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## From victorious rebels to strong authoritarian parties: prospects for post-war democratization

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### ABSTRACT


In a number of cases, rebel movements that won civil wars transformed into powerful authoritarian political parties that dominated post-war politics. Parties whose origins are as victorious insurgent groups have different legacies and hence different institutional structures and patterns of behaviour than those that originated in breakaway factions of ruling parties, labour unions, non-violent social movements, or identity groups. Unlike classic definitions of political parties, post-rebel parties are not created around the need to win elections but rather as military organizations focused on winning an armed struggle. Key attributes of victorious rebel movements, such as cohesive leadership, discipline, hierarchy, and patterns of military administration of liberated territory, shape post-insurgent political parties and help explain why post-insurgent parties are often strong and authoritarian. This article seeks to identify the mechanisms that link rebel victory in three East African countries (Uganda, Ethiopia, and Rwanda) to post-war authoritarian rule. These processes suggest that how a civil war ends changes the potential for post-war democratization.

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### Introduction

In a number of cases, rebel movements that won civil wars transformed into powerful authoritarian political parties that dominated post-war politics. Parties whose origins are as victorious insurgent groups have different legacies and hence different institutional structures and patterns of behaviour than those that originated in breakaway factions of ruling parties, labour unions, non-violent social movements, or identity groups.<sup>1</sup> The strength and durability of a political party, Huntington suggested, “derives more from its origins than from its character”.<sup>2</sup> Unlike classic definitions of political parties, post-rebel parties are not created around the need to win elections but rather as military organizations focused on winning an armed struggle.<sup>3</sup> Key attributes of victorious rebel movements, such as cohesive leadership, discipline, hierarchy, and patterns of military administration of liberated territory, shape post-insurgent political parties and help explain why post-insurgent parties are often strong and authoritarian. This article seeks to identify the mechanisms that link rebel victory in three East

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After this introduction, the second section of this article reviews recent research on war-to-peace transitions and on the roles played by political parties in authoritarian regimes. It then examines how insurgent groups operate as proto-political parties during the period of armed struggle and how legacies of wartime shape the nature of the post-war democratization. The third section uses the three East African cases to identify a mechanism that links the rebel movement to the post-war authoritarian party. This mechanism includes leadership coherence and discipline, the legacies of wartime administration of liberated territory, and the opportunities in the transition from war to peace to consolidate power. The final concluding section develops some of the implications of these findings and thoughts regarding future research.

### **Transforming rebel movements into political parties**

There has been a significant growth in research on the transformation of rebel movements into political parties. Until recently scholars of political parties paid relatively little attention to cases following civil war and the conflict resolution community said little about the roles played by post-conflict parties in promoting peacebuilding. Manning's early work on Mozambique provides an important case study of the transformation of the Renamo rebel movement in Mozambique.<sup>4</sup> Ishiyama and Batta point to the links between the organizational legacies of civil war and centripetal dynamics within new post-war parties.<sup>5</sup> Lyons emphasizes how processes to "demilitarize politics" can promote post-war parties that are able to operate effectively within the context of electoral competition.<sup>6</sup> Most of this scholarship focuses on transitions following negotiated settlements and where the international community played an important role in supporting "liberal peacebuilding".<sup>7</sup> What has been missing from this literature, however, has been a consideration of cases where the insurgent force won the war. The war-to-peace transition following rebel victory is different than the transition in cases of a negotiated settlement with important implications for the character of post-war parties and prospects for democratization.

The existing literature on the links between war termination by victory and post-war politics provides inconsistent findings. Toft argues that civil wars that end in rebel victory are more inclined to produce democratic outcomes. This, she suggests, is because victorious insurgents have both the military capability to penalize spoilers and the incentives to govern justly in order to gain legitimacy from both domestic constituencies and the international community. Following the logic of Tilly and the state-building literature, Toft argues that a "victor's peace" will lead to stronger institutions which in turn lead to "a more stable, and perhaps more democratic, system of government".<sup>8</sup> Negotiated settlements, she argues in contrast, are more likely to lead to renewed violence and to increased authoritarianism as weak governments crack down on the opposition. Weinstein also suggests that popular mobilization by the National Resistance Army (NRA) during the Ugandan civil war created the conditions for post-conflict democratization.<sup>9</sup> Fortna and Huang, however, find little support in the quantitative data for the hypothesis that military victories – including insurgent victories – improve the prospects for democratization.<sup>10</sup>

