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PATHWAYS OF GOVERNANCE AID EFFECTIVENESS: THE CASE OF RWANDA AND BURUNDI

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Recent studies on U.S. democracy aid found that democracy aid programs do have a positive impact on democratic development, yet little is known about how this impact is brought about and which types of democracy aid might be more effective than others. To explore these relationships, CCAPS analyzes aid programing in post-conflict situations using a case study of Rwanda and Burundi. Research showed the aid programs in Rwanda were designed to build formal institutions of democracy, while Burundi programming focused more on fostering informal democratic norms. This case comparison finds that democracy aid seeking to build democratic norms was most effective in this post-conflict context, creating the greatest democratic gains in Burundi during the study period and minimizing opportunities for intervention from non-democratic entities in the country.

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Rwanda and Burundi were once described as "false twins" by a leading scholar on the two countries.[1] This description is apt given that no two countries on the African continent have such similar histories and ethnic makeups, and yet neither have any two countries diverged so resolutely in how they weave ethnicity together with democracy. Rwanda and Burundi each consist of approximately 85-90% Hutu, 10-14% Tutsi, and 1% Twa. They have similar climates, population densities (which are both among the highest in Africa), economies, religious backgrounds, and colonial histories.[2] Most significantly, though, both Rwanda and Burundi have borne the cost of massive violent conflicts over the last 50 years between Tutsis and Hutus.

Similarly, both countries began 1990 on the very end of the political freedom spectrum: Neither country had a functioning democracy, and political and civil rights abuses based on ethnicity were rampant. For that year, Freedom House rated both countries as "Not Free."[3] Over the next twenty years, Rwanda and Burundi both received a great deal of attention and aid money from the international community to help them along the democratic pathway. By 2010, Burundi had made significant progress—even moving to "Partially Free" according to Freedom House ratings, but Rwanda had stagnated with few improvements on the democracy front, and it continues to be rated "Not Free."

What role has international aid played in these outcomes? Which aspects of democracy and governance aid were more effective at promoting democracy in this post-conflict context? This case study delves into the causal mechanisms through which democracy promotion programs impact

democratic development in a post-conflict context. In particular, it seeks to identify whether building formal institutions or fostering informal democratic norms contributes more effectively to democratic development.

POST-CONFLICT CONTEXT: SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Democracy promotion in any context is a difficult and formidable task, but promoting democracy in post-conflict countries provides an even more unique set of challenges and opportunities for the international community. Donors must contend with a state that has often ceased to function as a state due to the breakdown of political, economic, or social institutions and norms. Given this set of constraints, donors must be both strategic and comprehensive in their approach to establishing, or re-establishing, democracy in a post-conflict situation.[4]

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However, the existence of conflict and its resulting cessation provides an exceptional opportunity for the international community to directly influence domestic political structures that were not previously fulfilling their role in protecting and providing for the people. As donors enter the fray in an attempt to help the country deal with the aftermath of the conflict, they often get direct access to the country's political leaders and have ample opportunities to use development finance to motivate these leaders to implement democratic reforms. This is particularly true if peacekeeping or peacebuilding operations are present in the country.[5]

The post-conflict period is also, however, a risky one since post-conflict countries are significantly more likely than other countries to fall (back) into conflict. As such, post-conflict settings are simultaneously among the most fertile and volatile ground for new or fledgling democracies. Democracy promotion activities thus have the greatest chance of being effective in these difficult situations if they can avoid more conflict.

Existing literature on democracy promotion in post-conflict settings does not explicitly address whether building formal institutions or fostering informal democratic norms provides a more effective mechanism of advancing democracy in post-conflict countries, but it does coalesce around several important features for policy makers to consider. First, donor's democracy aid programs must be adapted to the country's context, must signal a strong commitment to the country, and must focus on sustainability of reforms.[6] Second, democracy aid donors should help establish and maintain peace in the country, adhering to the mantra "No order, no democracy."[7] Third, donor's democracy aid programs should support elections in a way that creates cohesive, pluralist political parties and high civic participation.[8] Fourth, donor aid programs should support development of formal and informal institutions that move the country towards democratic development.[9]

As this list shows, both formal institutions and democratic norms have been identified in current literature as important features of democracy promotion in various ways, and this study seeks to parse out more specifically which type of aid is more effective overall at fostering democratic development.

RWANDA AND BURUNDI: HIGHLIGHTS FROM CURRENT LITERATURE

Scholars and policymakers continue to debate the potential determinants of democratic development in Rwanda and Burundi—or, as the case may be, their lack of democratic development at various points. These debates reveal commonalities, as well as differences, that emerged in these countries throughout the study period that have played important roles in the trajectories of these countries.

Common Trends

Strong one-party governments opened democratic space in the early 1990s. Both Rwanda and Burundi came into the early 1990s with strong one-party systems. By 1993, both had made moves to open political space for greater democratic development. In Rwanda, the ruling regime announced a move to multi-party elections, and at the same time Burundi ended discriminatory policies and initiated a series of inclusive consultations at various levels of government. These democratic openings in both countries were largely motivated by the promise of aid flows by international donors. Specifically, in the early 1990s many large donors to the countries announced plans to condition aid to recipients on democratic development.[10]

Democratic openings quickly led to insecurity and mass violence. As the countries moved to open political space, the political uncertainty led to mass violence. When both presidents were shot down in the same plane crash, Rwanda was unceremoniously taken over by extremists within Hutu Power that led the country in a genocide against minority Tutsis and moderate Hutus, leaving at least 800,000 dead within three months. After the plane crash, Burundi similarly erupted in a civil war that would last another ten years and kill at least 300,000 people.[11]

Demonstration effects of violence across both countries hindered motivation for democratic changes. Rwanda and Burundi have an ethnic breakdown of approximately 85-90% Hutu and 10-14% Tutsi. In Rwanda, the regime was led by a Hutu-dominant party that discriminated against Tutsis, while Burundi's regime was led by a Tutsi-dominant party. Throughout the latter half of the twentieth century, both countries experienced mass violence by the ruling party targeting the discriminated ethnic group, and this motivated violence from the opposing ethnic group in the other country. When Hutus came to power in Rwanda and carried out massive violence against Tutsis within the country, Tutsis in Burundi would use violence to hold on to their power in Burundi because they feared similar violence from their own Hutus, and vice versa.[12]

