Introduction

> It has been the involvement of the military in politics that has generally paved the way for the militarization of ethnic conflict.
>
> – Pradeep P. Barua[1]

Ethnicity has profoundly shaped African military institutions and, through the involvement of the military in politics, the instability of the postcolonial state. Learned from colonial practices, African leaders have often built security institutions on ethnic foundations: conflating loyalty with coethnicity. Constructing such systems of ethnic privilege within the military has led to repeated, violent, and ethnically-based resistance from soldiers facing imminent exclusion. Their coups and mutinies have perennially destabilized the region. Even if successfully built, ethnic armies feed into other dynamics of instability and violence. Removed from one of the most important and powerful state institutions, excluded groups may rebel through other tactics, such as insurgencies or terrorism. Dictators supported by ethnically loyal institutions may discount potential challenges to their rule, untying their hands to pursue increasingly repressive practices. Nor do ethnic armies embrace recent trends toward liberalization, processes that threaten their continued dominance of the security sector, making them an obstacle to further democratization. Understanding the intersection between practices of ethnic politics and civil-military relations thus reveals fundamental tensions in the African state that have resulted in enduring instability.

The unraveling of Ugandan democracy following independence aptly illustrates these dynamics. In 1966, Prime Minister Milton Obote used

[1] Barua 1992, 134.

the military to dissolve his own government after a vote of no-confidence in Parliament. This autogolpe rapidly assumed an ethnic dimension as Bagandan leaders, whose ethnically-based political party had controlled the Presidency and were constitutionally guaranteed reserved seats in Parliament, protested. In response, Obote purged the army of Baganda soldiers, filling their places with fellow northerners, and then deployed the military to the Buganda Kingdom. He also constructed a paramilitary General Services Unit with recruits from his home district of Akororo.[2] After two assassination attempts in 1969 and 1970, and with growing suspicion of his protégé Idi Amin who had been recruiting his own following of coethnics, Obote decided to further narrow the ethnic basis of the officer corps to fellow Langi and the allied Acholi.[3] Facing perceived imminent exclusion, Amin struck first. He claimed that, just prior to his coup, a secret meeting was held between Obote and senior police and military officers in which it was decided that Acholi and Langi troops, who already constituted roughly 75% of the army, would be used to disarm and purge all other officers and enlisted men.[4] In the following months and years, Amin then massacred Acholi and Langi troops and ethnically stacked the military with fellow Kakua as well as Nubians and southern Sudanese rebels.[5] Idi Amin's resulting dictatorship was one of the most brutal and unstable in Africa's history: suffering at least seven separate coup attempts and multiple ethnic rebellions, eventually being overthrown by neighboring Tanzania.

Even in far more stable countries, the construction of military institutions on ethnic grounds has created the conditions for sporadic violence. Kenya, for example, has a long history of ethnically stacking both security and civil service institutions. Kenya's first president, Jomo Kenyatta, created a new air force and paramilitary units recruited from coethnic Kikuyus to act as counterweights to the regular army. He then reconstructed the army's officer corps, recruiting its ranks almost entirely from the Kikuyu community, while also ethnically stacking the powerful provincial administration.[6] After their successions to power, subsequent Presidents Daniel arap Moi and Mwai Kibaki, have dislodged their predecessors' appointments from the police, military, and provincial

[2] Byrnes 1990; Horowitz 1985, 466; Minorities at Risk 2009.
[3] Horowitz 1985, 455; Minorities at Risk 2009.
[4] *Keesings* 1971.
[5] Keegan 1983, 598–600; Minorities at Risk 2009.
[6] Hassan 2015, 594; N'Diaye 2001, 123–126.

administration, replacing them with coethnic Kalenjins and then Kikuyus, respectively.[7]

These practices have contributed substantially to ethnic violence in Kenya. It was during the transition from Kenyatta to Moi that Kenya experienced its only coup attempt: as Moi attempted to dismantle his predecessor's ethnically stacked military institutions, initially purging the high command, Luo and Kikuyu junior officers rose up and seized Nairobi airport, the Voice of Kenya radio station, and other public buildings. Although the coup was put down by loyal units of the army within a matter of hours, the event deepened the historically tense cleavage between the Kikuyu and Kalenjin.[8] Following the coup, Moi continued his restacking of the Kenyan state apparatus with coethnics, who were later used to influence election results during liberalization and the opening of politics to multiparty competition. Kalenjin internal security officers were specifically deployed to swing districts and ethnically unaligned areas and used to intimidate and obstruct the opposition, stuff ballot boxes, and coordinate local ethnic violence.[9] The construction of ethnic security institutions in Kenya thus directly facilitated ethnic violence and contributed to political instability during regime transitions.