The argument in this article is that there is a specific type of strong authoritarian party that is the progeny of a victorious insurgent group. This is consistent with Levitsky and Way, who argue that strong authoritarian parties tend to be mass-based and often have high levels of solidarity derived from their origins in armed conflict.<sup>11</sup> Party “cohesion” is demonstrated by the leadership’s ability to secure the cooperation of political allies or to impose discipline and therefore see less elite defection in times of crisis.<sup>12</sup> Other scholars have argued that one-party authoritarian regimes are likely to be stable and resist both international and domestic pressures to democratize.<sup>13</sup>

It is notable that three of the most powerful authoritarian ruling parties in Africa operate in states where protracted civil wars ended in rebel victory. These parties are not just networks supporting personal rulers or window dressing for military regimes. While neo-patrimonial links and ethnic mobilization are important, these post-insurgent political parties are distinguished from other African political parties by the legacies of winning their protracted civil wars. In Uganda, the National Resistance Movement (NRM) came to power in 1985 and has ruled first through a “no party” system and since 2005 through a multi-party system where the government dominated by the former insurgent force suppressed the opposition. In Ethiopia, the Ethiopian Peoples’ Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) defeated the previous military regime in 1991 and, with the exception of 2005, held a series of non-competitive elections. The EPRDF won 100% of the seats in the 2015 national elections. The Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) came to power following the 1994 genocide and has ruled in a highly authoritarian manner that has prevented opposition from mobilizing or elections from being meaningful. In 2015, 98% of voters approved a referendum to amend the Rwandan constitution so that President Paul Kagame could run for re-election. These post-insurgent parties have used the legacies of the war and the processes of war-to-peace transitions to create the kind of strong authoritarian parties that have dominated post-war politics.

### **Political life during wartime: insurgents as proto-political parties**

In order to survive in the harsh environment of protracted civil war, rebel groups must concurrently operate as private military organizations, have the ability to raise funds, and function in ways similar to peacetime political parties. As Collier and his colleagues argue, a successful rebel group is simultaneously a political party, a military organization, and a business.<sup>14</sup> Southall emphasizes the legacies of violence that shape politics during armed struggle: “War is violent, and the use of violence in politics comes at the expense of the gentler virtues which make for a good society.”<sup>15</sup> In particular, launching an armed struggle reinforces hierarchy at the expense of internal democracy and the treatment of rival organizations as traitors rather than legitimate competitors.

Political organizations in the context of civil wars respond to a specific set of incentives and opportunities. The presence of protracted violence leads to specific forms of governance in the form of norms, expectations, and patterns of behaviour that shape perceptions of what is politically possible and thereby create the political context in which strategies are considered and adopted. Wartime governance is not anarchy and, as Menkhaus argues in the context of Somalia, there can be “governance without government”.<sup>16</sup> War destroys many types of political institutions but provides the setting for others to thrive.<sup>17</sup> New research investigates different forms of what

Staniland calls “wartime political orders” as insurgents and states develop relationships during protracted armed struggle that are both cooperative and conflictual.<sup>18</sup>

Insurgent groups often arise in the context of brutal authoritarian regimes and therefore are characterized from their creation by secrecy and fear of betrayal. Della Porta’s comparative work on clandestine political violence emphasizes the specific nature of solidarity that arises from underground politics.<sup>19</sup> Clandestine organizations tend to be particularly centralized, hierarchical, and compartmentalized and become more so as repression and violence escalate.

Other types of violence – communal conflicts, pogroms, urban riots – may not require a high level of institutionalization and may reflect a relatively unorganized, spontaneous outpouring of grievance-driven frustration or anger. Protracted civil wars such as those in Uganda, Ethiopia, and Rwanda, however, require institutions with highly developed capacities and structures to mobilize supporters and provision armed forces. Insurgent groups are generally studied as military organizations and more recently as greedy mafia-style business enterprises that are motivated by greed and the opportunities of illicit diamond mining or narcotics trafficking.<sup>20</sup> In the context of civil war, political organizations may perceive armed struggle rather than electoral competition as the most feasible tactic to achieve their political goals. Operating as an insurgency seeking military victory rather than as a party focused on electoral politics may therefore be a tactical response to the incentives of wartime rather than an inherent part of a movement’s nature.

What is less often considered is how insurgent groups may be studied as proto-political parties and how rebels must overcome some of the same challenges as any other political party. In other words, while they differ with relation to the use of violence, “insurgent group” and “political party” play similar functions regarding mobilization in pursuit of political power. Rebels may differ from a classic definition of a political party as “a team seeking to control the governing apparatus by gaining office in a duly constituted election” but primarily in the tactics used in pursuit of the levers of power.<sup>21</sup> In this formulation, civil war is a form of contentious politics that requires a particular type of organization: the insurgent group.<sup>22</sup> The internal dynamics of alliance building and fragmentation of rebel movements is another way of understanding political processes during violent conflict.<sup>23</sup>

### **Linking victorious rebel groups to powerful authoritarian parties**

This section traces how the nature of post-conflict political parties and their potential to promote democratization are shaped by their wartime legacies. In Uganda, Ethiopia, and Rwanda, small cohesive cohorts of leaders created insurgent movements based on strict discipline and hierarchical authority. In addition, experiences in military administration of liberated territory during the war form precedents and patterns of behaviour that are carried through the transition to peace. Political parties that originate in rebel movements often have particular characteristics that make it more likely that they will become powerful peacetime authoritarian parties and limit potential for democratization.

