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War and democracy : the legacy of conflict in East Africa

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War and Democracy.

The Legacy of Conflict in East Africa

Abstract

The historical literature on statebuilding in Europe has often portrayed a positive relationship between war, state making, and long-term democratization. Similarly, a number of large-n quantitative studies have concluded that war promotes democracy. Against this, a growing area studies literature has argued that in developing countries violent conflict is unlikely to drive either statebuilding or democratization. However, this literature has rarely sought to systematically set out the mechanisms through which war undermines democracy. Contrasting three “high conflict” cases (Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda) with two “low conflict” cases (Kenya and Tanzania) in East Africa, we trace the way in which domestic conflict has undermined three key elements of the democratization process: the quality of political institutions, the degree of elite cohesion, and the nature of civil-military relations. Taken together, we suggest that the combined effect of these three mechanisms helps to explain why Kenya and Tanzania have made significantly greater progress towards democratic consolidation than their counterparts and call for more in depth research on the long-term legacy of conflict on democratization in the African context.

Why are some states more democratic than others? In the African context, the literature has developed a number of answers to this question. Countries with oil and other valuable natural resources are less likely to be democratic (Ross 2001), as are those in which political institutions are weaker, and in which neo-patrimonial politics has been more pronounced.

Having earlier and deeper experience of plural politics during the colonial period is generally seen to have a positive effect (Cheeseman 2015), while low and falling economic growth is understood to represent a significant challenge. However, one factor that is rarely systematically included in cross-national discussions on the quality of democracy in Africa is experiences of war and, by implication, peace. None of the most prominent books on the subject of democratic consolidation in Africa, from Bratton and van de Walle's seminal early work (1997) to Claude Ake's analysis of the feasibility of democracy on the continent (2000), emphasise the effect of war, whether positive or negative.

By contrast, the broader literature on state building and democratization has often placed war at centre stage while drawing seemingly paradoxical conclusions. Most obviously, the 'bellicose' literature (Centeno 2002), famously advocated by Charles Tilly, has identified a number of mechanisms through which war led to statebuilding: the need to fund armies which triggered greater taxation, boosting government coffers; the need to defend territory which led to investment in stronger borders, creating a monopoly over the legitimate use of force; and the way in which the experience of conflict generated stronger and more unified national identities. On this basis, Tilly concludes that 'war made the state, and the state made war' (Tilly 1992). Implicit within Tilly's model is a connection between this kind of statebuilding and democratization; when states lacking full political control levy greater taxation they must do so through processes of bargaining, giving away influence in return for revenue, and spurring cries of 'no taxation without representation'. Thus, in the long-run (and it can be a very long run) taxation drives demands for greater accountability, and thus a social contract.

Other scholars present a similarly optimistic view. As Nancy Bermeo (2003: 161) has noted, 'the democratization literature portrays the association between war and democracy to be broadly positive'. This argument tends to follow Tilly in tracing a line between war, the construction of more effective states, and demands for greater accountability. More

contemporary analysis has offered a third leg to this argument where civil war is concerned, claiming that where the human and economic cost is high and felt by all actors, it generates elite and public pressure for senior political leaders to enter into negotiated transitions to democracy. These “pacted” transitions are often assumed to be relatively stable precisely because they represent a bargained compromise that reflects the core concerns of major parties (Karl 1990).¹

By contrast, the Africanist literature that has addressed the relationship between war and statebuilding or democratization assumes a negative association, thereby diverging from the broader comparative literature. Tilly himself has questioned whether his analysis applies to developing countries, noting that the principal mechanisms he identifies do not apply in contexts where, for instance, the military is externally funded and, consequently, no domestic bargaining over taxes and military restraint occurs. Herbst (2014), meanwhile, suggests that the absence of inter-state war in Africa, and the different incentives facing political leaders, mean that Tillyian processes have not occurred, which in turn helps to account for the continent’s weak borders. In a similar vein, Reno (1999) challenges the notion that civil conflict will one day lead to processes of statebuilding and, in some of its variants, democratization. According to Reno, warlords and other local power brokers are unlikely to see a value in strengthening and investing in the state, which offers greater risks than benefits. Instead, they find greater opportunities in what Chabal and Daloz (1999) have called ‘disorder as political instrument’, and deliberately work to keep the state weak. In line with this, scholars of particular African states, such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Somalia have demonstrated that prolonged episodes of unrest have done little to promote democratic norms and values, or the state capacity needed to enforce them (Prunier 2009).

The Africanist literature thus casts doubt on the virtue of war for democracy. But despite this, there have been relatively few attempts to theorise precisely how and why conflict

reduces the prospects for plural politics. To do this we need to go beyond case studies and global datasets to conduct the kind of focussed comparative research that animated Tilly's own findings, looking at enough cases to permit general tendencies to be observed without casting the net so wide that the specific features of each country's experience are overlooked. In this article we take the first steps towards such an approach, drawing on a comparative analysis of the five states of East Africa – Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda.² We have deliberately included all five states to ensure variation in terms of both colonial experiences and outcomes, and to allow us to look at processes of democratisation and authoritarianisation. In this regard, the cases of Kenya and Uganda are particularly instructive. While both countries suffered the destabilising effect of British divide-and-rule policies, it was in many ways Kenya, which had experienced the violent *Mau Mau* rebellion, that had the greatest challenges to overcome. The contrasting fate of these countries that have both experienced periods of democratic progress and backsliding over the years – but in which Kenya has recently established a more open and competitive political system – allows us to bring post-colonial factors into sharper relief.

Our argument runs as follows. The three countries of East Africa that have experienced recurrent episodes of conflict in the post-independence period – Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda – are significantly less democratic than their more peaceful counterparts. This is not an accident, but reflects the impact of domestic political conflict on three critical components of the democratization process: the quality of political institutions, the degree of elite cohesion, and the nature of civil-military relations. The impact of conflict is not uniform, but is shaped by the intensity of violence, and existing conditions on the ground. In those countries whose colonial histories made them more vulnerable to domestic unrest and where an extreme form of divide-and-rule colonial rule generated weak institutions and social tensions that divided post-independence political elites, such as Burundi and Rwanda, conflict

has played into and exacerbated existing barriers to democratic reform. In cases where the colonial experience was less fatal, such as Uganda, the impact of war led to greater deviation from the country's prior experience, but with similar consequences. In all three cases, we demonstrate that the net effect of conflict has been to strengthen the hand of authoritarian forces over civil society and decreased the likelihood that leaders would be able to build a negotiated transition to democratic civilian politics. We illustrate the significance of conflict to these processes by comparing these 'high conflict' cases with two 'low conflict' ones – Kenya and Tanzania – that have avoided prolonged war and have achieved more open and competitive politics.³