Major Differences

International reaction to conflict. Both Burundi and Rwanda experienced mass ethnically motivated violence, but the scale of Rwanda's violence was much larger over an exceedingly short period of time. As such, the international community's reaction after the genocide was much more involved compared to the international community's response to Burundi's civil war. Rwanda is often viewed as an "exceptional situation" and has thus benefitted from additional leeway from donors and international leaders because of what some have called this "genocide credit."[13]

Nature of the peace agreement. In Burundi, the civil war ended as a result of a peace agreement painstakingly negotiated by the international community. To get all warring parties to agree, the peace agreement—and subsequent government structure—reflected major compromises from all opposing sides and sought to protect the rights of all groups involved.[14] Burundi's peace agreement institutionalized the protection of minority rights and civil liberties for all. In contrast, the genocide in Rwanda ended only when the Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA) fought its way to the capital and took over the government. Rwanda's regime therefore could set the terms of its government without having to make concessions to the opposition. Without a significant opposition to motivate compromise, the regime institutionalized central power in the executive branch, hindered free speech and civil liberties, and precluded the formation of a fully pluralistic multi-party system. Rwanda has created its own form of "consensual democracy" that prioritizes mass participation without devolving significant decision-making power.[15] The nature of the peace process in each country has led the two governments on drastically different paths.

Treatment of ethnicity. Burundi has a meticulously crafted power-sharing arrangement where ethnic breakdowns for representation at all levels of government became

mandated by law. With this, Burundi sought to ensure both minority rights for Tutsis as well as majority representation for Hutus. This treatment of ethnicity allowed both groups in Burundi to feel protected and represented during the study period—enabling greater security in democracy for both groups.[16] Rwanda instead eschewed formal power-sharing arrangements and attempted to erase ethnic differences among the population and focus on creating a new identity of "Rwandaness." Ethnicity references disappeared from government documents and, ultimately in 2002, a new law was passed outlawing "divisionism," which included most references to ethnicity within formal government institutions and actions that could create conflict between people.[17] The government of Rwanda has been routinely accused of using this divisionist law to restrict democratic space. Rwanda's treatment of ethnicity essentially provides no protection for either ethnic group in a competitive democracy, and many assert it has instead led to a poor democratic trajectory for Rwanda.[18]

Democratic development trajectory. During the study period from 1990-2010, Burundi ultimately experienced more democratic development compared to Rwanda. Rwanda's democratic development was rather bleak by the end of the study period and continues to be so. For the last decade or more, observer reports have indicated that elections do not offer meaningful political choice to voters, that press freedom is limited, and that civil liberties are not adequately protected, including accusations of manipulating the judicial system, intimidation, and even torture.[19] As such, it is currently rated as "Not Free" according to Freedom House ratings. On the other hand, during the same time period Burundi successfully implemented local, regional, and national elections; established a participatory and vibrant civil society; and made enough improvements to move from a rating of "Not Free" to "Partly Free" according to Freedom House ratings.[20]

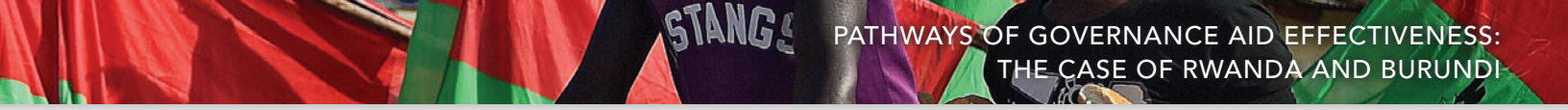
In turning to an analysis of whether building formal institutions or fostering democratic norms was more effective in either Burundi or Rwanda, this case study considers these important contextual factors. The analysis outlines how they helped or hindered the countries' democratic development as well as donors' potential roles in supporting these countries.

STUDY METHODOLOGY

While previous aid research has convincingly shown that aid focused on democracy and governance can be effective,[21] this study seeks to uncover the specific causal mechanisms through which different types of democracy and governance aid successfully increased democracy development in Africa in a range of contexts.[22] This study chose Rwanda and Burundi as a case study pair for post-conflict countries through a rigorous case-matching exercise. Based on their similarities on a variety of variables, Rwanda and Burundi were identified as highly comparable case studies: They started at roughly the same level of democratic development at the beginning of the case study period in 1990; they received comparably high levels of democracy aid during the study period from 1990-2010; they experienced massive conflict during the beginning of the case study; and they had similar population density, country size, economic performance, ethnic makeup, colonial history, and human development indicators. However, Burundi and Rwanda experienced substantially different democratic development trajectories over the two decades of the study period from 1990 through 2010: Rwanda has consistently remained "Not Free" according to Freedom House ratings while Burundi has progressed to "Partially Free."

Given their similarities on many other variables, this study analyzes the distinctive composition of their democracy and governance aid packages to determine if those differences caused one country to be more successful than the other in promoting democratic change.

This study analyzes the democracy promotion programs funded in Rwanda and Burundi and compares them to three potential causal mechanisms. The first potential



causal mechanism states that aid programs focused on increasing the representativeness of formal government institutions will lead to democratic development, while the second states that aid designed to increase checks and balances between formal government institutions will cause improvements in a country's democratic development.

Burundi and Rwanda experienced substantially different democratic development trajectories over the two decades of the study period. This study analyzes the democracy promotion programs funded in these two countries during this time, assessing whether democracy aid may have contributed to this divergence.

These first two causal mechanisms reflect potential ways that aid focused on building *formal institutions* could have an effect on democratic outcomes. These causal mechanisms posit that institutional changes—such as changes to the structure of government branches, changing laws, and amending or creating constitutions—create the formal opportunity for democracy, and citizens and leaders will respond to these new rules accordingly to increase democratic development.

The third causal mechanism assessed here turns to a competing theory, stating that aid programs that foster *informal democratic norms* will lead to democratic development in a country. Without these norms, according to this causal mechanism, the formal institutions will not function democratically because people's behavior will not change.

To find evidence for these causal mechanisms, this study turns to relevant project documents, assessments, annual reports, and evaluations published directly by the donors, as well as project-level data included in the AidData Research Release 2.1 (Provisional Governance Release).[23] The largest repository of documents was made available by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the World Bank. Other donors that published project documents included the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Netherlands, and the United States' Millennial Challenge Corporation (MCC)—though the coverage of these project documents was often sporadic. For each causal mechanism, the study sought to identify specific evidence regarding the aid programs targeting each type of democracy intervention to assess (1) if the recipient successfully adopted the reforms, (2) if the reforms helped build the type of formal institution or informal norm that was targeted, and (3) if reform of that institution or norm helped increase the democratic development of the country as a whole.