#### ***Wartime institutions: leadership coherence, discipline, and hierarchy***

In Uganda, Ethiopia, and Rwanda, the leadership of the victorious insurgent groups had experience in politics before launching their rebellions. NRM leader Yoweri Museveni

and several of his top leaders participated in the Uganda Patriotic Movement, a political party that competed in the 1980 elections. The leadership of the EPRDF first engaged in contentious politics as members of the student movement that sparked the Ethiopian revolution in the early 1970s and only later took up the armed struggle. Paul Kagame and several others in the leadership of the RPF engaged in politics through the Rwandan Alliance of National Unity, a diaspora-based political party. It was only after trying other political strategies and failing (often to face brutal repression) that these groups opted for armed struggle. Post-insurgent parties such as the NRM, EPRDF, and RPF therefore often had some form of existence as suppressed political movements prior to transforming into a rebel movement. In these cases and as political opportunities shifted, failed political parties became victorious rebels that then became powerful authoritarian ruling parties.

Insurgencies often begin with a small, dedicated group of committed fighters. According to official narratives, the NRA in Uganda launched the war with 27 men with guns, the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF, the core of the EPRDF) with less than 100 fighters, and the RPF developed out of the Rwandan Alliance of National Unity that had just 100 members in 1983.<sup>24</sup> Early divisions and factionalization are either settled (often through violence) or differences are put aside (for a time) as the prospects for victory are realized. The pressures of protracted conflict forge relationships based on interdependence if not trust among leaders and between leaders and the rank-and-file. A coterie of linked leaders and high levels of solidarity forged in wartime facilitate the transition from a rebel movement to a strong authoritarian political party.

The early leaders of the NRA in Uganda had already struggled together in the Ugandan Patriotic Movement, a political party that had participated in the elections of 1980 before heading to the bush. The NRA's leadership was largely from the south-west of the country (particularly the Ankole). A number of Museveni's relatives joined him in the NRA, reinforcing the solidarity typical of clandestine networks and military units.<sup>25</sup> The rebel movement cannot be explained as a narrow ethnic organization because its main area of military operations was in the Buganda-inhabited Luweero triangle to the north of Kampala. The struggle was extremely violent, with an estimated 100,000–200,000 persons killed in a very small area.<sup>26</sup> This limited area and the high level of violence compelled the NRA to form a disciplined organization or perish. The NRA had no foreign border or inaccessible mountains to retreat to and therefore had a great fear of betrayal and infiltration, resulting in a well-articulated core leadership.<sup>27</sup>

During the protracted civil war in Ethiopia, the TPLF similarly developed a cohesive leadership and a disciplined, hierarchical organization.<sup>28</sup> The TPLF became the most powerful insurgent force in the northern Ethiopian region of Tigray only after defeating rival rebels in the Ethiopian Democratic Union and the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party in a series of pitched battles in the 1970s. In the late 1970s the TPLF faced splits and fissures in a period known as *hinfishfish* ("anarchy") that resulted in many deserting the movement and some dissenters being executed. As Milkias notes, the TPLF had strict discipline and made its decisions according to the precepts of democratic centralism so that "once policies were adopted, power was intended to flow only downward".<sup>29</sup> Meles Zenawi and a small group of others in the leadership formed the Marxist-Leninist League of Tigray (MLLT) in the mid-1980s, a tightly integrated vanguard within the TPLF, and it was this coterie that led the movement to

victory. Another period of internal factionalization occurred in 1989 as war aims shifted following the liberation of Tigray. Many fighters returned to their villages rather than remain in the Front as it moved through non-Tigrayan areas towards Addis Ababa.<sup>30</sup> The TPLF was not cohesive by birth but became so over time as a core leadership in the MLLT consolidated its hold and purged the movement of dissent.

The early leaders of the RPF also had prior experience together in the Rwandan Alliance for National Unity, an organization of exiled politicians. Under Obote's regime in Uganda, Rwandan refugees were targeted and many joined Museveni in the NRA for self-defence, forging additional ties. The RPF began with an already established set of seasoned military leaders who had fought together in Uganda. Key leaders such as Fred Rwigyema and Paul Kagame were part of the group of 27 that were with Museveni when he started his insurgency in 1981. Rwigyema rose to deputy commander of the NRA before becoming commander of the RPF and Kagame served as head of military intelligence and was in the United States receiving training as an officer of the NRA when the civil war broke out.<sup>31</sup> The RPF therefore had a coherent military leadership and a battle-hardened army before it even stepped over the border into Rwanda in October 1990.