We recognise that even with careful process tracing it is difficult to disentangle the different effects of colonial rule, geo-strategic location, economic context, and domestic political conflict across cases – especially in a journal article. This is particularly true when a particularly poisonous colonial legacy and high levels of post-colonial conflict have occurred in the same place, as in Burundi and Rwanda. Given this, it is important to emphasise that we *are not* claiming to account for the specific effects of each of these factors; rather, we are focusing more narrowly on instances of post-independence domestic conflict and their direct effects on political institutions, elite cohesion and civil military relations. As a result, we are not claiming to show that conflict is the most significant factor preventing democratic reform in our cases. Instead, our ambition is much more modest: to demonstrate that conflict in Africa makes democratisation more problematic, and to advance a framework through which to understand why this is the case. Given this, our analysis should not be taken to imply that countries that have avoided war will inevitably become democratic, or that those that have been mired in conflict cannot. In other words, our purpose here is not to argue for the pre-eminence of war,⁴ but rather to flesh out the mechanisms through which conflict contributes to authoritarianism and thus to enable these processes to be better understood.

THEORISING CONFLICT AND DEMOCRACY

Measuring democracy is complicated and controversial. To avoid any suspicion of cherry picking, we present the democracy scores for all five countries in four commonly used democracy indices, from which we have derived a composite index, in table 1. While all five countries feature political elites with authoritarian tendencies, and there is some inconsistency in the rankings, it is clear that a democratic divide exists within East Africa: on average, Kenya and Tanzania are significantly more democratic states. Moreover, the scores for Burundi and Uganda are likely to fall further following recent episodes of state violence and political repression in 2015/2016.

Table 1. Democracy ratings of East Africa (2014/2015)

	Bertelsmann Transformation Index	The Economist Democracy Index	Freedom House Political Rights Score	Polity IV	Average rating*
	10=best, 1=worst	10=best, 1=worst	1=best, 7=worst	10=best -10=worst,	10=best, 1=worst
Kenya	6.6	5.13	4	9	6.3
Tanzania	6.1	5.77	3	-1	5.5
Burundi	5.3	3.33	6	6	4.5
Uganda	6.9	5.22	6	-1	4.5
Rwanda	4.0	3.25	6	-3	3.0

²The average rating is calculated by converting all scores to a 0-10 rating in which 10 = best, and then averaging them. Note that this involves inverting the Freedom House score.

As noted above, in tracing the way in which conflict may contribute to these outcomes we focus on three factors that African political scientists have identified as being central to

democratic consolidation on the continent: the quality of political institutions, the degree of elite cohesion, and the nature of civil-military relations.

Regarding the first factor, a number of scholars including Bratton and van de Walle (1997) and Cheeseman (2015) have posited that strong institutions are central to the process of political reform, in large part because they make possible negotiated and stable transitions – as in the case of South Africa. We argue that in the one-party states that emerged in Kenya and Tanzania, formal political institutions were weakened but were never fully destroyed and in some cases were fortified by the reintroduction of multipartyism. By contrast, in states such as Burundi, Rwanda, and Uganda, periods of military rule and/or prolonged conflict have served to further weaken – and in some cases eviscerate – the already problematic political institutions developed under colonial rule, undermining the prospects for democratic consolidation.

With respect to the second factor, we focus on the way in which conflict may undermine elite cohesion, which has been identified by researchers such as Anja Osei (2015) and theorists such as Robert Dahl (1989) as contributing to democratic consolidation by enabling the political class to manage crises and disagreements in a way that prevents the breakdown of the wider political system. Trust and cohesion is also significant, because it improves the prospects for a negotiated transition to take place, and makes it more likely that agreement can be reached on the new rules of the game. Trust and cohesion are shaped by a variety of different factors – such as divide-and-rule colonial government – but some of the most important are episodes of conflict (LeBas 2006). Indeed, we show that repeated bouts of violence have negatively impacted on elite relations in Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda, even after periods of rapprochement. By contrast, Tanzania has never experienced notable or sustained conflict, at least on the mainland. Kenya falls between these two extremes, as elections have often been accompanied by state-led violence and ethnic clashes, but these did

not lead to conflict on anything like the scale of a civil war; partly as a result, elite relations have remained more cohesive.

Finally, we investigate civil-military relations, a topic that has sometimes been overlooked within African studies,⁵ but it is important in East Africa, where three out of five serving presidents are former rebel leaders and the militarization of everyday politics is often cited as a major obstacle to political reform (Cheeseman 2015, Chapter 2). New democracies are better protected from the risk of coups and from the militarization of politics if their militaries are effectively civilianized and a norm barring military interference in civilian affairs has been established. We argue that this is much more likely to be the case in former one-party states such as Kenya and Tanzania, where there was a clear separation between the civilian government and the military. By contrast, where militaries have wielded power for many years they tend to be more politicized. Consequently, leaders in post-conflict countries are more likely and able to violently repress opposition – and in the case of both Uganda and Rwanda now enjoy control over a far more extensive coercive apparatus than previously existed.

On the basis of this analysis, we argue that each of these factors on its own represents an important mechanism through which conflict makes democratic consolidation problematic, and that taken together the cumulative impact is profound. Weaker institutions compound the problem of a lack of inter-elite trust, because leaders cannot be sure that the deals that they strike will be enforced. At the same time, the absence of effective checks and balances with independent legislatures and judiciaries facilitates the misuse of the security forces. In the worst-case scenario, in which conflict occurs over a long period of time, this combination can lead to a vicious cycle in which violence, weak institutions, and inter-elite contestation become self-reinforcing. It is under these conditions that there are the greatest barriers to democratic consolidation.

In the discussion that follows, we proceed by assessing the countries of East Africa on these three factors, explaining how we operationalise our framework before drawing on the secondary literature and sustained periods of fieldwork by the authors to explain the experience of all five states. By looking at our two sets of cases (high conflict versus low or no conflict) across these three themes, we are able to demonstrate the diverse pathways through which conflict promotes authoritarianism.

THE CAPACITY AND INDEPENDENCE OF POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

We understand the capacity and independence of political institutions to refer to their ability to perform the basic tasks set out for them in the constitutional and legal system. This is shaped not just by formal rules such as meritocratic appointment processes and security of tenure, but also by norms such as whether members of the judiciary and legislature challenge and constrain the powers of the executive in practice. We argue that episodes of domestic conflict have contributed to the breakdown of already weak institutions in Burundi and Rwanda, and of formerly capable institutions in Uganda, which stands in stark contrast to the (admittedly slow and uneven) process of institution building witnessed in Kenya and Tanzania.

The high conflict cases

Belgian colonial rule was authoritarian and paternalistic, ignored the separation of powers, and endorsed divide-and-rule strategies that sowed division between rival elites. It also did little to prepare colonies for majority rule.

