in a series of violent incidents that would continue to periodically shake Burundi”. These incidents have been taking the form of ethnicity-based conflicts between Hutus and Tutsis. Let us go on with May 10, 1965 legislative elections.

#### 4.2. May 10, 1965 Legislative Elections in Burundi

On May 10, 1965 UPRONA political party obtains 63% of votes expressed in legislative elections. That party has overcome hardships due to internal misunderstandings (CASABLANCA-MONROVIA), and ethnicity-based dissidences. *Nindorera, W. (2012: p. 10)* says it in these words,

*Although UPRONA had successfully overcome ethnic rivalries, the sudden death of its charismatic leader, the pernicious influence of the Rwandan revolution on Burundi's intellectual elites, and the increasingly fierce fight for power created internal tensions within the party that led to the emergence of two rival groups. The so-called “Monrovia” group, composed of equal numbers of Tutsis and Hutus, was considered to be pro-Western, whilst the “Cassablanca” group was close to Socialist countries and called itself “progressive”.*

The opposition between the former companions of prince Louis RWAGASORE (MIREREKANO<sup>7</sup>-MUHIRWA), and the reappearing of PP(Parti du Peuple: People's Party), a former party of FRONT COMMUN (COMMON FRONT) were involved in that conflict. It is also to be noticed that Paul MIREREKANO, independent candidate in those elections, was one of the caciques of UPRONA who had become defectors. Here is what he used to say during the electoral campaign: *Tuzorerekana n'umugambwe UPRONA* (UPRONA and I shall be watching over each other). Nevertheless, he had been one of the founders of that political party along with Prince Louis Rwagasore.

<sup>7</sup>Since the death of prince Louis RWAGASORE, Paul MIREREKANO seems to be excluded from UPRONA political party. Many UPRONA members accuse him of being the initiator of youth movements which are known under his name (*Mirerekano Youth*).



### 4.3. October 22, 1982<sup>8</sup> Legislative Elections in Burundi

In October 22, 1982 legislative elections, UPRONA political party got an overwhelming victory of 100%. It is worth reminding here that since November 23, 1966, UPRONA is a unique party *de jure et de facto* (by law and by fact). No any other political party can attempt to enter in elections because all the others have already been banished. That is why those elections took the form of a popular democracy. But it is to be noticed that all the preferred candidates of the ruling political system were not elected. For instance Mrs. Euphrasie KANDEKE, sister-in-law of the President of the Republic was made member of parliament only by means of cooptation by her brother-in-law President Jean Baptiste BAGAZA who was at the same time chairman of UPRONA political party. After these legislative elections, others followed only in 1993.

### 4.4. June 29, 1993<sup>9</sup> Legislative Elections in Burundi

Following the defeat of President Pierre BUYOYA on June 1, 1993 presidential

<sup>8</sup>Elections were held for all the elective seats in Parliament for the first time since the national legislature was dissolved in August 1966. Under the terms of the 1981 Constitution\*, the unicameral Parliament of Burundi, the National Assembly, comprises 52 elected members and 13 appointed by the President of the Republic. All Deputies have 5-year terms of office. All Members of Parliament are nominated by the Union for National Progress (UPRONA), the country's sole legal political organization, and elected by direct universal adult suffrage. The previous National Assembly was elected in May 1965 and dissolved in August 1966, after which Burundi became a Republic. No national legislature therefore existed until the October 1982 elections, held for the Parliament foreseen in the November 1981 Constitution. The Union for National Progress (UPRONA) is the country's sole legal political party. For the 1982 poll, UPRONA nominated 104 candidates (twice the number of the Assembly's elective seats), who had been chosen by local party selection committees. These were overwhelmingly backed on election day in a voter turnout of approximately 95%. The newly-elected Assembly met for the first time on 1 November. On November 8, President of the Republic Jean-Baptiste Bagaza announced the formation of a new Council of Ministers. [http://archive.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/arc/BURUNDI\\_1982\\_E.PDF](http://archive.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/arc/BURUNDI_1982_E.PDF) Visited on Sunday March 27, 2022 at 9:07 a.m.