These illustrations therefore help us identify one possible mechanism that explains how victorious insurgent groups become powerful authoritarian political parties. In Uganda, Ethiopia, and Rwanda the rebels had coherent and disciplined leadership when they seized victory and began the process of transforming into a political party. This kind of leadership structure is in part the outcome of overcoming factionalization during the armed struggle and that contributed to the rebellion's success. In other words, post-insurgent parties often have particular attributes and leadership characteristics that developed not in the context of peaceful political competition nor as a result of the imperatives of winning elections but in the quite distinct context of violent, zero-sum, military struggles.

### ***Liberated territory administration: legacies of military rule***

Victorious insurgent groups often have direct experience administering liberated territory during the civil war. These wars are often protracted and therefore often attract what Balcells and Kalyvas call "higher quality rebels with the capacity to develop strong relations with civilian populations and build resilient institutions of governance".<sup>32</sup> Insurgents engaged in protracted warfare often provide governance in the form of public goods in order to secure the support of civilians in occupied territory. In some cases, rebels do more than control violence but seek to provide some level of public goods – a "rebelocracy" in Arjona typology.<sup>33</sup>

In this way insurgents, and particularly victorious rebels in protracted asymmetric conflict, have experience in performing functions of political administration. During civil war, military structures play roles that political parties fulfil in peacetime. Victorious insurgent groups often carry these models and precedents of military governance into the post-war political arena. The need to administer liberated territory provides incentives to develop cadres with skills to mobilize civilians under the difficult circumstances of violence and insecurity with the goal of supporting a military strategy. Not surprisingly, these precedents shape post-war governance as successful military administrators are converted (at least formally) into peacetime governors.

The Ugandan NRA organized the population in areas it controlled during the war through “Resistance Councils” (RCs). The rebels generally treated civilians in liberated territory well and the RCs were in some measure a form of village democracy that reflected local opinion and grievances.<sup>34</sup> When military conditions contradicted local democracy, however, the NRA put military survival ahead of civilian protection. The RCs themselves were an improvisation to wartime conditions. According to one NRA member, the insurgents set up the RCs as military auxiliaries “out of necessity to survive during the war”.<sup>35</sup> The *Uganda Resistance News* (NRA’s wartime publication) emphasized the military importance of RCs:

Although the committees were operating initially clandestinely, they succeeded in mobilizing the public towards the war effort. Their role was inter alia to provide information about the enemy’s activities, movements and report his agents among the society. RCs also obtained food-stuffs and provided camping sites for the troops.<sup>36</sup>

The exigencies of administering liberated territory in support of an armed movement therefore shaped the NRA’s experiences and the models it then transferred to local political structures after the war ended. When the NRA seized power in 1985, RCs were well-established in western Uganda, where the NRA controlled territory, and were put in place elsewhere around the country by 1987.

In northern Ethiopia, the TPLF saw itself as a classic Maoist-style guerrilla army that would win by forging relationships with the peasants of Tigray. In the very beginning of the civil war, however, the insurgent leaders from the cities needed the local knowledge of the peasants to survive.<sup>37</sup> In 1985 key leaders formed the MLLT, a vanguard party within the liberation front. As argued by Lenin in *What is to Be Done?*, the MLLT saw itself as a party of enlightened elites that could lead the masses to revolution.<sup>38</sup>

The TPLF was a political army that emphasized indoctrination and the military being under the control of the political party. Senior military leaders argued that armies are inherently political and what differentiates revolutionary militaries is the political order they serve. The rebels deployed political cadres with their military units to insure discipline and organize regular self-criticism sessions known as *gimgema*.<sup>39</sup> Local councils known as *bayto* (“peoples’ council”) worked under TPLF guidance to administer liberated zones. The *bayto* provided a mechanism for top-down wartime governance and served to implement the TPLF’s war policies and “generate the maximum contribution to the movement’s project” according to one of the founders of the TPLF.<sup>40</sup> Civilian administration supported the military agenda, and health workers and local administrators in liberated zones were regarded as “fighters” in the “people’s struggle”.<sup>41</sup>

During the famine of the mid-1980s, the Front had the capacity and local legitimacy to organize a massive movement of the population from Tigray to TPLF-controlled camps in Sudan.<sup>42</sup> The movement had its own very impressive humanitarian wing, the Relief Society of Tigray that coordinated large-scale relief operations with international assistance, and the Tigray Development Association that raised significant resources in the diaspora. The insurgents played other state-like diplomatic roles, including having extensive (and often contentious) relationships with neighbouring insurgents in Eritrea as well as a range of international actors and organizations.<sup>43</sup>

The TPLF therefore had extensive local political structures prior to gaining power, and these models developed during wartime shaped the design of post-war institutions. The rebels began the transition in 1991 with not only a large and battle-hardened



military and a disciplined leadership but also cadres in every village in Tigray who were well integrated into a region-wide political network and with experience in administering liberated territory and managing top-down relationships with the peasantry. The TPLF effectively administered a mini-state before it seized power and took control over all of Ethiopia.