The first general elections in Burundi were organised less than a year before independence, and political institutions immediately exhibited considerable fragility, setting the scene for post-colonial instability. However, post-colonial conflict further exacerbated this problematic inheritance, with coups d'état in 1966, 1976 and 1987, political assassinations and purges, and genocide in 1972. These episodes of political conflict undermined what institutions had been developed and consolidated 'Big Man' rule. The reign of General Micombero, who seized power in 1966, was marked by personal rule and deinstitutionalisation, which is highlighted by the 1974 constitution that did not provide for a parliament, and gave both executive and legislative power to the president. After another coup that brought Colonel Bagaza to power in 1976, the 1981 constitution introduced a strong presidency that allowed Bagaza to dominate the political system. He was in turn overthrown by Major Buyoya in 1987, a further demonstration of the falling capacity of formal institutions.

After a prolonged period of ethnic politics marked by the exclusion of the Hutu majority, Burundi embarked on a process of 'reconciliation' in 1988 under intense international pressure. The next step towards 'democratisation' included the promulgation of a democratic constitution in 1992 and general elections in June 1993. These polls were won by the Hutu-dominated opposition party Frodebu, thus putting an end to decades of rule by Tutsi elites. Just months later, the Tutsi-dominated army staged a coup with the aim of preserving the privileges of the former incumbents. President Ndadaye was assassinated, which plunged the country into a decade-long civil war during which political institutions were paralyzed.

Following heavy international and regional pressure, the protagonists signed a power-sharing accord in Arusha in August 2000. Thanks to shrewd constitutional engineering, the ethnic divide was largely managed, but the attempt to create new political institutions ultimately failed because there were insufficient foundations to build upon. The 2005

elections brought to power the CNDD-FDD (Conseil national pour la défense de la démocratie-Forces pour la défense de la démocratie), the most important former rebel movement. It set out to consolidate its power, and soon marginalised the political opposition and civil society. Although in principle the formal rules placed considerable constraints on the president, in reality they proved to have little effect.

Instead, President Nkurunziza's repressive strategies prompted opposition parties to boycott the 2010 polls, while his bid for an unconstitutional third term in 2015 led to the exodus of over 200,000 people and provides a further demonstration of the difficulty of enforcing negotiated settlements in institutionally weak post-conflict states. Moreover, those leaving the country included the most prominent representatives of the opposition (and even the moderate leaders of the ruling party), civil society, and independent media, further weakening the potential for strong political institutions to emerge.

Rwanda shares Burundi's colonial past. The late introduction of democratic institutions, and the refusal to establish a more inclusive form of politics, meant that Rwanda entered independence with a political system that had particularly shallow roots and no time to develop a supportive set of informal norms. Episodes of conflict further weakened the institutional landscape and undermined the prospects of democratic consolidation. The immediate post-independence period saw ten years of *de facto* single party rule that were marked by moments of ethnic violence. In 1973, the army seized power and in 1978 a new constitution, which purported to return Rwanda to 'civilian' rule, set up the Mouvement révolutionnaire national pour le développement (MRND) as the single party of which all Rwandans were members by birth. Only the president of the Movement was allowed to be a candidate for the presidency, and there was no distinction between the organs of the Movement and those of the state. This allowed for personal rule; separation of powers existed on paper only.

In 1990 a fresh episode of conflict led to a process of further institutional upheaval, as the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) invaded the country from Uganda, thus starting the civil war that was to end with genocide against the Tutsi that resulted in the loss of over 800,000 lives. The RPF ultimately won the war and, like the CNDD-FDD, immediately set about consolidating its hold on power. Although the government claimed that it adhered to the spirit of the 1993 Arusha Peace Agreement, it quickly began suppressing countervailing voices in politics, the press and civil society. The recent period of mass conflict, and the resulting destruction of the previous institutional landscape, made this task considerably easier.

Parliamentary elections in 2003, 2008 and 2013 and presidential elections in 2003 and 2010 were held without opposition and were characterized by intimidation, terror and fraud, resulting in the establishment of *de facto* single-party rule. Legislation on ‘divisionism’ and ‘genocide ideology’ allowed the RPF’s monopolistic narrative to be entrenched, and the regime reacted aggressively to opposing voices. Policy on the most important issues was decided by a small inner circle of the RPF, without involvement of the cabinet or parliament, and free from judicial oversight (Reyntjens 2013).

Uganda is a somewhat different case. At independence, it was by no means obvious that the country was headed for a downward spiral. Although the British strategy of indirect rule conferred considerable political privileges on the Buganda Kingdom while also feeding into a North-South socio-economic divide (Apter 1961), its institutional legacy was more positive. A legislative council was set up as early as 1921, and the first African member was admitted in 1945. Two competitive multi-party elections were held in advance of independence, and although the polls were problematic, the two main parties split the seats roughly equally.

The 1962 National Assembly elections passed relatively peacefully and were won by a coalition comprising then Prime Minister Milton Obote’s Uganda People’s Congress (UPC)

and the Kabaka Yekka (King First) party, which represented the interests of the elite within the Buganda Kingdom. However, the fragile entente between these two parties broke down in 1966 when Obote sent troops to attack the royal palace, forcing the Kabaka (King) into exile. This clash constituted ‘the first major bloodbath in independent Uganda’ and was followed by a ‘savage and unprecedented slaughter of Baganda’ (Mutibwa 1992: 38).

Far from consolidating control, Obote’s power grab exacerbated tensions and further undermined his popularity, paving the way for Major-General Idi Amin’s successful coup in 1971. Amin’s subsequent eight-year rule incapacitated most key state institutions, even if it stopped short of producing a complete institutional vacuum (Hansen 2013). In 1979, the Tanzanian army aided by a loose coalition of exiled Ugandan forces invaded and overthrew Amin. A brief, turbulent transition period followed, which culminated in a rigged election in 1980 that brought Obote back to power. A variety of rebel groups soon emerged to fight the Obote II regime. One of these rebel outfits, the National Resistance Army (NRA), took control of Kampala in 1986 and its leader, Yoweri Museveni, became President.

The NRA, known as the National Resistance Movement (NRM) in its civilian form, promised, among other things, to restore democracy. This included the institution of regular parliamentary elections as well as local councils to promote popular participation and oversight (Museveni 2000). The implementation of this democratisation agenda nevertheless proved slow as a new constitution was only adopted in 1995. Significantly, the absence of effective institutions following the collapse of the Amin regime made it easier for Museveni to create a new institutional landscape that he could control. This included a ‘no-party’ system effectively dominated by a pro-NRM elite faction (Carbone 2005). Although the legislature briefly asserted a limited form of autonomy, systematic executive meddling led to what Tripp characterizes as Uganda’s ‘hybrid regime’: a combination of a constitutional façade and an authoritarian dynamic (Tripp 2010).