INCREASING REPRESENTATION THROUGH FORMAL INSTITUTIONS

In an effort to initiate democratic reform and increase democracy and good governance, aid programs often seek to increase the representativeness of formal institutions. These types of programs attempt to increase citizen participation in formal institutions through institutional changes such as decentralization and public participation mechanisms. As institutions increase their representativeness through formal changes, these programs aim to increase the overall democratic development of the country as a whole.

Throughout the study period, donors had divergent approaches to increasing democracy and good governance in Rwanda and Burundi. These differences extended to their attempts—or lack thereof—to increase the representativeness of formal government institutions. Donors in Rwanda spent a great deal of time, effort, and money on creating and reforming government institutions to broaden their processes for consulting citizens as well as increasing their responsiveness to citizens' demands. In contrast, donors in Burundi dedicated relatively fewer aid flows to building and reforming formal government institutions to be more responsive to citizens.

Decentralization and Democracy: Rwanda's Weak Link

Aid flows directed at devolving decision-making power to lower levels of government played significantly different roles in Rwanda and Burundi. Where decentralization was an extensive focus for Rwanda and a wide variety of its donor partners, Burundi experienced relatively little activity in the decentralization sphere. Given available evidence from donor documentation, it is clear that the decentralization policies in Rwanda were adopted and well implemented by the Rwandan government and donors. With the massive amount of decentralization aid activities being implemented in Rwanda during the study period, did these reforms indeed become the driving force for democratic change in Rwanda?

This is where the great paradox of Rwanda first comes to light. Contrary to the causal logic behind increasing institutional representation, the decentralization activities did not lead to real democratic progress in Rwanda. One of the tenets of this first causal logic is that an increase in decentralization should increase democracy because it creates downward accountability and gives citizens a voice in local governance. While this may be the logic often behind decentralization, and may have worked in Burundi, this is unfortunately not the reality in Rwanda.

The way Rwanda structured its decentralization counteracted the potential for democratic openings through this reform. From the beginning, decentralization was instituted as a top-down reform, and the government maintained tight control on wider government policy, government objectives, and reform agendas.

The government of Rwanda enthusiastically embraced donors' efforts to increase decentralization and even went further to make decentralization a main goal for its country from 2000 to 2020 in its Vision 2020 document and its Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper. However, the way Rwanda structured its decentralization counteracted the potential for democratic openings through this reform. From the beginning, decentralization was instituted as a top-down reform. With both donors and the government, the decentralization initiatives were initiated and enforced by the central government, rather than as a response to pressure from lower levels of government or the population as a whole. Some donor reports call these actions "deconcentration" rather than decentralization because the lower levels of government were still highly dependent on the central government, making it difficult for these agencies to exercise any amount of autonomy or discretion.[24]

The one area where it appears the government did effectively devolve decision-making power was in community development needs and service delivery. With the establishment of community development committees and similar structures, the central government allowed communities to determine their local development needs and execute projects, though usually with donor funding, leaving a question as to how sustainable this local autonomy and locally-led development approach is.

However, the Rwandan government maintained tight control on wider government policy, government objectives, and reform agendas. One USAID assessment of the decentralization process in 2009 also noted that decentralization was implemented as a way that engaged citizens in "centrally-determined objectives"—meaning that citizens are not empowered to change or influence policy if it is not in line with the central government's initiatives and that, even throughout the decentralization process, the source of political power in the country still remained the national executive office.[25]

This is further seen through other population survey results showing that, while there was an increase in citizen participation in community affairs and local government during the study period, the survey respondents indicated the quality of citizen participation and their trust in local elected officials actually *decreased*.[26] Indeed, even though Switzerland

had supported decentralization activities in Rwanda every year since 2002, Switzerland specifically decided to stop funding decentralization projects in Rwanda in 2010 due to the lack of democratic results seen from decentralization. The 2010 project description from Switzerland explicitly stated that the decentralization in Rwanda was "being used as a means for stronger control of central government over local powers" through the existence of parallel decision and accountability mechanisms that held the local authorities more accountable to the central government rather than their constituents.[27] Switzerland's statements convey that Rwanda has been exploiting the institutions of decentralization to close political space and maintain social control.

This trend is also confirmed in quantitative measures provided by the Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI) dataset. The WGI indicator for *Government Effectiveness* shows a steady and impressive upward trend—from -1.20 in 1996 to -0.05 by 2010—moving the country from the 12th percentile up to the 53rd percentile.[28] During the same time period, though, the WGI indicator for *Voice and Accountability* shows little improvement; it started at -1.56 in 1996 and ended at -1.31 in 2010, moving the country from the 7th percentile to the 12th percentile. As a document from the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation states, "decentralization programs succeed if partner country governments clearly prove that they intend to redistribute the political and administrative power,"[29] but it is now clear that Rwanda did not allow such redistribution.

In contrast to Rwanda's experience, Burundi experienced positive growth towards establishing effective democracy despite having few aid activities focused on decentralization. The WGI indicator for *Voice and Accountability* shows significant improvement overall; it moved from -1.75 in 1996 to -0.94 by 2010, raising the country from the 4th percentile to the 22nd percentile. This indicator peaked in 2005 right after the national elections at -0.64 (29th percentile), but decreased slowly over the later years.[30] This shows that, throughout the study period, and particularly between 2000 and 2010, citizens in Burundi had significantly more opportunities to influence the government. Burundi's trajectory far outstrips Rwanda's performance during the same time period: Burundi started out three percentile points below Rwanda and ended up over ten percentile points above Rwanda by 2010. In contrast, the WGI indicator for *Government Effectiveness* in Burundi shows a much less rosy story—Burundi made modest progress but stagnated far below Rwanda. In 1996, Burundi measured at -1.73 (3rd percentile) and by 2010 it had only increased to -1.10 (14th percentile).[31]

On the macro level assessing overall democratic progress, though, Burundi impressively progressed on the *Polity2* scale from a score of -7 to 6 from 1990 to 2010, moving from a strong autocracy to a relatively strong democracy during the study period.[32] Given that Burundi received fairly little aid focused on formal decentralization, it must have been other factors driving Burundi's progress in popular representation and democratic development overall.