Rarely have the fields of civil-military relations and ethnic conflict been brought together to understand the African state and its seemingly endemic political instability. This is thus, first and foremost, a book about the military as a fundamental state institution in Africa – as tantamount to the state in many contexts – and the intertwined problems of ethnic violence and military intervention in politics. Ethnic conflict, and pervasive ideas of ethnic loyalty, have shaped the very development of African militaries while soldiers have played a central role in the competition over state institutions. Throughout much of Africa, the military is not a homogenous or neutral agent, but rather an institution complicit in and riven by ethnic conflict. I argue that building and dismantling systems of ethnic privilege within the military has led soldiers facing exclusion or the loss of their historic advantages to rebel. This has, in turn, further militarized ethnic politics. For while coups are the soldiers' first tactical choice of resistance, as they leverage their remaining access to state resources to halt their deteriorating circumstances, successful exclusion from important state institutions instigates further social violence.

[7] Decalo 1998, 229–230; Hassan 2015, 594; Hornsby 2013, 712–713.
[8] *Keesings* 2001; N'Diaye 2001, 132.
[9] Hassan 2015, 594; Hassan 2017.

CURRENT UNDERSTANDINGS OF ETHNIC VIOLENCE

The broadest contribution of this book is to the ethnic conflict literature. Organized political resistance along identifiable ethnic cleavages has come to characterize most civil conflict in the contemporary world, whether in the form of separatist insurgencies, civil wars, terrorist campaigns, or military coups.[10] The devastation of this violence is staggering. In the most extreme cases, ethnic tensions have culminated in ethnic cleansing, genocide, and other forms of mass killing, claiming hundreds of thousands of lives across all regions of the globe.[11] Insurgencies, including those with quite low fatality counts, increase government authoritarianism, regardless of initial levels of democracy or of the ultimate success or failure of the rebel movement.[12] And ethnically-based military coups displace civilian governments, often leading to years of military governance and the repression which sustains it: suspending the constitution, significantly undermining civil liberties, and banning political parties and associations. Ethnicity overwhelmingly conditions the struggle for state power with often deadly consequences.

The prevalence and consequences of ethnic violence have led many scholars to question, why do ethnic groups rebel? Three schools of thought have emerged advocating different causal mechanisms that link ethnicity to organized political violence: institutionalization of ethnic cleavages, horizontal inequalities, and ethnic political exclusion. In all three, how the state categorizes and treats ethnic groups is central to explaining the "propensity for political identities to become violent."[13]

Lieberman and Singh argue that the mere institutionalization of ethnic categories, boundary drawing between groups by the state, generates

[10] Since the end of the Cold War, ethnic wars have comprised over 75% of all civil wars (Gleditsch et al. 2002; Harbom & Wallenstein 2010; Fearon & Laitin 2011, 199; Wimmer, Cederman, & Min 2009, 316). Using a lower fatality threshold, Fearon and Laitin also find that sons of the soil movements, that defend ethnic homelands from the incursions of outsider migrants, constitute 31% of all civil conflicts (2011, 199). Ethnically orchestrated coups have also been commonplace throughout sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia (Horowitz 1985, 480–492; Quinlivan 1999, 139–141; Roessler 2011, 307).

[11] Our best estimates indicate 500,000 Tutsi civilians were killed in the 1994 Rwanda genocide, 200,000 non-combatants by the Sudanese government in Darfur, 100,000–200,000 indigenous Mayans in the Guatemalan civil war, 85,000–265,000 Kurds in Iraq, and 25,000–155,000 Bosnian Muslims between 1990–1995. Casualty figures were drawn from the following sources: for Rwanda, see Kuperman 2001, 19–21; for Sudan, see Downes 2008, 2; for Bosnia, Guatemala, and Iraq see Valentino 2004, 77–83.

[12] Chenoweth & Stephan 2011, 212–216.

[13] Daley 2006, 663.

emotional dynamics that lead to an increased risk of violent conflict. They contend that the state draws and reifies group boundaries when it explicitly bases law and policy on identity categories. Such institutionalization can take on many forms, including the use of ethnic categories on the census, the adoption of affirmative action policies in education and employment, the delegation of autonomy to particular groups, and the legalization of differentiated voting and citizenship rights, among others.[14] Highly institutionalized ethnic categories, drawn repeatedly across policy domains, make identities increasingly visible and thereby both susceptible to prejudice and easier to mobilize.[15] Additionally, institutionalization "signals that a dividing line exists between 'us' and 'them,' priming relational status concerns and shaping how subsequent facts are likely to be interpreted within a political context."[16] They find that ethnic enumeration on state censuses correlates both with an increase in the politicization of ethnic identity and with ethnic violence.[17] The deep institutionalization of ethnic categories thus increases the risk of conflict by raising the probability that prejudice and discrimination will be practiced and perceived while simultaneously making ethnic mobilization easier.