As the NRM government became ever more personalised and centralised, Museveni and his inner circle found fresh strategies to convert would-be democratic institutions, such as the much-celebrated local councils, into new channels for patronage (Green 2010). Even the 2005 transition to multi-party politics ultimately served to consolidate NRM control. Meanwhile, the simultaneous lifting of presidential term limits ensured that Museveni's authority went unchecked. The highly controversial 2016 general elections, with a partisan Electoral Commission overseeing widespread fraud and a post-election crackdown on opposition activity, are only the latest illustration of this authoritarian trend.

Thus, in all three of these cases episodes of conflict further undermined the weak institutions inherited from the colonial era, leading to the emergence of vulnerable and pliant political systems. Where political upheaval has been a regular occurrence, contemporary institutions have especially shallow roots and so are poorly placed to resist the will of the executive. One clear indicator of this is that in all three countries the current president flouted or removed presidential term limits in order to stay in office.

The low conflict cases

In stark contrast to the three conflict cases, Tanzania stands out as one of the most stable states in the continent. Although German colonial rule led to the violent suppression of the *Maji Maji* revolt in 1905-06, after World War I the country was mandated to Britain and in 1946 this relationship was converted into a trusteeship by the United Nations. As a result, colonial rule was not nearly as invasive or exclusionary as in many other parts of the continent, and featured national political associations from the late 1920s onwards.

Tanzania's more positive colonial legacy and post-colonial stability created room for aspects of the political process to become institutionalized. Most obviously, a single party

ruled until the early 1990s under the guise of the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU), which was later rebranded as the Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) following a merger with Zanzibar's Afro-Shirazi Party (ASP) in 1977. Less obviously, despite its status as a de jure one-party state, Tanzania held competitive parliamentary elections every five years from 1965 to 1995, at which point opposition parties were again allowed to contest. Although the one-party legislature remained a weak institution, subordinate to the ruling party, some scholars have argued that it provided an important forum for protest, amplified through high levels of media interest in parliamentary proceedings (Van Donge and Liviga 1986). Moreover, following Tanzania's multiparty transition, and in particular since in the mid-2000s, the legislature has emerged as a more assertive body, pushing through institutional reforms and challenging the government over corruption allegations. Following President Nyerere's decision to step down in 1985, Tanzania also institutionalized presidential term limits, with each successive president serving two five-year terms.

The extended reign of the ruling party has, needless to say, created its own set of challenges, notably regarding the independence of key political institutions, while there are numerous examples of overlap between partisan and official functions.⁶ The Regional and District Commissioners, for example, are presidential appointees and face routine criticism for their alleged involvement in CCM mobilization efforts. The Registrar of Political Parties has also been accused of partisan bias, including divisive interference in the internal affairs of opposition parties (*Mwananchi* 7.12.2016). Constitutional reforms have remained a top-down affair both under one-party rule and after (Nyirabu 2002), while limits on press freedom and efforts to co-opt civil society actors have also constrained the space for political dissent. However, despite this problematic legacy, Tanzanian institutions have, on balance, allowed for some progress towards democratic consolidation. Opposition parties, for instance, credit their performance in parliamentary debates—broadcast live during much of President

Kikwete's term in office (2005-2015)—with raising their popular profile nationally. These parties increased their vote share in the 2010 and 2015 elections, gains that were also facilitated by stronger local structures and the formation of a united coalition in 2014. While elections are still not fully free and fair, levels of intimidation, harassment or outright violence are considerably lower than in other East African states.

Unlike Tanzania, Kenya experienced a particularly turbulent colonial era. The violent conquest of the country in the early 1900s was followed fifty years later by the *Mau Mau* rebellion, which was not only a conflict between Kenyans and colonial forces but also pitted different elements of the Kikuyu ethnic group against each other. The rebellion and the resulting state of emergence from 1952 onwards led to the prohibition of colony wide parties, retarding the development of national politics. Moreover, while elections were organised for the Legislative Council from 1958 onwards, these were initially held on a restrictive franchise that only empowered 'loyal' colonial subjects (Branch & Cheeseman 2006).

Yet in stark contrast to Uganda, Kenya did not experience high levels of post-colonial conflict. Instead, President Jomo Kenyatta's careful management of the one-party state that emerged after independence led to a period of political stability, albeit one punctuated by a number of political assassinations. As a result of the absence of prolonged violence, the country's institutional experience has been closer to Tanzania than that of the conflict cases. From 1969 until 1992, Kenya was governed by a single-party system that held regular elections for the legislature and had a National Assembly that was, at least in the 'golden years' of the 1960s and early 1970s, one of the most vibrant on the continent. During this era, political stability was sustained by the 'politics of participation and control' (Bienen 2015). Participation came through one-party elections for Members of Parliament that were held based on the Westminster model,⁷ and which remained relatively free and fair until the 1980s. Control came through the security forces and the Provincial Administration, a prefectural

bureaucracy established under British rule to act as the eyes and ears of the colonial governor (Branch & Cheeseman 2006). Together with Kenyatta's legitimacy as the country's 'founding father', this combination generated the legitimacy and coercive capacity needed to stabilize the political system (Tamarkin 1978).

The reintroduction of multi-party elections in the 1990s created fresh challenges for the regime, and led to significant election related conflict in 1992, 1997 and 2007. However, although this violence was tragic and cost over 3,000 lives, it did not lead to the collapse of political institutions that occurred in Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda. In part, this was because the level of violence was comparatively low and localised. Along with the strong coercive institutions at the disposal of the president, this empowered the government to retain overall control, and as a result the state limped through its various crises.

Of course, it is also true that the same coercive institutions were often used to intimidate opposition supporters, and so compromised the potential for democratic transformation. However, over time the stability of the political framework, and the willingness of Kenyan leaders to seek power through the ballot box, facilitated a process of institutional strengthening. Most notably, at times the government has responded to political crises by implementing piecemeal reforms to the structure of the state. For example, following the post-election violence of 2007/8, a national unity government passed a new constitution that significantly enhanced the independence of key political institutions, while reducing the powers of the presidency. Although the Jubilee Alliance government elected in 2013 has attempted to roll back some of these gains, key elements such as the system of devolution are becoming entrenched.

In both of our non-conflict cases, then, institutional stability, combined with pressure from opposition groups, civil society organisations and international donors, has given rise to gradual processes of institutional strengthening. Moreover, this is not just an issue of capacity

but also relates to the independence of institutions. In stark contrast to our conflict cases, presidential term limits have become entrenched, and have so far been respected by a number of leaders: Moi and Kenyatta in Kenya, and Mwinyi, Mkapa and Kikwete in Tanzania. This cannot be fully explained with reference to the absence of conflict, but it is clear that these iterative processes of democratic consolidation have benefitted from taking place against a backdrop of relative political stability.