Elections: Institutions and Practice in Rwanda and Burundi

In Rwanda, donors dedicated a good deal of resources towards supporting and bolstering the election process. In general, the elections are praised for their efficiency and successful completion—in the sense that little or no violence broke out, the elections had very high turnouts, voter registration went smoothly, and the ballots were counted with little or no fraud. As such, donors declared the various elections from 2003-2010 as "free and fair."[33]

However, while the election process in these years was praised in terms of institutional development, the overall level of democracy in Rwanda during the same time period did not improve. While the elections have run as an institution in the country, political leaders, parties, and ideas have not been allowed to compete in those elections.

In an assessment published in 2002 on Rwanda's democratic position, one USAID document spoke frankly of the continued narrowing of the political space in Rwanda, stating that "the RPF maintains effective control over virtually all state institutions [and] exercises tight control over political debate."[34] In the same report, USAID states that the party forum "often operates as an institution of control rather than a forum for dialogue and competition of ideas."[35] The Rwandan government regularly denies political parties' registration applications, accuses opposition candidates of divisionist ideology and imprisons them, and disqualifies candidates days before an election. For example, in 2001, former President Bizimungu announced he was forming a new political party, and immediately he was put under house arrest by the government and officially jailed a year later.[36] Similarly, the main opposition party in the early 2000s (Mouvement Démocratique Républicain, or MDR) was eventually outlawed and disbanded in 2003, shortly before parliamentary elections.[37] The 2008 and 2010 elections showed similar trends.

While the elections have run as an institution in Rwanda, political leaders, parties, and ideas have not been allowed to compete in those elections.

One quantitative indicator of this lack of progress is Polity IV's *Political Competitiveness* measure, which seeks to measure the extent to which citizens can pursue alternative preferences for policy and leadership in the political arena. During the study period, in Rwanda, this indicator started at 1 in 1990, moved to 3 in 2000, and then moved back down to 2 in 2010.[38] On a scale of 1-10, with 1 indicating the least amount of political competition, Rwanda has made minimal progress in building space for political competition despite donors' efforts. In Rwanda's case, the aid directed towards elections helped establish the institutions of elections, but those elections ultimately did not increase political competition or democratic development of Rwanda.

In Burundi, elections likewise garnered significant funding from the aid community, though this was split between supporting formal election institutions and fostering informal democratic norms around the elections. In contrast to Rwanda's lack of progress in building political competition, Burundi's competitive election system blossomed over the study period. In Burundi, Polity IV's *Political Competitiveness* measure started at 1 in 1990—as it had in Rwanda—but then moved to 6 in 1998, and settled at 8 in 2010.[39] On a scale of 1-10, with 10 indicating the highest amount of political competition, Burundi voters clearly had a high amount of opportunities to support and elect competing platforms and candidates by the end of the study period.

This progress does not mean, however, that Burundi elections were perfect. Some donor project documents highlight flaws of the 2005 elections, including accusations of cheating, intimidation, and manipulation in some polling stations. They also indicate that the Independent National Election Commission still lacked sufficient human, material, and financial resources and, as a result, was not adequately transparent or neutral.[40] By the 2010 elections, there were hints at larger problems looming over Burundian democracy. Despite having 23 different parties participating, the commune elections showed a large win (64%) for the National Council for the Defence of Democracy / Forces for the Defence of Democracy (CNDD-FDD), which had been the majority party for the prior five years. Opposition parties refused to accept this result and accused the government of fraud and intimidation—despite the fact that national and international observer teams had declared the elections were free and fair.[41] The 12 largest parties boycotted the presidential elections later that year, so the only candidate was the incumbent President Pierre Nkurunziza, who won the election overwhelmingly.[42] These situations indicate Burundi is still undergoing growing pains as it matures its democratic sector, but compared to Rwanda, the elections held during the study period presented voters with space to voice their opinions among multiple options.

Participation without Voice: Rwanda

As with trends in other formal institutional sectors discussed here, Rwanda received significant attention from donors seeking to build formal avenues of public participation, while Burundi had few aid activities focused on building such formal mechanisms for public participation in government institutions. Also similar to aid for other forms of formal-institution building, the Rwandan government managed to use those aid flows to establish the institutions of public participation without increasing democracy in the country. Over the study period, the government and donors instituted a broad range of public participation mechanisms, while at the same time effectively reducing opportunities for citizens to truly have a voice in their government. This 'participation without voice' culture stemmed from two aspects of participation in Rwanda.

First, the public participation institutions were largely state-driven and state-determined. In Rwanda, the government determined when and where citizens could participate, and often this participation would then be undermined by the government's decision power.[43] The Vision 2020 participation process serves as an illustrative example. To formulate the Vision 2020 document, the central government held widely inclusive dialogue sessions with citizens from all areas of the country and at all levels, yet the central government held the pen on what policies were actually included in the final document. Further along during the study period, the decentralization institutions were even co-opted to better control citizen participation, as one USAID document states:

> Decentralized administrative structures of the government tend to manage the participation process, guided from the center. As a result, citizens are not so much initiating engagement with administrative structures to push for responsiveness; citizens are instead being mobilized to participate in state-set agendas.[44]

The second aspect of Rwanda's participation processes that reduced their effectiveness is a strong emphasis on conformity. The regime consistently exerted pressure on all levels of society to conform tightly to the bounds of discourse and ideas set by the state.[45] The state expected consensus rather than a diversity of opinions and, within this culture, participation could be easily viewed as more formulaic or perfunctory.[46] Politicians, civil society, activists, and others were expected to bolster the ruling consensus rather than tear it down.

Thus while democracy and governance aid flows went toward establishing an impressive array of public participation mechanisms within Rwanda, the end result was far from an inclusive democracy. This harks back to the lack of progress Rwanda has seen on the WGI indicator for *Voice and Accountability:* Over the study period, Rwanda only moved from the 7th percentile (with a score of -1.56) to the 12th percentile (with a score of -1.31) compared to all other countries.[47]

In Rwanda, the government determined when and where citizens could participate, and often this participation would then be undermined by the government's decision power.

In Burundi, building public participation mechanisms within formal government institutions was not a focus for donors. Despite this, Burundi did experience a significant expansion of political space for citizens' participation and influence on the government. For example, the WGI indicator for *Voice and Accountability* showed that from 1996 to 2010, Burundi moved from the 4th percentile (with a score of -1.75) to the 22nd percentile (with a score of -0.94).[48] This increase in citizens' ability to voice their opinions, despite there being very few aid flows dedicated to increasing *formal* institutional mechanisms for public participation, suggests that there were likely other causes driving Burundi's progress.