The RPF planned and organized their invasion of Rwanda for three years prior to crossing the border and anticipated a protracted civil war similar to the one many of them had experienced in Uganda.<sup>44</sup> The RPF occupied a liberated zone along Rwanda's border with Uganda but did not control significant territory until late 1992. Under military pressure in 1990–1991 the rebels retreated to the inaccessible Virunga Mountains to rearm and reorganize. A Ugandan journalist who visited territory controlled by the RPF in December 1992, during the ceasefire and lengthy peace talks in Arusha, reported that the insurgents “did a lot of political work with the civilian population trapped or freely living in rebel territory”. Following models developed in the Luweero Triangle during the war in Uganda, the Rwandan rebels established “safe villages, where internally displaced people were mobilized, resettled, and empowered with political education”.<sup>45</sup> While it lacked the extended experience administering liberated territory that characterized the rebels in Tigray and Uganda, the Rwandans had significant wartime experience fighting within the NRA. Kagame headed the NRA's military intelligence, providing him with valuable experience in maintaining discipline and detecting defection. Refugee camps and the large Rwandan population within the diaspora provided additional opportunities to develop skills and institutions to manage civilians in support of the military campaign.

### **After victory: legitimacy and transforming insurgent groups into political parties**

Victorious rebels are more likely to derive significant legitimacy from defeating the old order and ending the violence – “we rule because we won!” Rebels who fight to stalemate and accept negotiations can claim a role in forcing a transition but those claims are more ambivalent and contingent than claims of unilateral victory. War-weary publics often appreciate parties that can credibly promise security and there is some survey evidence that exposure to protracted conflict leads a population to be more willing to accept authoritarian leaders.<sup>46</sup> Rebel movements often highlight the sacrifices made during the armed struggle and the valour of their martyrs. Victors do not need to rely upon winning credible post-conflict elections to claim legitimacy. Rebel tanks on the streets of the capitol provide ample evidence of the effective transfer of power. Some in a population may enthusiastically support the new order while others may resent it but it is difficult to deny the reality of a military victory.

Rebel winners of protracted civil war often claim to create a new political order rather than the more limited change of top-level leadership. In this way the rebel movements in Uganda, Ethiopia, and Rwanda share key characteristics with national liberation movements such as the Zimbabwe People's National Union, the South West African People's Organization (SWAPO), and the African National Congress. As Southall argues, these movements “could claim the authority of history, they and their leaders were imbued with a particular legitimacy, and challenges to their rule were therefore morally and politically illegitimate”.<sup>47</sup> During the armed struggle, insurgents such as the NRA, TPLF, and RPF assert that they represent the “people” and have

the right to rule because of the organization's commitment to needed social and political transformation. In Namibia, the victorious liberation movement transformed into the ruling party and used the campaign slogan "SWAPO is the nation and the nation is SWAPO".<sup>48</sup> Such narratives challenge the legitimacy of political competition and underline post-liberation parties' ambivalence if not hostility towards democracy.

Victorious insurgents must transform from organizations that developed in the context of wartime into organizations that can respond effectively to the different challenges of peace. As noted above, civil wars are not periods of anarchy or political vacuum but are alternative systems of governance based on fear and predation and that reward violence. If the insurgents remain unreconstructed, then the post-war regime is likely to be fragile. In Uganda, Ethiopia, and Rwanda, the creation of a strong authoritarian party was a key stage in the process of consolidating power and making the transition from victorious insurgent force to powerful and stable regime.

A significant challenge faced by the NRA, EPRDF, and RPF upon seizing power was that key national constituencies played minor roles in their respective insurgent movements. The popular bases of the three insurgencies were, to varying degrees, regionally and ethnically focused in contrast to the broader and more diverse bases needed to rule their respective post-conflict states. Civil wars are often fought in confined territories, as in the Luweero Triangle or Tigray, requiring victorious insurgent groups to reach out to populations outside of these zones as post-war parties in order to extend their authority throughout the state. Insurgent movements transform into political parties because such parties serve to broaden the base of the movement and make it a more effective organization to govern nationally post-war.