ELITE CONSENSUS

We understand elite consensus to refer to the quality of relations between the leaders of rival parties and factions, and of different economic and social groups. Elite consensus is high when rival leaders share common beliefs and goals, and are willing to work across party, ethnic or other lines to achieve these. Where elite consensus is low, it can feed into a negative cycle of conflict and violence, which in turn render elite differences all the more intractable. A comparison of our cases suggests that experiences of conflict leads to a deterioration in elite relations, which in turn makes it harder to negotiate across divides.

The high conflict cases

Burundi and Rwanda have an ethnic setup that is relatively rare in Africa in that it is bipolar, with only two relevant groups, a large majority of Hutu (85-90%) and a minority of Tutsi (10-15%). While political ethnicity existed in pre-colonial times, particularly in Rwanda, a number of measures by the colonial administration rigidified and exacerbated the divide, undermining the potential for a stable political system to evolve.

After independence, trust and consensus remained limited in Burundi, even within the small circle of the ruling military elites, as is shown by the fact that the country experienced coups d'état roughly every ten years. These were typically palace revolutions that aimed at replacing a military ruler who had come to be seen as a liability for the group in power. Indeed Micombero, Bagaza and Buyoya all hailed from the same area in Bururi province. Each time, the reasons for the coup were the same: end intra-regime tensions, avert threats against the group's hegemony, and re-establish the corporatist power of the army.

Subsequent episodes of ethnic conflict, and the coups themselves, led to a further deterioration in relations between rival political leaders. When the incumbent elites were defeated at the 1993 elections, there was no common ground between them and the unexpected winners. Although President Ndadaye attempted to rectify this by appointing a Tutsi prime minister from the former ruling party and a cabinet that, despite Frodebu's large majority in parliament, offered about one third of positions to the opposition, the old elites feared political marginalisation and the loss of their privileges. In turn, this lack of trust led to the coup of October 1993 (Reyntjens 1993).

Even after a peace accord was signed in August 2000, the absence of elite consensus delayed its effective implementation, and it took another five years to peacefully end the transition period. Moreover, the experience of prolonged conflict engendered a form of political paranoia within the new political elite. Although the CNDD-FDD handsomely won the 2005 elections, it failed to transform from a rebel movement into a political party, retaining its bush mentality. This was expressed in two ways. On the one hand, the CNDD-FDD exhibited a 'siege mentality', fearing everything and everyone outside its own small circle: the political opposition, urban opinion, civil society, the media and the international community. On the other, it continued to be haunted by internal distrust and competition, and

the settling of scores was common. As a result, fresh barriers emerged to democratic consolidation.

Turning to Rwanda, the ethnically-inspired violence in 1959-1963 and 1973 abated following the 1973 coup. However, regionalism then became a more prominent divide, pitting northerners against the rest of the country. When the predominantly Tutsi RPF invaded, ethnicity immediately came to the fore again, in part exacerbated because many Hutu felt that the RPF – and thus the Tutsi – got too favourable a deal in the 1993 peace accord. Consequently, this period led to an intensification of distrust and the division of the political elites into two camps, one allying with the former single party MRND, and the other with the RPF. In turn, growing distrust contributed to institutional stalemate and the subsequent resumption of the civil war. Although the victorious RPF later put in place a government of national unity with members of the main parties, this fell apart in August 1995, after which the government gradually eliminated the political opposition and autonomous civil society. As a result, increasing numbers of politicians, civil servants, military officers and members of the judiciary fled the country in the second half of the 1990s.

The further erosion of trust and consensus during this period, which owed much to the trauma of the genocide itself, is visible on two levels. First, it is clear that the government's commitment to an inclusive political settlement has been extremely limited. This 'settlement' was imposed by the RPF, and 'the political parties that exist in Rwanda today are only tolerated if they agree not to question the definition of political life drawn up by the RPF' (International Crisis Group 2002: 2). In other words, the 'settlement' is that of an RPF cartel (that also includes the military), leaving out all those who do not agree with the RPF's definition of political life. Second, the manifestation of distrust is also to be found within the RPF itself. From the late 1990s on, a number of RPF members defected, but the watershed came in 2010 when four major (former) high-ranking RPF leaders created an opposition

movement, the Rwanda National Congress, after having fled the country. This increased the government's fear of internal subversion, which became apparent in 2014 and 2015 when dozens of people were arrested or 'disappeared'. High-ranking army officers were prosecuted and sentenced to long prison terms for subversion, conspiracy and insurrection. All this occurred in an atmosphere of denunciations and rumours that confirmed Clark's assessment that 'the RPF is a deeply divided, fragile, paranoid party' (Clark 2010). Just like the CNDD-FDD, it has failed to shed the practices of a secretive rebel movement.

In Uganda, elite relations towards the end of the post-colonial period were not as poor as in Burundi and Rwanda, but quickly deteriorated following bouts of post-independence conflict. Indeed, although there were notable elite cleavages at independence, particularly relating to the pre-eminence of the Buganda Kingdom, these were not insoluble. While differences between the Buganda elite and the central government were inevitable, the narrowing of the UPC leadership and corresponding political base to focus on northerners was a by-product of internal party wrangling and could have been avoided by careful political management.

Worse was to come. After his 1971 coup, Idi Amin initially espoused an anti-sectarian message, which helped win him the support of the Baganda and other groups. However, faced with an economic crisis and mounting opposition, Amin came to depend on an inner circle dominated by elites from his home region of West Nile (Hansen 2013). As Amin's paranoia began to grow, the country became engulfed in domestic and then international conflict that exacerbated ethnic tensions and inter-elite mistrust. In turn, this undermined the effort to engineer a peaceful transition after Amin's overthrow as the groups working to defeat him fragmented into competing politico-military factions.

Although the subsequent NRA insurgency against the Obote regime espoused an anti-sectarian message, violations of this principle were tolerated on an opportunistic basis. For

instance, retaliation against Northerners living in Luweero was largely overlooked, and even encouraged (Kasfir 2005). Moreover, Branch (2005) argues that continued hostility towards the Acholi and Langi peasantry helped prolong the struggle against the Lord's Resistance Army, a brutal insurgency that terrorised the North for 20 years.