(Un)representativeness of Formal Institutions

The analysis of aid programs in Rwanda and Burundi has revealed no evidence that aid targeting increased

representation through formal institutions led to democratic development. Despite the high amount of aid flowing into Rwanda that focused on building formal government institutions for decentralization, elections, and public participation in government, Burundi ultimately far outstripped Rwanda in its democratic trajectory from 2000 to 2010, based on both qualitative information as well as sectoral and aggregate quantitative measures. In these cases, development of other democratic processes, supported by other types of of aid, must explain the different democratic trajectories seen in Rwanda and Burundi.

CREATING CHECKS AND BALANCES ACROSS FORMAL INSTITUTIONS

In an effort to further democratic reform and increase democracy and good governance, aid programs may seek to create and increase checks and balances across formal government institutions to improve a country's democratic functioning. These types of programs attempt to establish balanced democratic institutions. By seeking to balance the formal structures of government, these programs attempt to bolster all types of legitimate government power—including legislative, judicial, and executive—so no one institution dominates the others and each fulfills its duties.

Donors sought to increase the institutional transparency and separation of powers to different degrees in Rwanda and Burundi. Rwanda received a great deal of attention and aid flows for both institutional transparency and horizontal separation of powers. Burundi, on the other hand, received much less aid in both categories.

Institutional Transparency and Accountability

The aid flows directed towards institutional transparency and accountability played different roles in Burundi and Rwanda. Rwanda received the most flows in this area, and likewise had the most success in reducing corruption and concurrently increasing financial accountability throughout the country. By 2010, the WGI's *Control of Corruption* indicator showed that Rwanda had moved from the 20th percentile to the 72nd percentile of countries, signifying Rwanda was now better at controlling corruption than 71% of all other countries.[49] This progress is impressive: Rwanda went from being one of the most corrupt countries in Africa to one of the least in only 14 years.

In contrast, Burundi continued to suffer from chronic corruption despite the aid flows. According to the same indicator for *Control of Corruption*, Burundi ranked in the bottom—in the 5th percentile—in 1996, and by 2010, it had risen only to the 12th percentile.[50] Between 2002 and 2005, there were some indications that corruption was declining, and Burundi even rose to the 19th percentile. This progress was short lived, though, as corruption surged soon after the 2005 national elections.

Indicators for the *Rule of Law* follow similar trends. Starting in 1996, Burundi and Rwanda start in roughly the same place in the 2nd percentile of countries who were perceived to have rule of law. During the study period through 2010, though, Rwanda's performance picked up dramatically, and it moved to the 46th percentile by 2010, while Burundi only moved to the 11th percentile.[51]

While Rwanda succeeded in becoming highly efficient and transparent in its financial management and routine dealings, this transparency and accountability did not translate to progress in its political sphere.

Corruption and the rule of law in these cases are used here as proxies for how transparent and accountable the government was in its dealings. Such institutional transparency and accountability is a vital prerequisite to democratic functioning. As governments become more accountable in their routine dealings, they are less likely to undermine accountability in other governmental spheres. In contrast to Rwanda's positive trajectory and Burundi's negative trajectory in corruption and rule of law, though, quantitative indicators and contextual

information on the countries show that Burundi made the most progress in democratic development more generally, moving from "Not Free" to "Partially Free" on the Freedom House scale between 1990 and 2010. During the same time period, Rwanda stayed stagnant at "Not Free." While Rwanda succeeded in becoming highly efficient and transparent in its financial management and routine dealings, this transparency and accountability did not translate to progress in its political sphere.

The causal mechanism suggested for supporting formal checks and balances in government institutions thus does not bear out in Burundi and Rwanda. The higher amount of funding and attention donors dedicated to Rwanda for transparency and accountability did not increase its democratic development. Likewise, Burundi increased its democratic development despite very few aid flows being directed at building institutional transparency and accountability.

Horizontal Checks and Balances

The true crux of Burundi's and Rwanda's institutional democratic trajectories lies within creating proper checks and balances within the government. Without those institutional checks and balances, history proves that actors fearful of losing power will use government institutions to manipulate, intimidate, and overpower the other democratic institutions.

In Rwanda, this controlling institution has been the executive branch, led mostly by President Kagame and a tight-knit group around him. In fact, Polity IV's *Executive Constraints* indicator reflects that, in the 1990s in Rwanda, the executive had unlimited authority: There were no institutional limits regularly imposed on the executive.[52] In Burundi, the Tutsi-dominated army became an unconventional institution in the government as Tutsi groups used their influence and intimidation to control the other branches of the government. As such, the challenge for aid flows intending to bolster horizontal checks and balances across government institutions in these countries was to integrate these sources of authoritarian power into the democratic order. Unfortunately, it is not clear that the aid flows were able to achieve this outcome. Rwanda received the most aid in this regard, so according to this causal logic, it should have had a stronger democratic awakening. However, events throughout the study period show that the other institutions were not able to establish effective checks against the ubiquitous power of the executive in Rwanda.

In Rwanda, the aid flows donors dedicated to this sphere largely sought to increase the institutional independence of the different branches of government—with the hope that each branch would then have more equal shares of power and be able to act as a check to the executive. However, there is little to no evidence that this institutional independence then allowed each branch to be a check on the executive when it acted beyond its institutional powers, or that there was an *equitable* horizontal balance of power. This last point helps highlight something that is missing from donor documentation and independent evaluations: While the legislative and judicial branches became increasingly independent and had more defined powers, there is a lack of evidence that these institutions were actually able to check the power of the executive when it went beyond its legal powers. Donors point to no specific examples where either branch was able to successfully stop the executive from its desired course of action—whether that action was within the limits of the law or not.

In fact, there are examples of just the opposite happening, where the competing branches chose to relinquish their own authority when the executive applied pressure: First, a survey analysis showed judges routinely used self censorship when confronted with problematic issues relating to the executive.[53] Second, legislative leaders abandoned an autonomy bill that would have solidified the legislative branch's constitutionally sanctioned independence—specifically because of pressure from the executive.[54] These are troubling indications that the increase in institutional capacity in the legislature and

judiciary did not ultimately build sufficient institutional independence and therefore democracy in Rwanda.