<sup>9</sup>Elections were held for all the seats of the new parliament established by the 1992 Constitution after the former legislature was dissolved in September 1987 following a military coup d'Etat. Parliamentary elections had previously been held in October 1982. On March 29, 1993, President of the Republic Pierre Buyoya announced that presidential and parliamentary elections would be held on 1 and 29 June 1993, respectively. These elections were meant to be a culmination of the democratisation process initiated by President Buyoya upon coming to power through a military coup in September 1987. The presidential poll was held as scheduled and saw the victory of Mr. Melchior Ndadaye over the incumbent with 64.75% of the votes. In all, six legally-recognized parties contested the parliamentary elections with a total of some 740 candidates for the 81 seats to be filled. Apart from Major Pierre Buyoya's ruling Union for National Progress (UPRONA), which had been the sole legal party until the institution of multiparty politics pursuant to the 1992 Constitution, the other main contender was the Front for Democracy in Burundi (FRODEBU) of President-elect Ndadaye. The election campaign was conducted against a background of ethnic tension that had plagued the country in recent years. The main candidates were at pains to downplay this tension by stressing the need for national unity. Despite fears of violence, polling took place in a calm atmosphere and voter participation was high. Foreign observers were present. FRODEBU political party won an outright majority of the seats, leaving its main rival, the UPRONA, with only 16 victories. The other parties failed to score the 5% needed to be allocated seats in the National Assembly. The victory of Mr. Melchior Ndadaye and FRODEBU political party marked a power shift, for the first time since independence in 1962, from the minority Tutsi tribe to the Hutus, who account for close to 85% of the population. [http://archive.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/arc/2049\\_93.htm](http://archive.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/arc/2049_93.htm) Visited on Sunday March 27, 2022 at 9:25 a.m.

elections, UPRONA political party was seriously defeated on June 29, 1993 legislative elections in which it obtained only 21.86 of the expressed votes. This may have been the result of the decrease of legitimacy which caused the problem of the acceptability of UPRONA political power. In order to laugh at the non-representativeness of UPRONA political party, a cacique of FRODEBU wrote to President BUYOYA: “How can one speak of civil disobedience for a people which is tired with tyrannical methods of that administration and that police? How not to understand that a people in trauma, subjected daily to imprisonments and abusive amends may resort to riots?”<sup>10</sup> Here is noticed the mentioning of the absence of a minimal agreement as the foundation of legitimacy. According to *Beaud, O., and Blanquer, J.M. (1999)*, in democracy the agreement is reached only “if the law serves in determining the fair share which must be given to an individual in a community and in making it possible for that share to be respected”. In 1993 legislative elections, the majority of Burundian voters proved to be tired of that lack of agreement between the leaders and the people, which caused the loss of power for UPRONA political party.

#### 4.5. July 4, 2005<sup>11</sup> Legislative Elections in Burundi

In 2005, UPRONA political party became the third in legislative elections, after CNDD-FDD (Conseil National pour la Défense de la Démocratie-Forces de Défense de la Démocratie = National Council for the Defense of Democracy-Forces for the Defense of Democracy) and FRODEBU (Front pour la Démocratie au Burundi = Front for Democracy in Burundi). The 2005 elections were well organised, and that is the reason why all the political actors who took part in them spontaneously accepted the verdict. At that time, UPRONA looked like a political party of the past, a party which had agreed to reveal its tutsi ethnic identity<sup>12</sup>. Even within that ethnic group there were dissidences whose two can be taken as the main ones. At the beginning of Arusha peace talks, a branch of UPRONA called ABATINGINGWA (those who are not beseeched) led by Charles MUKASI, joined ACCORD CADRE POUR LA RESTAURATION D’UN ETAT DE DROIT (FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT FOR THE RESTORING OF A STATE OF LAW), another UPRONA dissidence, in order to say “no” to any compromise with the rebels. Then, taking advantage of the implementation of

<sup>10</sup>Open Letter written by Christian SENDEGEYA, a militant of FRODEBU political party, to President Pierre BUYOYA, on December 8, 1992.