In Ethiopia, for example, the war was fought by the TPLF in the north and significant communities in the south had little contact with the insurgents prior to regime change. Populations from the historically marginalized Oromo and southern communities had been drafted into the Derg's army but most wished to stay out of the war. In 1989, the TPLF joined with a largely Amhara organization, the Ethiopian People's Democratic Movement, to form the coalition the EPRDF.<sup>49</sup> The EPRDF recognized this challenge and recruited leaders from among prisoners of war to form ethnic vanguards, to move quickly into southern areas after victory. These cadres established "peace and stability committees" within days of the regime change in 1991 and transformed these committees into political parties often known as "People's Democratic Organizations" throughout southern Ethiopia in time to dominate local elections in 1992.<sup>50</sup> These parties often were created virtually overnight and many had tenuous links to the often quite isolated communities in question.<sup>51</sup> By transforming the regionally and ethnically based insurgent movement into a national political party, the EPRDF had the kind of organizational capacity to extend its power into vast new areas for the first time.

Similarly in Uganda, leaders from the southern Ankole people and fighters from the Buganda dominated the NRM during the war. After victory, the movement deliberately reached out to old politicians from the Democratic Party to broaden its reach and to more closely resemble the ethnic complexity of Uganda.<sup>52</sup> The Tutsi-dominated RPF initially reached out to "moderate Hutus" so that it could position itself as a national party. By creating state-wide political parties, rebel movements with specific regional and ethnic origins could create new institutions that could claim to represent all of the population.

## Elections and post-insurgent authoritarian parties

Post-conflict elections following rebel victory have little to do with determining who will govern but are often key processes for the transformation of rebel movements into national authoritarian parties. Uganda, Ethiopia, and Rwanda each held multiple rounds of post-conflict elections but these polls served to consolidate the authority of the victorious rebel group rather than being a mechanism for citizen participation. Beyond their consequences for legitimacy, electoral processes following civil war play other key functions that assist victorious rebels to demonstrate their domination, consolidate power, and engage in political party expansion.

Elections following rebel victory are typically non-competitive and function as processes of power consolidation rather than citizen participation in selecting their leaders. In Uganda, Ethiopia, and Rwanda the incumbents have all won by overwhelming majorities. In the 2010 elections in Ethiopia, the ruling party won 96.6% of the seats in the national parliament and in 2015 increased its share to 100%.<sup>53</sup> Rwandan President Paul Kagame, when asked if his 93% landslide in the 2010 election represented the will of the people, answered: “So, 93% – I wonder why it wasn’t higher than that?”<sup>54</sup> Successful rebel groups are not constructed to win “50% + 1” shares of battles and post-insurgent political parties tend to see losing a constituency as similar to losing a battle. The point of elections organized by strong authoritarian parties is to demonstrate overwhelming, unassailable strength, not to create a governing coalition or to solicit the views of citizens.

Elections under powerful post-insurgent authoritarian regimes follow patterns similar to polls in electoral or competitive authoritarian systems.<sup>55</sup> Turnout is often high despite the lack of competition. Many voters, however, go to the polls in order to avoid being characterized as an opponent of the military regime. Voter turnout in Rwanda was 97% in 2003 and 98% in 2010.<sup>56</sup> In Ethiopia, voter turnout was 94% in 1995, 90% in 2000, 83% in the competitive 2005 elections, and 93% in 2010 and 2015.<sup>57</sup> Museveni regarded political parties as one of the instigators of internal strife and consequently banned political parties until 2005. Only the NRM was allowed to operate in the “no-party” system. In fact, as documented by Carbone, the NRM assumed many of the functions of a political party and handily won the first multi-party elections.<sup>58</sup> In 2016, just before the February election, an observer wrote:

There are no prizes for predicting who wins Uganda’s presidential election on 18 February. After 30 years in office and four victorious elections in the last 20 of them, President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni knows every trick in the book. Yet he’s still taking no chances. Using state funds, intimidating and outlawing the opposition, and mobilizing violent “youth” are all part of the presidential armory. All this comes on top of his National Resistance Movement (NRM)’s overwhelming control of the electoral process and its unparalleled ability to mobilize the grassroots.<sup>59</sup>

Some voters explain that voting in non-competitive elections is a necessary task to avoid trouble with the powerful authoritarian party. As one Ethiopian farmer explained his 1995 vote for the ruling party, “I was afraid. The Government said I should vote so I voted. What could I do?”<sup>60</sup> Frightened voters can acquiesce to but not legitimate the power of strong authoritarian regimes. Elections following rebel victory provide opportunities for the authoritarian party to demonstrate its power and to marginalize potential rivals, both within the ruling party and from other potential sources of opposition. A

victory of over 90% sends a powerful message that the ex-insurgent party remains overwhelmingly dominant and that compliance or acquiescence is necessary.