This lack of progress in Rwanda is again confirmed with quantitative measures as well. Polity IV's measure on *Executive Constraints* shows very little progress: In 1990, Rwanda earned a score of 1 and only moved to a score of 3 by 2003 through 2010. The slight improvement to 3 indicated a "slight to moderate" limitation on executive authority. However, at the same time Rwanda only progressed on the *Polity2* scale from a score of -7 to -4, remaining within the range of autocracies by the end of the study period.[55] The improvement in executive constraint scores may indicate that aid flows directed towards bolstering other branches were having a positive effect, but ultimately the effect was not large enough to push Rwanda towards increased democracy overall.

While the legislative and judicial branches in Rwanda became increasingly independent and had more defined powers, there is a lack of evidence that these institutions were actually able to check the power of the executive when it went beyond its legal powers.

In Burundi, the arm of authoritarian power was successfully integrated into the democratic system, but the extent to which aid flows directed towards horizontal separation of powers actually contributed to this accomplishment is unclear. The army was the main institution that routinely extended past its democratically sanctioned role, but the peace agreement and power-sharing arrangements successfully got the main actors behind the military to accept more restraints. This mostly came in the form of restructuring the ethnic makeup and leadership of the military so that it could not be used as a tool for ethnic or political violence. Aid flows had very little to do with this process directly, though donors did generally support the peace process and provide funding for demobilization. Furthermore, the total amount of aid flows dedicated to bolstering the other branches of government was generally too low to make any real impact in Burundi.

Balance Upended in Formal Institutions

If funding towards creating formal institutional checks and balances were the key causal mechanism through which democracy and governance aid impacted overall democratic development, Burundi should have had less progress given its low levels of aid targeting checks and balances, but the opposite is true: Burundi progressed on the *Polity2* scale from a score of -7 to 6 during the study period, moving from a strong autocracy to a relatively strong democracy.[56] Rwanda on the other hand had a great deal of aid directed at creating balance across formal government institutions; in the end, however, the formal structures were not effective since the actors within them—the officials in the legislative and judicial branches—did not change their submissiveness to executive demands.

FOSTERING INFORMAL DEMOCRATIC NORMS

The previous two causal mechanisms explored in this study sought to pinpoint whether *formal* institutions were the central mechanism through which democracy aid contributes to democratic development. The third causal mechanism explored here turns to an opposing theory, which posits that developing *informal* processes and democratic norms in society is the critical step to drive democratic change. This theoretical perspective posits that, without these norms, the formal institutions are unable to function democratically because people's behavior will not change. In the context of aid programs, these types of aid flows focus on channeling funding outside the government and directly into society through supporting civil society organizations, encouraging citizen participation, and developing an independent media. If this perspective is correct, as these elements of society grow in strength and activity, they will become a collective power for change from the ground up and enact change in the sociopolitical

sphere of the country—and eventually even change how the government functions at each level. If properly developed, then, such informal mechanisms would become a counter-weight to the government, fulfilling a watchdog role or communicating citizen interests to the government, and ultimately contributing to democratic development.

In Rwanda, donor aid programs focused on building informal democratic norms by bolstering civil society, civic participation, and the media were few and far between, indicating that this type of democracy aid was not a priority for donors, the Rwandan government, or both. Furthermore, many of the project objectives for the aid activities that *did* exist in this sphere in Rwanda were left incomplete, as many of the largest projects encountered significant implementation problems and were canceled before the planned end of the projects. Overall, the low level of funding likely denotes that these types of aid programs did not garner the critical mass necessary to create any specific democratic changes in the long run in Rwanda.

In stark contrast to Rwanda, the majority of democracy and governance aid flows to Burundi during the study period focused on developing informal democratic norms in some capacity. Whether through targeting civil society, perpetuating civic education and reconciliation, or supporting the free media, aid projects focused heavily on developing the informal institutions and norms required to make a democracy function. This may be a reaction to the prolonged insecurity in Burundi, where the civil war lasted from 1993 to 2005, with varying levels of intensity, while Rwanda's conflict largely ended in 1994. Furthermore, the 1996 military coup in Burundi caused some donors like the United States to suspend aid that went directly to the government. These suspensions may have caused donors to send larger amounts of aid money through informal channels than they would have under different circumstances. Even so, the increased focus on informal institutions in Burundi highlights the results of this type of democracy aid to better test its effectiveness.

Civil Society

Compared to the activities dedicated to formal institutions, building informal democratic norms received little attention in Rwanda. Several donors were active at one point or another during the study period in this area in Rwanda, but the information available on project implementation and results show that the largest projects failed to be fully implemented or to make the impact the donor had targeted with the intervention. According to the theorized causal mechanism regarding the importance of informal democratic norms in advancing democracy, it is therefore not surprising that Rwanda does not see significant democratic development as measured through quantitative sectoral measures. For example, the WGI's *Voice and Accountability* indicator shows that during the study period, citizen's involvement and influence in policymaking barely increased at all; this indicator only moved from a score of -1.56 in 1996 to a score of -1.31 by 2010, moving it from the 7th percentile to the 12th percentile.

Donor evaluations in Rwanda provide some insight into these quantitative scores. They indicate that the civil society in Rwanda remained weak throughout the study period—both because of the restrictions placed on it by the government and because of civil society groups' "own fears" of reprisal from the government.[57] Ultimately, the evidence available shows that the aid flows supporting civil society in Rwanda did not reach the threshold necessary to overcome these challenges—both in terms of sustained commitment to this sector and in terms of the relative balance of aid targeting formal institutions versus informal democratic norm development. Instead, the Rwandan government increasingly viewed civil society as an implementation

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vehicle for its own policies instead of as external advocates for reform or a counterpoint to government power.[58]

As the political space for civil society to meaningfully engage in democratic behavior diminished in Rwanda, citizens had less opportunities to influence and engage in policymaking, which makes a thriving democracy nearly impossible. Instead of focusing on informal norm development in the country, donors funded formal institutions of the government, which ultimately played into the hands of the increasingly centralized and autocratic-leaning government whereby the Rwandan government went through the motions of instituting democratic institutions, but ensured the people were not allowed to wield any real power.