A second school of thought builds on Gurr's concept of relative deprivation, arguing that large social or economic disparities between ethnic groups, or horizontal inequalities, generate grievances that motivate the relatively deprived to rebel.[18] According to Gurr, relative deprivation is the gap between what men expect and what they have the capability to achieve. The greater this gap, the greater the grievances and the higher the risk of rebellion as frustration driven aggression mounts.[19] Inequality that falls along group cleavages additionally violates important social norms of justice and equality, aggravating emotions of anger and resentment amongst members of the deprived group.[20] Visible socioeconomic disparities between groups also increase the salience of ethnic identity as well as

[14] Lieberman & Singh 2012a, 209.
[15] Lieberman & Singh 2012b, 5.
[16] Ibid., 2.
[17] Lieberman & Singh 2017.
[18] The concept of horizontal inequalities also builds on Horowitz's concepts of horizontal and vertical ethnic differentiation. The former occurs when ethnic groups parallel each other in socioeconomic stratification, each stretching across the domain of possible positions. The latter transpires when ethnic groups are hierarchically ordered with one socioeconomically subordinate to another, like a caste-based system (1971, 232).
[19] Gurr 1970, 22–58.
[20] Cederman, Weidmann, & Gleditsch 2011, 481.

enhance group cohesion and loyalty. These, in turn, provide groups with mobilizational resources for overcoming the collective action dilemma and thus further contribute to the potential for violence.[21] For example, participation in rectifying group-based deprivation or discrimination confers values of dignity and self-respect on individuals, furnishing them with positive incentives to contribute to collective goods even if that participation entails high costs and personal sacrifice.[22] Findings suggest that group-based inequalities in education, wealth, and life expectancy significantly predict political violence, including insurgency, terrorism, coups, and democratic breakdown.[23]

A third school of thought argues that the exclusion of ethnic groups from political power constitutes a grave risk for organized rebellion. Political exclusion entails both symbolic and material sacrifices. Groups standing outside the halls of power tend to lack equal access to state employment, patronage, and public services as well as the ability to ensure for themselves protection from state discrimination, disadvantageous policies, and unfair treatment under the law. As norms of democracy and inclusion spread, overt political exclusion, particularly of large demographic groups, also runs increasingly counter to the foundations of state legitimacy. This generates mounting feelings of injustice toward exclusionary states, thereby facilitating recruitment into resistance movements.[24] Robust findings across studies indicate that ethnic exclusion from political power greatly increases the probability of violent conflict, especially when the excluded groups are large and located far from the capital.[25]

[21] Houle 2015, 475; Østby 2008, 144; Østby, Nordås, & Rød 2009, 304.
[22] Varshney 2003.
[23] See Barrows 1976; Buhaug, Cederman, & Gleditsch 2013; Cederman, Gleditsch, & Buhaug 2013; Cederman, Weidmann, & Gleditsch 2011; Gubler & Selway 2012; Han, O'Mahoney, & Paik 2014; Houle 2015; Houle & Bodea 2017; Kuhn & Weidmann 2015; Murshed & Gates 2005; Østby 2008; Østby, Nordås, & Rød 2009; Piazza 2011.
[24] Cederman, Gleditsch, & Buhaug 2013, 47; Wimmer, Cederman, & Min 2009, 321.
[25] See Asal et al. 2016; Azam 2001; Bodea, Elbadawi, & Houle 2017; Buhaug, Cederman, & Gleditsch 2013; Buhaug, Cederman, & Rød 2008; Cederman, Buhaug, & Rød 2009; Cederman, Gleditsch, & Buhaug 2013; Cederman & Girardin 2007; Cederman, Wimmer, & Min 2010; Cederman, Weidmann, & Gleditsch 2011; Chiba & Gleditsch 2017; Kuhn & Weidmann 2015; Miodownik & Bhavnani 2011; Ray 2016; Roessler 2011; Rustad et al. 2011; Wimmer, Cederman, & Min 2009; Wig 2016; and Wucherpfennig et al. 2011. Similar results hold for the effect of political exclusion and state discrimination on non-violent protest (Jazayeri 2016) and terrorism (Boylan 2016). Relatedly, studies have found that ethnic accommodation, declining discrimination, and the inclusion of ethnic groups in cabinet representation, as well as local-level inclusion and power-sharing, has decreased coup, civil war, and inter-religious violence