To his credit, Museveni's government has pursued a relatively inclusive 'big tent' strategy, which has minimized the effects of elite defections and thereby secured a degree of stability. However, this only applies to those willing to operate under the president's patronage – opposition leaders are branded as 'wolves' out to undermine the 'peace' that the NRM fought for. Most notably, former rebel and NRM comrade, Col. Kizza Besigye, who broke ranks in 1999 and has since stood against Museveni in four presidential elections, has been arrested, physically attacked by security operatives, jailed, driven into exile, and falsely charged with treason and rape. The president has been very clear that such strategies have been motivated by the fact that he does not trust his former ally to run the country. Opposition leaders aside, the security forces under the NRM regime have repeatedly entered into violent confrontations, notably with traditional cultural institutions—Uganda's kingdoms—and their supporters (*Human Rights Watch* 10.09.2010; *Washington Post* 29.11.2016). What's more, the question of who will succeed Museveni in power has repeatedly divided Museveni's inner circle and is widely seen to carry the threat of future political instability.

Of course, elite and societal divisions in Uganda do not approach the levels of Burundi and Rwanda. Nonetheless, in all three countries a profoundly suspicious and anxious set of elite relations have been further complicated by episodes of conflict, exacerbating leaders' deep distrust and encouraging them to eschew compromise in favour of violent strategies – compounding the impact of weak institutions.

The low conflict cases

The degree of elite consensus has been far greater in Kenya and Tanzania. During the colonial period in Tanzania, the majority of the nationalist elite united within TANU as the dominant political party, and have remained largely cohesive throughout the subsequent period of one-party rule. Some of this elite cohesion was preserved through concerted efforts to downplay ethnic differences and thereby eliminate societal cleavages as a base around which rival elites could mobilize and challenge the centre. Most notably, President Nyerere's post-independence government pursued nation-building policies, which included the promotion of Swahili as a national language and an explicit ban on references to ethnicity, religion or race in an electoral context.

The relative lack of politicised inter-communal tensions does not, of course, remove the possibility for distrust among elites. Actors within CCM frequently try to de-legitimize the opposition, and the ruling party often resorts to authoritarian tactics to defuse challenges to its authority, for instance by periodically harassing opposition politicians and their supporters. Elite cleavages, however, do not reach the same depth as in neighbouring countries, as demonstrated by the political manoeuvrings around the 2015 president elections. When party stalwart Edward Lowassa lost his bid to secure the CCM presidential nomination, he was able to both leave the ruling party and find acceptance among the opposition, becoming their presidential flag bearer. Crucially, despite crossing the floor he has not been the target of state-led harassment to anywhere near the same degree as, say, Besigye in Uganda. In general then, the relative absence of politicised ethnicity and higher levels of elite trust help enable a more stable—if constrained—form of multiparty politics in Tanzania.

By contrast, in Kenya the level of inter-elite trust was relatively low during the colonial era, when the nationalist movement split into two competing coalitions, the Kenya African National Union (KANU) and the Kenya African Democratic Union (KADU).

However, the incorporation of KADU leaders within the KANU government in 1964/5, and the subsequent rise of KADU leader Daniel arap Moi to the Presidency in 1978, integrated these rival groups within one political structure. Ever since, Kenyan politics have been characterised by an unusual combination of elite tension and cohesion.

Winner-takes-all politics, together with strong ethnic identities, have encouraged leaders to use negative messaging about the danger of a particular leader or community coming to power, and in some cases to deploy political violence in their campaigns (Ferree, Gibson & Long 2014). However, the Kenyan political elite is also remarkably fluid and leaders remain willing to engage with each other, and to share political platforms when the need arises, despite their differences. In part such accommodative strategies are necessary as a result of the nature of political competition in Kenya. Because no ethnic group comes close to being a majority of the population, winning elections requires candidates to put together multi-ethnic coalitions. As a result, the political system tends to coalesce into two or three main coalitions before elections and then fragment thereafter as former allies argue as to how to share power if they win, or who was to blame for their defeat if they lose (Cheeseman 2008).

This is not to say that Kenya does not suffer from serious ethnic tensions, or that competing leaders have a high level of trust in each other: coalitions are typically fleeting because rival Big Men do not really believe that their supposed allies can be relied upon to protect their interests. But in Kenya, as in Tanzania, these tensions have proved to be much more manageable than in our conflict cases, and the political elite remains capable of both cohesion and cooperation. Most notably, the leaders of the two main parties that fought against each other in the controversial 2007 election, Raila Odinga and Mwai Kibaki, joined forces to push through much needed constitutional reform. In doing so, they facilitated a

process of political reconciliation and democratic renewal that is currently unthinkable in Museveni's Uganda, Kagame's Rwanda or Nkurunziza's Burundi.

PAST REGIME TYPE AND CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS

A civilianised and non-interventionist military is generally seen to be an important component of a stable democracy in which the composition of the government reflects the popular will rather than coercive force. Indicators of the militarisation of politics include strong representation of the security forces in the cabinet, senior military figures regularly expressing their opinions on government policy, and the use of the security forces to resolve domestic political disputes. Our cases demonstrate that when the military has entered mainstream politics as a result of prolonged conflict or civil war, it is extremely difficult to send it 'back to barracks', even in states that previously experienced civilian rule. In turn, this has severely compromised the transition to democratic rule in our conflict cases.

The high conflict cases

Burundi has been ruled by military regimes from the mid-1960s. This has resulted in a highly politicised military prone to intervention in civilian affairs. Just months after the country reverted to civilian rule after the 1993 elections, the army intervened again, and put an end to the democratic experiment. After the CNDD-FDD took power in 2005, its main leaders, more used to running a rebel movement than a government, had little idea of how to manage a state. In line with its *maquis* experience, it focussed on capturing state bodies in charge of security and intelligence as well as the means of economic and financial accumulation, and did so very

rapidly and successfully. Inside the party, its chairman, Hussein Radjabu, installed a reign of terror similar to the one he and other leaders exercised during the rebel years.

Things did not improve after Radjabu's replacement as party chair and detention in 2007. Instead, attempts by the 'generals' inside the party to impose their dominance led to splits and the expulsion of dissidents. In 2009, Nkurunziza reasserted control over the CNDD-FDD with the support of three generals from the police, the army and the intelligence agency. This shift implied a clear choice in favour of authoritarianism and, when needed, the use of violence as a political strategy. The same year, the increasing visibility of the party's youth wing, the *imbonerakure*, which became more and more involved in violent attacks on opponents, provided further evidence of this evolution. According to information obtained by the United Nations office in Bujumbura in April 2014, army generals were overseeing *imbonerakure* activities (AFP 2015).