In contrast, the democracy and governance aid programing in Burundi showed an extended and consistent focus on building informal democratic norms through bolstering its civil society. In this sector, USAID was the most active donor in Burundi. USAID's choice to direct its main focus in democracy and governance programing in Burundi towards civil society and reconciliation after the 1993 political crisis stands in unique contrast to donors' programming choices in Rwanda. In Rwanda after the 1994 genocide, USAID and other donors chose to focus their efforts largely on government institutions. However, after the 1993 crisis in Burundi where over 300,000 people were killed in a series of reprisals between Hutus and Tutsis, USAID chose to focus specifically on ground-up approaches to reconciliation and preparing the country for democracy. By the end of the study period in 2010, the aid projects and activities had achieved significant effects in this sphere: Over the study period, Burundi's civil society was "reignited" and underwent significant expansion in size, diversity, capacity, and influence—all of which are critical to developing informal democratic norms that will support democratic development in a country.[59]

The results of USAID's specific programming choices in Burundi had significant effects on both the vibrancy of the country's civil society and its overall democratic development. As shown in the previous analysis, the democracy and governance activities focused on civil society consistently expanded the capacity of civil society in Burundi to engage government institutions in policymaking, influence policy outcomes, and become agents for reform. The activities also successfully promoted new norms of how civil society organizations should be involved in society and policymaking by taking on new roles of advocating for change.

Sectoral and macro-level indicators of Burundi's democratic trajectory capture the positive effect of these new norms, showing that Burundi was indeed moving towards greater democratic development. On WGI's *Voice and Accountability* indicator, Burundi showed significant improvement over the course of the study period. It moved from a score of -1.75 in 1996 to a score of -0.94 by 2010, taking the country from the 4th percentile to the 22nd percentile.[60] This shows that throughout the study period, and particularly between 2000 and 2010, citizens in Burundi had significantly more opportunities to their influence government.

The democracy aid activities focused on civil society consistently expanded the capacity of civil society in Burundi to engage government institutions in policymaking, influence policy outcomes, and become agents for reform.

Burundi's trajectory is particularly impressive when compared to Rwanda's performance during the same time period. Burundi started out eight percentile points below Rwanda in 1996, but it ended up over ten percentile points above Rwanda by 2010. Similarly, according to Freedom House, Burundi started the study period in 1990 as "Not Free" and ended the study period in 2010 with a higher value of "Partly Free," while Rwanda remained "Not Free" over the entire course of the twenty-year study period. Even more impressively, Burundi progresses on the *Polity2* scale from a score of -7 to 6, moving from a strong autocracy to a relatively strong democracy during the study period.[61]

In addition to the increased sectoral focus that USAID had on civil society in Burundi, its aid activities were also structured differently in Burundi compared to Rwanda. Between 1996 and 2004, USAID chose to switch the structure of its involvement from discrete aid projects to broader programmatic support of its implementing agencies. Switching to a programmatic approach meant that USAID provided its implementing agencies—like Search for Common Ground—consistent, sustained funding for a longer period of time. It also meant that Search for Common Ground and the other implementers had greater flexibility in how they chose to design and implement their interventions, allowing for greater adaptability throughout the life of the program.[62]

Additionally, USAID's programmatic-support approach meant there was a less specific focus on a pre-determined set of project indicators and outputs, which potentially allowed the implementing agencies to take a wider approach to effecting change in the realm of civil society and addressing gaps as they came across them. This structural difference in how the aid activities were designed, implemented, and sustained is potentially key to the success of USAID's intervention in building informal democratic norms in Burundi.

Civic Participation and Reconciliation

Democracy and governance activities focused on civic participation and reconciliation is another area where aid flows focusing on building democratic norms differed dramatically between Rwanda and Burundi. In Rwanda, the activities that focused on informal routes of participation and reconciliation seemed to come in fits and spurts, with large gaps in funding of up to eight years. By the first election after the genocide in 2002, donor reports indicate that the informal routes of civic participation, such as civil society and NGOs, had failed to provide adequate civic education in the run up to the election.[63] Such results are not surprising given the extremely low attention donors gave to this area in Rwanda. Instead, donors relied on formal government institutions to develop civic participation in the policy process. Given the autocratic nature of the government during this time period, though, this backfired on donors and resulted in participation being state-driven, meaning that the Rwandan government chose when, where, and how it allowed citizens to engage on a limited set of policies.[64] As such, throughout the study period the space for citizens to engage government or policies on their own remained extremely restricted.

Many aid activities in Burundi focused on training community leaders, women, and youth on ways to participate in and influence policymaking and reconciliation in their own communities. These activities had demonstrated positive effects—to such a degree that some observers attributed USAID's early efforts with stopping Burundi from seeing the wider violence seen in Rwanda.

On the other hand, donors, and particularly USAID, focused on a bottom-up approach to civic participation and reconciliation early on in Burundi, and continued this focus throughout the study period. Project activities focused on creating informal forums for citizens to engage generally, and also specifically with other ethnicities, in constructive dialogue and positive interactions. Many aid activities in Burundi focused on training community leaders, women, and youth on ways to participate in and influence policymaking and reconciliation in their own communities. These activities had demonstrated positive effects—to such a degree that some observers attributed USAID's early efforts with stopping Burundi from seeing the wider violence seen in Rwanda.[65]

The effect these programs had on each country's democratic trajectory can also be seen through the macro-level democracy indicators. Freedom House's indicator of "Not Free," "Partially Free," and "Free" consists of two specific indicators measuring political rights and civil liberties in the country. The *Political Rights* indicator specifically measures how free citizens

are to participate in the political process. Scores range from 1 to 7, with 7 being no political rights. During the study period, Burundi's score for political rights moved from 7 to a 4, indicating a move from the least amount of political rights possible to partial political rights.[66] It is this improvement in political rights that bumped Burundi from a country categorized as "Not Free" to "Partially Free," as the score for civil liberties did not change markedly during the study period.[67] At the same time, Rwanda failed to improve at all in its measure of political rights. It started out at 6 in 1990 and remained at a 6 in 2010.[68]

Aid project outcomes in Burundi indicate that aid activities successfully bolstered the media sector, but moreover, the media's positive involvement in the 2005 elections indicate that the media had successfully become an agent of reform in the country.

As these indicators show, Burundi's citizens enjoyed an expanding arena for participation in politics, but Rwanda's government maintained tight control over participation despite the development of formal institutions. As such, the increase in civic participation and reconciliation can be understood to have successfully contributed to an increase in democratic development in Burundi.