Relatedly, Roessler argues that ethnopolitical exclusion results from a strategic choice made by leaders to substitute civil war risk for coup risk. Fearing the "enemy within," that ethnic rivals will leverage their access to state institutions in order to fully seize power, leaders have expelled them from the inner halls of authority – only to find those same groups organizing resistance from the outside. Not only does such exclusion foment grievances, it also severely limits the state's ability to gather intelligence and conduct "cooperative counterinsurgency." Weak states lack strong institutions and bureaucracies; rather, they govern through managing rival networks of violence specialists and the populations they control, usually territorially-based ethnic groups. When an ethnic network is excluded, the government curtails its penetration of that community and sacrifices its means to cooperate with local leaders to ensure broader social peace. Roessler thus adds strategic and institutional opportunity mechanisms to existing grievance explanations of civil war.[26]

All three explanations make important contributions to how we understand why ethnic groups rebel against the state. Ethnic institutionalization primes individuals to understand and interpret their world in ethnic terms, making legible group grievances such as political exclusion and socioeconomic disadvantage – grievances which inspire organized, and often violent, political resistance. Yet, these explanations suffer from two main faults. First, they tend to highlight fairly static and slow moving variables which do a poor job of explaining the rarity and timing of resistance.[27] Ethnic institutionalization is rampant and yet organized

risk (Arriola 2009; Bunte & Vinson 2016; Cederman, Gleditsch, & Wucherpfennig 2017). Lacina also makes a non-monotonic argument for the relationship between the political importance of ethnic and linguistic groups (the flip side of exclusion) and their propensity for organized violence. The state accommodates highly important groups without the need for conflict while extremely disadvantaged groups do not revolt as they anticipate their own defeat. The groups in the middle – those moderately important but somewhat excluded – can tip the scales through violence and coerce the state into granting their demands (2014; 2015). As an exception, Basedau et al. find that state discrimination against religious practices does not predict conflict outbreak, although they do not directly test religious exclusion from government (2017). Lewis also critiques the EPR studies for selection bias and, based on fine-grained data from Uganda on failed rebel groups, argues that ethnic exclusion and discrimination do not shape the early formation of rebel groups but rather which ones survive to pose a significant threat to the state (2017).

[26] Roessler 2011; Roessler 2016, 11–13 & 56–57.

[27] Less than 1% of group-years have witnessed the onset of violent conflict, both during and after the Cold War (Asal et al. 2016, 11; Cederman, Weidmann, & Gleditsch 2011, 487). And measures of social inequality, in particular, are, "notoriously persistent" over time (Houle 2015, 500).

ethnic violence is rare. Many relatively deprived or excluded ethnic groups fail to resist and those that do often choose timing that remains opaque. The strategic trade-off between coups and civil wars is perennial, especially in ethnically politicized regions such as Africa, and yet both types of instability remain rare events.[28]

Second, existing ethnic-based theories of political violence tend to assume that it is the relatively deprived, politically excluded, or discriminated against who rebel.[29] This misses much of the ethnic violence we witness where it is the powerful and advantaged groups that initiate hostilities.[30] For example, the relatively privileged white members of the Ku Klux Klan perpetrated organized violence against southern Blacks after the American Civil War; extremist Hutu's already in control of the Rwandan state and military orchestrated the genocide against Tutsi's after ousting and killing moderate Hutu's; and the M'Boshi dominated armed forces of Congo-Brazzaville, from a position of inclusion, overthrew a newly elected democratic government, led by an ethnic rival, launching the country into civil war.

Of course, the strategic trade-off posited by Roessler indicates that included groups do rebel, in the form of military coups. His framework, however, has yet to develop causal mechanisms explaining when and why the included seize power, focusing instead on civil war dynamics and why leaders choose ethno-political exclusion despite its clear risk of social violence (to avoid coups). His model also neglects the possibility that exclusion may simultaneously increase both coup risk and civil war risk, as groups leverage whatever tactics and resources they have to fight against their declining status. Indeed, Sudduth finds that leaders facing a high-risk of military overthrow often decline to coup-proof due to the very likelihood that purges would provoke the very coup they seek to

[28] This is a classic critique of the grievance-based literature on civil war outbreak, leading many to turn towards resource and opportunity based explanations for violence (see Collier & Hoeffler 2004; Fearon & Laitin 2003). Nonetheless, recent studies develop compelling theory and find robust statistical evidence, even controlling for opportunity factors such as foreign financing and natural resource endowments, that grievances are crucial to understanding political violence. My argument thus refines and builds on the grievance perspective.