<sup>11</sup>On a total of 100 available seats, CNDD-FDD obtains 59 seats in the National Assembly at the end of the counting operation, whereas FRODEBU gets 25 seats, UPRONA 10, CNDD 4, and MRC 4. Among those 100 Members of Parliament who were elected, there were only 24 women and 35 Tutsi. Ethnic balances were respected by all political parties except UPRONA party whose all the deputies were Tutsi.

[https://aceproject.org/ero-en/regions/africa/BI/burundi-final-report-legislative-elections-eu-2005/at\\_download/file](https://aceproject.org/ero-en/regions/africa/BI/burundi-final-report-legislative-elections-eu-2005/at_download/file) Visited on March 27, 2022 at 11:27.

<sup>12</sup>During the Arusha peace talks, UPRONA political party was one of the ten Burundi political parties which were notably defending the interests of the Tutsi ethnic group. Those ten parties were: UPRONA, PARENA, PSD, ABASA, ANADDE, RADDES, PIT, A.V. INTWARI, PRP, MSP-Inkinzo.

the Arusha agreements<sup>13</sup> for peace and reconciliation, a group of tutsi leaders whose region of origin is not Bururi supported colonel Epitace BAYAGANAKANDI and his political party MRC (Mouvement de Rassemblement pour la Réhabilitation du Citoyen = Movement of Rally for the Rehabilitation of the Citizen). Official UPRONA remained supported by its traditional members, notably people displaced inside the country whose majority were Tutsis and reached the score of 10% of expressed votes.

#### 4.6. July 23, 2010<sup>14</sup> Legislative Elections in Burundi

In July 23, 2010 legislative elections, UPRONA political party obtained 11% of the votes expressed in the ballots. It can be raised that this score is not a realistic one. By taking a look at these results, one may think that the performance of UPRONA has increased a bit, which is not true. During district elections which had preceded the legislative ones, the main opponents to the CNDD-FDD ruling political party were seriously defeated by the latter. They refused to recognise their defeat and claimed that those elections had been characterised by fraud. As a response against this defeat, they withdrew themselves from the electoral race. It is in this atmosphere that the legislative elections took place. According to some of our respondents, UPRONA political party which remained in the race benefited from the votes of those who did not want to vote for CNDD-FDD<sup>15</sup> political party.

#### 4.7. June 29, 2015<sup>16</sup> and May 20, 2020<sup>17</sup> Legislative Elections in Burundi

In legislative elections organised in Burundi in 2015, UPRONA political party

<sup>13</sup>Arusha became a place where many political games were played: Alliances were formed and then destroyed. Before going to Arusha, each group prepared new strategies for winning.

<https://repositories.lib.utexas.edu/bitstream/handle/2152/4673/2214.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>  
Visited on Wednesday December 23, 2020 at 8:27.

<sup>14</sup>On July 23, national assembly elections were held with the participation of CNDD-FDD, its satellite party Frodebu Nyakuri, Uprona and a number of very small political parties (hardly known to the general public) and independent candidates. The CNDD-FDD—logically—improved its score (81 seats of 106 or 76, 4%), compared with the communal elections and with the 2005 legislative elections. Uprona (17 seats of 106) and Frodebu Nyakuri (5 seats of 106) obtained a score above the 5% threshold, which guaranteed their participation in the coalition government. BURUNDI'S 2010 ELECTIONS: DEMOCRACY AND PEACE AT RISK? By Eva Palmans, PhD Senior Elections Advisor

[https://epd.eu/wp-content/uploads/ECES-Burundi\\_Elections.pdf](https://epd.eu/wp-content/uploads/ECES-Burundi_Elections.pdf) Visited on March 27, 2022 at 11:40.