Media Development

In line with the previous areas related to building informal democratic norms, Burundi received much more aid directed towards developing the media sector compared to Rwanda. Rwanda had very limited aid flows in this area—including nothing between 1994 and 1999, and only a few projects from USAID and other donors after that. These projects were not enough to increase the capacity of the media sector in Rwanda or to increase media freedom there. Burundi on the other hand had a great deal of attention poured into its media sector, especially through Search's Studio Ijambo program. Ultimately these projects helped create independent, unbiased media options throughout Burundi; they also created a diffusion effect where the positive example of Burundi's highly-acclaimed Studio Ijambo helped create a culture in the media that valued unbiased reporting that sought to increase understanding and dialogue across ethnic lines. Burundi media still operated under some level of repression from the government, but throughout the study period the repression decreased.

The achievement of the aid activities in this sector was not specifically limited to just developing a free press. In many ways it was more focused on developing the press to become a force within the country for constructive reform. To do so, it first has to become a strong collective actor that can become a vehicle for citizen engagement. Aid project outcomes in Burundi indicate that aid activities successfully bolstered the media sector, but moreover, the media's positive involvement in the 2005 elections indicate that the media had successfully become an agent of reform in the country. According to directors of various radio stations in Burundi, the monitoring initiative that the media independently launched and executed caught and prevented numerous incidences of attempted election fraud—showing that the media had finally developed into its own role in ensuring a democratic country. In the words of one radio station director, the media had become an actual political power in Burundi.[69] The role of the media in ensuring the 2005 elections were free and fair is one qualitative indicator that the development of the media did in fact contribute to the democratic development of the country.

CONCLUSION

Under the last causal mechanism, this study has sought to test an alternative theory of democratic development, namely whether focusing on developing informal democratic norms within a country will lead to greater democratic development compared to flows focused on formal institutions of democracy. This causal mechanism posits that the most important factor in a country's democratic trajectory is how well democratic norms are established throughout society and through citizens'

behaviors. As donor flows focus on building civil society, increasing civic participation from the ground-up, and bolstering the role of a free media in the democratic process, then these democratic norms will become an enabling and mobilizing force for citizens to engage in policymaking and becoming effective democratic agents of reform.

This case study indicates that the most direct causal mechanism through which democracy and governance aid flows affect a post-conflict country's democratic trajectory is through developing informal democratic norms.

Since Burundi received the most aid activities focused on these categories of democratic norms, this mechanism would predict that Burundi would experience greater democratic development compared to Rwanda. As this analysis has shown, this prediction was correct. The full analysis of Burundi's democracy and governance aid flows in this area traced the aid programs' influence and causal mechanisms from the program design and implementation stage at the micro level, all the way to a national change in the country's democratic development at the macro level.

Given this evidence, this case study indicates that the most direct causal mechanism through which democracy and governance aid flows affect a post-conflict country's democratic trajectory is through developing informal democratic norms. By the end of the study period, both countries looked like model democracies on paper, with constitutions passed by national referendums; guarantees for civil liberties, freedom of the press, and human rights; and consistent elections at the local, regional, and national levels; and they even had voter turnout levels that put most western democracies to shame. Yet, in reality these institutions often ran differently than they appeared on paper. As the full analysis shows overall, it took more than just democratic institutions to drive democratic development though.

EPILOGUE: BURUNDI AFTER 2010

This study period ran from 1990 to 2010. Over this time period, this case study delves into a detailed analysis of democracy aid outcomes and the democratic development of both Rwanda and Burundi. Fast forwarding to the present day in 2016, Rwanda and Burundi have continued to face challenging circumstances. Burundi in particular has experienced several problems with backsliding as its democratic norms and institutions are potentially eroding away. In 2013, the parliament and President Nkurunziza approved a media law that restricts press freedom by forbidding media coverage on topics that would undermine national security by publishing stories about national defence, public safety, state security, and the local currency.[70] Journalists (through the Burundian Union of Journalists) countered by challenging the constitutionality of the law, and later in 2014 Burundi's Constitutional Court struck down several parts of the law, but not all of it.[71] The journalists' challenge and the court's ruling show that some aspects of democratic norms and institutions—such as civil society's right to challenge the government and the exercise of horizontal checks and balances—were present during this struggle. However, the fact that parliament passed the law, the president signed the law, and the court did not strike down all of the law also signal a potential breakdown in key democratic norms and institutions.

Another warning sign came later in 2014 when the ruling party and the executive office tried to push through a constitutional change. The suggested change would have changed the power-sharing arrangement in Burundi and would have allowed President Nkurunziza to run for a third term, which the constitution at the time disallowed.[72] However, parliament successfully blocked the change, which shows the strength of both the democratic values and horizontal checks established in the country. However, the suggested change itself reveals some un-democratic leanings of the executive office and ruling party.

In 2015, in the run-up to the presidential elections, the ruling party announced President Nkurunziza would again be its candidate for the executive office. The party argued that, since he had been elected to the presidency during his first term by a team of delegates instead of by a popular election, which were the terms of the Arusha Agreements, his first term did not count against the two term limit.[73] However, many in Burundi believed this move was unconstitutional and was putting Burundi on a path towards dictatorship. After the announcement, widespread protests broke out and continued in the lead up to the election. The government responded with violence against the protesters. A month later, there was a failed coup attempt, and violence continued. When the elections happened in May, President Nkurunziza won 70% of the vote, with the vote being declared not free or credible by the United Nations. Many of the opposition candidates boycotted the elections, and Burundi's largest donors condemned the election as not credible due to the persecution of the opposition, the press, and even voters. Donors and others have even threatened international sanctions—including cutting off aid flows to Burundi.[74]

An important milestone for any new democracy is the first successful hand-over of power from one executive or party to the newly-elected one. Unfortunately, Burundi has not yet passed this milestone, and the future of its democracy thus looks fragile. Due to the worsening situation, Burundi was rated once again "Not Free" by Freedom House in 2015, largely undoing the progress it made since 2004 when it was ranked "Partly Free" for the first time.[75]

During the same time period from 2010-2016, Rwanda failed to make any significant progress towards democracy and is still rated as "Not Free" by Freedom House.[76]

While the current case study cannot explain the determinants of these latest outcomes, or aid's role in them, since they fall well beyond the study period, further research should explore what has contributed to Burundi's backsliding. The example of Burundi demonstrates the ultimate frailty of new democracies, especially in post-conflict contexts, and the importance of continually building both formal democratic institutions and informal democratic norms.

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