[29] As a notable exception, building on ideas first espoused by Horowitz 1985 (249–250), Cederman, Weidmann, & Gleditsch 2011 argue that regionally concentrated, economically advantaged groups may resent state redistributive policies that detract from their net prosperity. Such groups might rebel to capture the benefits of greater economic autonomy or independence.

[30] Horowitz 2001, 41.

prevent.[31] Given this more complicated picture of risk trade-offs, better understanding when included groups seize power will also shed further light on when leaders may risk both coups and civil wars in the short-term to better consolidate their rule over the long run.

THE ARGUMENT: REACTIONARY VIOLENCE AGAINST BUILDING AND DISMANTLING SYSTEMS OF ETHNIC PRIVILEGE

This book argues that, in addition to these other mechanisms, the processes of creating and dismantling ethnically exclusionary state institutions engenders organized and violent political resistance. Where practices of clientelism and patronage combine with ethnic privilege, excluded groups face high political, economic, social, and emotional costs that generate deep-seated grievances. Exclusion, however, also reduces the available means for resistance. In contrast, the included can leverage their access to state resources and existing patronage networks to better organize and fund rebellion. Ethnic groups currently included but facing future exclusion thus possess both the strongest motives to rebel and the greatest capabilities to do so. It is the very processes of creating or destroying systems of ethnic privilege that produce the greatest risk of violence.

Ethnic groups often rebel, in other words, to preserve the status quo. This helps us understand both the timing and relative rarity of group rebellion: while exclusionary institutions and group grievances may persist over many years, it is in relatively brief and rare intervals that entire systems of ethnic privilege and disadvantage are created or destroyed. These moments of change provoke violence from losing groups, regardless of their relative political or socioeconomic position.

This argument builds on an important and notable exception to the aforementioned trend of existing ethnic explanations for violence to focus on the relatively deprived and aggrieved. Work by Cederman et al. finds that the most likely groups to engage in civil war are actually those that have recently lost power. Ethnic groups with a history of advantage sometimes witness quick reversals in their political fortunes. It is argued that such "recently downgraded" groups are especially likely to rebel as the "shock of demotion is likely to trigger strong emotional reactions."[32] Downgraded groups thus react violently to restore their previously

[31] Sudduth 2017a; 2017b.
[32] Cederman, Gleditsch, & Buhaug 2013, 62; See also Cederman, Wimmer, & Min 2010.

advantaged political position. My theory places this finding in context and further develops the causal mechanisms of why the loss of political advantage, and the loss of privilege and patronage it entails, provokes particular kinds of reactionary violence. The downgraded argument is thus subsumed within a broader understanding of how systems of ethnic privilege function within the state and how both their construction and dismantling lead to violence.

Focusing on the narrow empirical context of African militaries and when soldiers rebel against the state on ethnic grounds, I argue that when leaders attempt to build ethnic armies, or dismantle those created by their predecessors, they provoke violent resistance from military officers. The first process, when leaders attempt to construct ethnically-based security institutions, creates grievances amongst soldiers who now face exclusion from an important source of state power and patronage – closely following the ethnic exclusion argument but concentrating on the original process of generating that exclusion as a time of grave risk. I analyze this part of the argument in the context of African decolonization, a similar political shock experienced across the continent that allows for a relatively clean test of the theory prior to later endogenous ethnic dynamics within military institutions. Colonial military recruitment practices in Africa relied extensively on race and ethnicity as foundations for military loyalty. While officers were imported from Europe to command, rank-and-file soldiers were drawn from tribes deemed both politically loyal and "naturally martial." Facing a deteriorating regional security environment and pressing domestic threats, many independence era African leaders turned to this model when building new national armies, binding soldiers to the state through coethnicity. Where leaders had inherited a diverse officer corps from departing colonialists, such ethnic restructuring provoked violent resistance from soldiers now facing exclusion. Initial mutinies and coup attempts then sparked further violence as ethnic factions within the military vied for control over the state.

The second process, when new leaders attempt to dismantle ethnic armies, creates reactionary violence by those whose existing privileged position in the political system is threatened. Whether they subscribe to myths of their own deserved superiority or merely fear revenge and exclusion at the hands of those they have dominated, historically privileged groups will defend their monopoly over power and patronage. Here, I analyze the later period of democratization. The third wave of democracy that followed the end of the Cold War provides another exogenous political shock experienced simultaneously across many African countries,