<sup>15</sup>Testimony of one of the respondents in this research who declared that he voted for UPRONA political party not for militancy but just for fulfilling his civic right.

<sup>16</sup>The ruling coalition, the National Council for the Defense of Democracy—Front for the Defense of Democracy (CNDD-FDD), took 77 of the 100 directly elected seats during the elections; the poll was boycotted by the major opposition parties. Hope for Burundians (Abigen-ga-Amizero y'Abarundi) took 21 seats, even though this opposition coalition, led by Mr. Agathon Rwasa, had officially boycotted the elections. In order to ensure respect for the 60-40 ethnic distribution of seats and the 30 per cent quota for women, a further 21 members were co-opted after the elections. That increased the number of members in the new National Assembly to 121, up from 106 in the outgoing legislature. [http://archive.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/2049\\_e.htm](http://archive.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/2049_e.htm) Visited on Sunday March 27, 2022 at 11:52.

obtained 2.49%, whereas in 2020 it obtained 2.43% of the expressed votes. These 2020 elections were held following the new 2018 constitution for remaking Burundi's institutions as Vandeginste, S. (2020: p. 1) put it in these words: "In fact, the 2018 Constitution and, in particular, of some major institutional re-arrangements". The political turpitudes which are much observed in 2015 are the result of an internal division within political parties. As for UPRONA political party, it undergoes a crisis of reforming, renewal and mobility of the elites<sup>18</sup>.

In fact, in the conflict context, a new generation aims at showing itself and emerging. It is embodied by Abel GASHATSI who was so far unknown by the great public under the support of the former chairman of UPRONA political party Aloys RUBUKA, and of Concilie NIBGIRA, a former secretary general of UFB (Union des Femmes Burundaise = Union of Burundian Women), a league of women affiliated to UPRONA political party, which has passed through ACCORD CADRE POUR LA RESTAURATION D'UN ETAT DE DROIT (FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT FOR RESTORING A STATE OF LAW).

The support of Concilie NIBIGIRA by the then government caused the political migration of the former caciques of UPRONA political party who joined before the 2015 elections the FNL (Front National pour la Libération = National Front for Liberation) leader Agathon RWASA who had been chased from the chairmanship of that political party by his former companions Emmanuel MIBURO and Jacques BIGIRIMANA. That team of UPRONA militants and FNL members who continued to support Agathon RWASA created a new independent political coalition called AMIZERO Y'ABARUNDI (THE HOPE OF BURUNDIANS). That collaboration did not last for a long time because UPRONA members supporters of Charles NDITIJE, who were elected in the National Assembly in the name of AMIZERO Y'ABARUNDI coalition refused to take their seats in the National Assembly, whereas the supporters of Agathon RWASA who were elected accepted to sit. That coalition called "AMIZERO Y'ABARUNDI" went on until September 12, 2018 when a new political party named CNL (Congrès National pour la Liberté: National Congress for Freedom) was legally approved in Burundi.

The coming of a new generation of UPRONA leaders did not convince the grassroots who were taking them as felons, working for the benefit of the ruling political party. One can say that it is what explains the following situation: UPRONA loses its former held places namely urban centres and camps for dis-

<sup>17</sup>The legislative election of national assembly members was organized on the basis of a proportional representation system in 18 provincial electoral circumscriptions. Seventeen independent candidates and 13 parties—many of them small satellite parties supportive of CNDD-FDD—took part, some in all provinces, most of them in a limited number of provinces. /.../Final results were announced by the constitutional court on 4 June. CNDD-FDD won 68.01% of the votes, against 22.42% for CNL and 2.43% for UPRONA (Unité pour le progrès national—Unity for national progress), the party of outgoing first vice-president Gaston Sindimwo (Tutsi). Other parties and candidates obtained less than 1%.