Power struggles within the CNDD-FDD continued later that year, and prominent party members were occasionally threatened by hardliners. The watershed came in 2015 when the CNDD-FDD decided to field president Nkurunziza for a third, unconstitutional term in office. This was preceded by a great deal of debate that led to open confrontation within the party, revealing a struggle between the 'historicals'/'military' faction and the 'intellectuals'/'politicians'. On 23 March, 17 high-ranking party cadres signed a declaration opposing the third term. The 'frondeurs' were threatened, and many went into hiding and later exile. On 25 April, Nkurunziza's candidacy was proposed by the party congress, and the expulsion of the 'frondeurs' was confirmed. After most opposition parties boycotted the polls, Nkurunziza was elected president and the CNDD-FDD won a handsome majority in parliament. Violent protest left hundreds dead, and over 200,000 fled to neighbouring countries.⁸

Rwanda also has a long history of military rule, in its case since the coup of 1973. Although the country formally returned to constitutional government in 1978, a military-civilian coalition remained the major power broker. In 1994, the RPF seized power as a result of military victory instead of a political deal, and was thus in a position to unilaterally impose a political dispensation. It put in place a seemingly civilian regime, but major decisions are taken by a small inner circle in which army and intelligence officers play a dominant role. A strong example was the repeated deployment of the army in Zaire/DRC without a decision by the cabinet nor any debate in parliament. Indeed, the RPA's massive presence alongside the AFDL rebellion was acknowledged only after the end of the 1996-7 war. Rwanda launched a new invasion in August 1998, and its presence in the DRC continued, either directly or through proxies, well after it officially withdrew its troops in July 2002. At home, security forces were used to harass, arrest, and even kill dissidents, and to rig elections (Reyntjens 2013: 26-56).

Of course, the political system also involved civilians, but it soon became in essence a *securocracy*.⁹ Dorsey has shown how the army and the intelligence services were the pillars of the regime and how the strict control of space and people was an obsession from the beginning of the war in 1990 (Dorsey 2000). This is understandable in light of the life experience of the RPF leaders: 'atrocities and civilian massacres, committed against them, around them, or by them. For them violence was not exceptional; it was a normal state of affairs' (Prunier 2009: 13). The RPF's worldview and the awareness of its narrow political and social base do not allow sharing and inclusion, let alone competition. Indeed, Verhoeven notes that the RPF's self-perception 'will continue to clash with ideas of compromise, relativism and empathy that are integral parts of democracy' (Verhoeven 2012: 271).

Although Uganda experienced a period of civilian rule following independence, the military gained in political significance when President Obote, with his hold on power

increasingly tenuous, came to rely on loyal army officers and Acholi and Langi recruits for support. It was one of these officers, Major-General Idi Amin, who later overthrew Obote in a coup. Throughout the Amin years, as well as during the subsequent Obote II administration, the military retained a prominent position in civilian politics. After it took power, the NRM initially promised to normalize civilian-military relations, but the military remains a key pillar of government.

Most notably, the security forces have maintained a strong presence in formal politics. The military has ten reserved seats in Parliament while former or serving military officers have also been appointed to influential ministerial positions. On another level, corruption within the Uganda People's Defence Force (UPDF) has proved an effective vehicle for enriching and consolidating Museveni's elite inner circle, thereby further politicising the military. For instance, UPDF operations in both the DRC in the 1990s and in Northern Uganda into the 2000s provided opportunities for Museveni's allies to profit from illicit trade and the embezzlement of funds (Tangri & Mwenda 2013). At the same time, the president has remained suspicious of key figures among the military top brass and has responded, in part, by nurturing a special unit of the UPDF, the Presidential Guard Brigade (PGB), headed by his son. Moreover, open dissent amongst military personnel is not tolerated, with top generals facing detention and court martial for opposing the lifting of presidential term limits.

Despite these misgivings, the president's management of the armed forces has impacted on political competition and institutional performance. On a rhetorical level, Museveni routinely casts himself as indispensable in taking care of '[his] army'. Many opposition leaders, meanwhile, view Museveni's regime as a 'military dictatorship' (Besigye 1999). The UPDF, police force and loosely aligned paramilitary groups have repeatedly intervened in – or even taken over – the operations of key state institutions. Security forces have, for instance, interrupted court hearings and encircled parliament during controversial

debates. They are also heavily implicated in electoral politics. The 2001 and 2006 elections were notorious for their unprecedented level of police and military intervention and brutality while security forces also responded forcefully to the 2011 post-election ‘walk-to-work’ protests. The 2016 elections again raised serious concerns as security personnel blocked opposition candidates’ campaign efforts and repeatedly arrested Besigye.

In all three of our conflict cases, then, the militarisation of politics that occurred as a result of the takeover of the state by security forces during episodes of post-colonial conflict has never effectively been reversed. The continued heavy presence of security force personnel throughout government, combined with the weak insulation of the security forces from the partisan whim of the executive, has constrained the activities of civil society and opposition parties, undermining the process of democratic consolidation.

The low conflict cases

In both Kenya and Tanzania, the military has been much more effectively civilianised, despite an unpromising beginning. In Tanzania, for example, the army mutinied in 1964. However, President Nyerere’s subsequent re-organisation of the army effectively brought it to heel, and resulted in more cordial ties between the party and the military. Many new army recruits were drawn from the TANU Youth League, while local TANU secretaries used the prospect of army jobs to encourage people to take out party cards. At the same time, members of the military and police were allowed to join TANU and participate politically.

Partly as a result, military personnel emerged as a significant contingent within Tanzania’s ruling coalition. CCM Central Committee members, regional party secretaries, and district commissioners include a large percentage of army officers and members of the security forces. These percentages have, if anything, increased following the multi-party

transition with, for instance, the percentage of army officers serving as district commissioners rising from 15 percent in 1982 to 25 percent in 2012 (Therkildsen and Bourguin 2012: 16). Some of these figures are misleading, though, as many CCM politicians with an army rank passed through the military as part of their mandatory service, or else worked as political and ideological instructors within a military college, as was the case for former President Kikwete. Moreover, the partisan leanings of the military aside, instances of military personnel intervening in politics have been limited, and there has been no attempt by the armed forces to veto the process of democratization.

The benefits of a clear divide between the civilian and military sphere are even clearer in Kenya, where no post-independence leader has been drawn from the armed forces and very few military officers have entered into mainstream politics, for example by taking up cabinet positions. The separation of the military from the government was established early in the independence era, when Jomo Kenyatta moved to staff the security forces with close allies to guarantee their compliance. Thereafter, only during a confused and failed coup attempt in 1982 have the military threatened to usurp civilian leaders. Indeed, one of the most striking features of the Kenyan military has been its absence during major episodes of national crisis. In 2008, for example, President Kibaki decided not to deploy the military in response to the post-election violence, with the exception of one or two isolated instances.