## Conclusions

This article has identified mechanisms that show how victorious insurgent groups may transform into powerful post-war authoritarian political parties. One mechanism is the organizational legacies of wartime that shape the development patterns of post-war ruling parties. To engage in protracted armed conflict and to be viable as an actor in wartime governance requires an organization that operates in some ways as a proto-authoritarian party. Legacies of the protracted war – notably coherent and disciplined leadership, effective hierarchical links between leaders and rank-and-file, and experience in mobilizing civilians in liberated territory – create models and precedents that provide a mechanism that links wartime rebel organizations to peacetime political parties.

A second set of mechanisms is connected to the process of the war-to-peace transition following rebel victory. In contrast to cases of negotiated settlement and the liberal peace model supported by the international community with its emphasis on powersharing, third-party security guarantees, and building democratic institutions, the victorious insurgents dominate the transition following the defeat of the incumbent regime. Post-conflict elections and political parties are not just deployed by the international community in cases of negotiated settlement but also help consolidate power and build authoritarianism following insurgent victory.

This article focused on Uganda, Ethiopia, and Rwanda, three cases where victorious insurgents transformed into authoritarian parties. To answer the larger question of how wartime institutions shape post-conflict politics requires an analysis of a broader range of cases of civil wars that ended in victory. Other cases are characterized by the rapid collapse of the old regime, in part due to significant external intervention from neighbours or the international community, as in the Democratic Republic of Congo in 1996 or Libya in 2011. Laurent-Désiré Kabila's Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire, for example, was a quickly assembled amalgamation of armed factions organized with significant assistance from neighbouring Uganda and Rwanda, rather than an insurgency with a battle-hardened leadership and experience in administering liberated territory.<sup>61</sup> In Libya, an international air campaign contributed to the rapid collapse of Muammar Gaddafi's rule and the emergence of a patchwork of decentralized "revolutionary brigades".<sup>62</sup> In neither case did the insurgents have the time or incentives to forge the kind of strong institutional basis for an effective authoritarian ruling party.

There are other cases of insurgent victories that ended in self-determination, such as Namibia, Eritrea, and South Sudan.<sup>63</sup> These transitions raise different dynamics for victorious rebels compared to the challenges of consolidating power in existing states.<sup>64</sup> The old regime is no longer a political player in cases of secession. Finally, there are cases of civil wars that end with the victory of the incumbent state. The war-to-peace transitions in cases of government victory such as Algeria, Angola, Peru, Sri Lanka, and Russia (Chechnya) also differ from the East African cases examined here.

The three powerful authoritarian regimes with their origins in victorious insurgent groups under examination here – the NRM in Uganda, the EPRDF in Ethiopia, and the RPF in Rwanda – have remained in power since winning their respective wars. There

are questions, however, regarding whether such parties have the flexibility to facilitate a transition from post-war authoritarian to a more sustainable democratic political order. The original leaders in Uganda and Rwanda remain in power in 2016 and are likely to retain their positions in upcoming elections. Meles Zenawi, the founder of the insurgent group that became the ruling party in Ethiopia, died in office in 2012 and was replaced by the deputy prime minister without any public drama, suggesting the resilience and continued relevance of the party beyond its founder. The legacies of victory, however, change over time. Cohesive leadership forged on the battlefield fades as new interests and actors emerge in peacetime. The legitimacy achieved through victory lessens in countries where the majority of the population has no direct memory of the war. The hierarchy and discipline that was associated with winning the war may create a ruling party that is powerful but also brittle.

### Acronyms

EPRDF	Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front
MLLT	Marxist-Leninist League of Tigray
NRA	National Resistance Army (Uganda)
NRM	National Resistance Movement (Uganda)
RC	Resistance Council
RPF	Rwandan Patriotic Front
SWAPO	South West African People's Organization
TPLF	Tigray People's Liberation Front