<https://medialibrary.uantwerpen.be/files/8518/932dc3ee-95d6-413d-91f7-ce862e506f86.pdf> Visited on Sunday March 27, 2022 at 12:30.

<sup>18</sup>In many areas of Burundi, some elites former members of UPRONA political party have joined the ruling party CNDD-FDD for various reasons.

placed people. In 2015, the only seats of Members of Parliament won by UPRONA political party were those of Rumonge and Bururi. In 2020, that political party won only one seat by merit in Bujumbura town which was given to the former Deputy President Gaston SINDIMWO, while another one was obtained through cooptation in Muramvya province. This seat was given to the then UPRONA's chairman Abel GASHATSI. This reveals a lack of social inking which guarantees to UPRONA political party a possible progressive collapse.

Briefly, and with regard to the above shown results of UPRONA political party in legislative elections held in Burundi from 1961 to 2020, one can point out the following observations:

- UPRONA political party got a high rate of 90% in 1961, when the notions of democracy, political parties and elections were still very new in Burundi. It had no competent rivals, inasmuch as its leader Prince Louis Rwagasore was taken as the best politic of Burundi at that time;
- This political party performed so highly in 1982 until it reached the percentage of 100% because all the other parties had been abolished from the Burundian territory;
- The UPRONA's electoral influence began to openly shrink in 1993, with the return of the political pluralism and the thirst of democracy by the majority of Burundians who had witnessed UPRONA's weaknesses in the past;
- The coming into the political game of CNDD-FDD as a very popular and powerful political party in Burundi, became one of the major factors which went on reducing UPRONA's electoral might.

## 5. Conclusion

This is the end of this research paper. It is worth reminding the main question which was: "What is the size of the outcome of the participation of UPRONA political party in legislative elections which have been held in Burundi from 1961 to 2020?". In order to answer this question, resort has been done to ICT, interview, the reading of the physical documentation, and the participant observation so that the aim of this research which was that of showing the level of performance of UPRONA political party during legislative elections held in Burundi from 1961 to 2020 may be reached.

The results which were obtained indicate that in 1961 UPRONA political party won legislative elections in Burundi at the rate of 90%. This rate lowered in 1965, reaching 63%. However, this percentage increased until it reached 100% in 1982, when UPRONA political party was a unique party in Burundi under the chairmanship of Jean Baptiste BAGAZA, who had at the same time proclaimed himself President of the Republic of Burundi on Novembre 1, 1976.

After the decision of the French President François Mitterrand to give foreign aid on condition that democracy is respected during the La Baule conference which took place from 19th to 20th June 1990, President Pierre BUYOYA, successor of President Jean Baptiste BAGAZA since September 3, 1987, restored the

multi-party based political system in Burundi in April 1992. UPRONA was once again legally approved as a legal political party on May 14, 1992, and during the legislative elections which were held in Burundi in the political pluralism, that party underwent an overwhelming defeat, falling from 100% in 1982 to 21.86% in 1993.

This decrease of the electoral score of UPRONA political party continued to be observed because in 2005 it fell from 21.86% to 10%. However, in 2010 a slight increase of that electoral score was reached as it went from 10% to 11%. Nevertheless, in 2015 and 2020, that score decreased very much, until it reached 2.49% in 2015, and 2.43% in 2020, which shows that that political party is in trouble nowadays.

This research contributes to giving a clear instance in Burundi where a former ruling political party (UPRONA) loses its members until it lacks meaningful seats in the national administration through the analysis of legislative elections. By putting an end to this research paper, it is recommended to other researchers who are interested in political science, whether they are Burundi nationals or not, to conduct other investigations of this kind on other former ruling political parties in Africa and elsewhere in the world.

## Acknowledgements

My thanks go to all the INASP (International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications) associates who initiated me in research writing and research publishing. I also thank the whole staff of the University of Burundi doctoral school for their daily hard work in research teaching and promoting. Last but not least, I send my warm thanks to all my respondents who accepted to give me information for the fulfilling of this research paper.

## Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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