As in Tanzania, the relative absence of direct military involvement in everyday politics should not be taken to imply that the security forces are not politically partisan. The leadership of the military, police, and the paramilitary General Service Unit (GSU) – which is tasked with protecting the president – are carefully selected to ensure their loyalty. When the position of the government is challenged, either by ethnic clashes or large rallies for opposition leaders, it is the GSU that the government typically relies on to maintain control (Branch & Cheeseman 2009). However, in contrast to our conflict cases, the broader

significance of these coercive institutions has not secured them a dominant voice when it comes to the composition of the government or to government policy, even in the wake of the invasion of Somalia.

Thus, in both Kenya and Tanzania the leadership of the security forces is heavily politicised, but the political role of the military is nevertheless limited. Both the institutional superiority of civilian actors and the long-established norms of military non-intervention help to insulate everyday politics to a greater extent than in our conflict cases. In turn, this creates greater space for multiparty politics to evolve outside of the shadow of authoritarian excess.

CONCLUSION: THE PROSPECTS FOR DEMOCRACY IN EAST AFRICA

This article has examined the relationship between conflict and democracy through three factors that play an important role in the process of democratization. Drawing on five cases from East Africa, we have argued that sustained political violence has contributed to weaker and more pliant political institutions, less cohesive inter-elite relations, and the militarization of the political sphere. Although we have not sought to quantify the impact of conflict, the three mechanisms identified in this paper appear to be influential, especially in combination. Leaders operating in a context of weak institutions and low trust are particularly unlikely to believe that deals negotiated with rivals will hold, and so are prone to try resolving political crises through force rather than compromise. In turn, where presidents enjoy strong and partisan control over a loyal and effective military, their capacity to rule through force is enhanced, and the political space available to opposition parties and civil society is considerably constrained.

Taken together, these points help to explain the absence of political reform in Burundi, Rwanda, and Uganda. Although international actors repeatedly engaged in all three countries

in order to encourage negotiated settlements, such deals ultimately proved unviable because leaders felt neither confident enough to invest in them, nor ‘trapped’ enough to abide by them. In Uganda, Yoweri Museveni saw peace talks as a sideshow in the 1980s, and was determined to take power through the sword rather than the pen. In Rwanda, peace negotiations in the early 1990s, and the implication that power would need to be shared, encouraged the government to look for extreme solutions to the challenges that it faced, and so played a role in the build-up to the genocide. In Burundi, it took repeated rounds of negotiations to arrive at the inclusive arrangements codified in the Peace Accord of 2000 and the ensuing 2005 constitution, but even this has failed to hold due to the lack of autonomy of core democratic institutions.

Moreover, while there are a number of other factors that shape the extent of democratic reform, none accounts for the clear divide between Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda, on the one hand, and Tanzania and Kenya, on the other, in a way that would suggest that legacies of conflict do not play a role. For example, the influence of western governments is often seen to be an important factor in democratization. However, progress towards democratic consolidation in the region does not reflect levels of aid dependency or international intervention: Rwanda and Uganda have been considerably more aid dependent than Kenya in recent times, but have failed to democratize nonetheless. Similarly, the negative impact of natural resources on democratic consolidation cannot help us here, as they are not present in either Burundi or Rwanda in significant quantities, and were found in Uganda only recently (Ross 2001).

Our main conclusions summarised, it is important to repeat what we are *not* saying. We are not claiming that domestic political conflict is the only factor contributing to authoritarian rule in these states, or that other factors such as problematic colonial legacies do not matter. Rather than arguing that conflict is the dominant factor shaping (un)democratic

trajectories in East Africa, we have pursued the more modest goal of demonstrating that it has been a contributing factor, and of tracing the mechanisms through which the relationship between conflict and authoritarianism works in the East African context. Recognizing the limitations of counterfactual and small-n analysis, we call for further research into these relationships that can add new cases and draw on a wider range of methods.

In a similar vein, it is important to note that our focus on the way in which conflict shapes the prospects for democratic consolidation should not be taken to imply that these states are trapped in a situation that they cannot escape. A number of African countries have found pathways out of conflict towards more open politics, for instance Nigeria and Liberia. Both of these cases reflect many of the trends identified in this paper: after the end of the Biafran civil war, it took 29 years for Nigeria to introduce a stable form of multi-party politics, while Liberia's first attempt at democratic transition in 1997 ended in the resumption of civil war. Both nonetheless achieved considerable democratic breakthroughs. In Liberia, Africa's first democratically elected female president Ellen Johnson Sirleaf came to power in 2005 and has since served two terms. In Nigeria, a sustained period of multi-party politics culminated in the victory of the opposition All People's Congress in 2015, leading to the country's first ever democratic transfer of power.

The events that made these processes of democratization possible have important lessons to tell us about what might be required if democratic consolidation is to take place in Burundi, Uganda, and Rwanda. Most notably, in the two West African cases, political transition was made possible by a change of leadership.¹⁰ In Nigeria, it was the sudden death in office of President Sani Abacha, one of the country's most brutal and uncompromising dictators, which created the space for a process of democratic renewal. In Liberia, it was the overthrow of the warlord Charles Taylor, his exile in Nigeria, and the agreement that those who had been involved in previous power sharing deals would not contest the 2005 elections,

which made possible the predominantly civilian contest in which Sirleaf emerged victorious. Of course, this only serves to highlight the challenges ahead for the conflict cases discussed in this paper: with the curtailment of term limits in Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda, it is unclear when a change of leadership might take place. Moreover, a change of leadership on its own is unlikely to effect far-reaching reform in the absence of a broad consensus on the need to initiate constitutional reform, undertake a process of national reconciliation, and remove the military from civilian politics. It is this set of deeper challenges that explains why it is so difficult to build democracy out of conflict in Africa (Ottaway 2003).

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NOTES

¹ For a later quantitative study of global datasets, see also Wantchekon & Neeman 2002.

² Our sample comprises the member states of the East African Community (EAC). We do not include South Sudan as it joined the EAC very recently, in April 2016, and as the country has been in near permanent turmoil since independence in 2011. If anything, inclusion of South Sudan would have reinforced our argument.

³ It is important to note that Kenya has not been conflict free. In 1992, 1997, and 2007, election related violence resulted in the deaths of many citizens and the displacement of many more. However, this violence was neither as sustained or as geographically broad as that witnessed in Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda.

⁴ Because some of the intra-state violence witnessed in the region has not taken the form of a civil war as conventionally defined, from hereon we use the term ‘domestic political conflict’ rather than war.

⁵ There are some notable exceptions such as Tendi 2013,

⁶ Under President Magufuli, elected in October 2015, many of these negative trends have become markedly worse.

⁷ Voters in each constituency were able to select their preferred MP from a list of candidates standing under the banner of the ruling party. Elections were held on a first-past-the-post basis.

⁸ An analysis of this crisis can be found in Nindorera 2015.

⁹ Term coined by Sidiropoulos 2002.

¹⁰ We are grateful to John Dunn for leading us to this point.