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### Notes

1. LeBas, *From Protest to Parties*; Elischer, *Political Parties in Africa*.
2. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies*, 424.
3. Michels, *Political Parties*, 367.
4. Manning, *The Politics of Peace in Mozambique*.
5. Ishiyama and Batta, "Swords into Plowshares."
6. Lyons, *Demilitarizing Politics*. See also Kovacs, *From Rebellion to Politics*; De Zeeuw, *From Soldiers to Politicians*.
7. Paris, *At War's End*. For a recent review of the concept see Richmond and Mac Ginty, "Where Now for the Critique of Liberal Peacebuilding?"
8. Tilly, "War Making and State Making"; Toft, *Securing the Peace*, 60.
9. Weinstein, *Inside Rebellion*.
10. Fortna and Huang, "Democratization after Civil War," 805.
11. Levitsky and Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism*.
12. See also Brownlee, *Authoritarianism in an Age of Democratization*; Gandhi, *Political Institutions under Dictatorship*; and Magaloni, *Voting for Autocracy*.
13. Geddes, "Authoritarian Breakdown."
14. Collier et al., *Breaking the Conflict Trap*, 56.
15. Southall, *Liberation Movements in Power*, 56–57.
16. Menkhaus, "Governance without Government."
17. Keen, "Incentives and Disincentives for Violence"; Duffield, *Global Governance and the New Wars*.
18. Staniland, "States, Insurgents, and Wartime Political Orders." See also Arjona, "Wartime Institutions"; Mampilly, *Rebel Rulers*.

19. Della Porta, *Clandestine Political Violence*.
20. Collier, Hoeffler, and Rohner, "Beyond Greed and Grievance."
21. Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, 25.
22. Weinstein, *Inside Rebellion*; Wood, *Insurgent Collective Action*.
23. Christia, *Alliance Formation in Civil Wars*; Woldemariam, *When Rebels Collide*.
24. Herbst, "African Militaries and Rebellion." On the NRM see Museveni, *Sowing the Mustard Seed*, 7. On the TPLF see Young, *Peasant Revolution in Ethiopia*, 101–103. On the RPF see Misser, *Vers un Nouveau Rwanda?*
25. Ngoga, "Uganda," 100.
26. Ofcansky, *Uganda*.
27. Schubert, "Guerillas Don't Die Easily."
28. Young, *Peasant Revolution in Ethiopia*; Hammond, *Fire from the Ashes*.
29. Milkias, "Ethiopia, the TPLF, and the Roots of the 2001 Political Tremor," 13.
30. Tronvoll, *War and the Politics of Identity in Ethiopia*, 49, 56.
31. Reed, "Exile, Reform, and the Rise of the Rwandan Patriotic Front."
32. Balcells and Kalyvas, "Does Warfare Matter?," 1395. See also Kalyvas and Balcells, "How the End of the Cold War Shaped Internal Conflict." For a case study see Daly, "Organizational Legacies of Violence."
33. Arjona, "Wartime Institutions."
34. Kasfir, "Guerrillas and Civilian Participation," 291.
35. Eriya Kategaya, a member of the NRA, quoted in Tideman, "Resistance Councils in Uganda," 82.
36. Cited in Tideman, "Resistance Councils in Uganda," 63.
37. Hammond, "Garrison Towns and the Control of Space in Revolutionary Tigray," 92–93.
38. Bach, "Abyotawi Democracy"; Lenin, *What is to be Done?*
39. Vaughan and Tronvoll, *The Culture of Power in Contemporary Ethiopian Political Life*.
40. Berhe, *A Political History of the Tigray People's Liberation Front*, 252.
41. Africa Watch, *Evil Days*, 309; Barnabas and Zwi, "Health Policy Development in Wartime," 42.
42. Hendrie, "The Politics of Repatriation."
43. Prendergast and Duffield, *Without Troops and Tanks*.
44. Watson, *Exile from Rwanda*.
45. Muhanguzi, "Visiting RPA's Captured Territory."
46. Dyrstad, "Does Civil War Breed Authoritarian Values?"
47. Southall, *Liberation Movements in Power*, 6.
48. See Melber, "Limits to Liberation."
49. The EPDM later recast itself as the Amhara National Democratic Movement.
50. Vaughan and Tronvoll, *The Culture of Power in Contemporary Ethiopian Political Life*, 116.
51. For the example of the Omotic People's Democratic Front, see Markakis, *Ethiopia: The Last Two Frontiers*, 337.
52. Tripp, *Museveni's Uganda*, 48–49. See also Lindemann, "Just Another Change of the Guard?"
53. Arriola and Lyons, "Ethiopia."
54. AFP, "Rwandan President."
55. Schedler, *Electoral Authoritarianism*.
56. Reyntjens, "Rwanda."
57. Voter turnout data from International IDEA available at <http://www.idea.int/vt/countryview.cfm?id=73>. The figures for Uganda are not as dramatic – 59% in 1996, 70% in 2001, 68% in 2006, and 59% in 2011.
58. Carbone, *No-Party Democracy?*
59. Africa Confidential, "Uganda."
60. Quoted in Buckley, "Ethiopia Takes New Ethnic Tack," A21.
61. Stearns, *Dancing in the Glory of Monsters*.
62. International Crisis Group, *Popular Protest in North Africa and the Middle East*.
63. Somaliland is a similar case, but has not been recognized as a new state by the international community.
64. For a discussion see Toft, "Self-Determination, Secession, and Civil War."

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