

Colonial Style and Post-Colonial Ethnic Conflict in Africa*

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Though European colonialism had a profound and lasting impact on the development of contemporary Africa, there are few studies that assess these effects empirically. This study explores one facet of the colonial legacy: ethnic conflict. Despite the pervasiveness of ethnic strife across the continent, grievance-based approaches have had only limited success in modeling ethnic conflict in Africa. Using a structural approach, we argue that the distinctive colonial styles of the British and French created fundamentally different systems of ethnic stratification, which left contrasting legacies for post-colonial ethnic conflict. Specifically, the indirect, decentralized rule of the British fostered an unranked system of ethnic stratification, while the legacy of the centralized French style approximated a ranked system. Because unranked systems foster competition between ethnic groups – which can readily spiral into conflict – we posit that the British colonial legacy is positively related to both the frequency and intensity of ethnic conflict. French colonies, on the other hand, were left with a centralized bureaucratic power structure that impeded ethnic mobilization and suppressed nonviolent ethnic challenges. Using the Minorities at Risk III dataset, we first compare the ethnic struggles faced across former British and French colonies. Next we test the impact of this colonial legacy on two facets of ethnic conflict, rebellious actions and civil war. Results indicate that, after controlling for other salient factors, a British colonial legacy is positively associated with ethnic conflict.

Introduction

European colonialism had profound, lasting, and wide-ranging effects on the development of contemporary African states. One of the most profound legacies of the colonial period has been ethnic conflict. When the European powers imposed formal territorial boundaries

throughout the continent in 1885, the seeds for ethnic conflict in post-colonial Africa were sown. Those boundaries were drawn with little or no consideration to the actual distribution of indigenous ethno-cultural groups. With the demise of colonial rule, the former colonies, with their colonial borders essentially intact, were transformed into some of the most ethnically fragmented states in the world.¹

Yet the forms and frequency of ethnic conflict have by no means been uniform across Africa. Some states, notably Rwanda and Burundi, have been torn by frequent

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instances of communal violence between groups. Others, such as Angola, have faced intermittent but extremely violent instances of ethnically based revolution. Still others have been confronted with low-level but protracted separatist revolts by ethno-regional minorities, including the Eritrean secession in Ethiopia and the Biafran secession in Nigeria. Finally, some have managed to remain relatively free of violent ethnic conflict. How, then, do we explain these differences in the form and frequency of violent ethnic conflict across a set of states that was uniformly subjected to colonial rule?

Despite colonialism's central role in the development of weak and ethnically divided African states, there have been few efforts to assess empirically the linkage between ethnic conflict and Africa's colonial legacy. Most efforts to analyze ethnic conflict have employed grievance-based models, which emphasize economic, political, and social deprivation or discrimination as sources of ethnic strife. Despite their intuitive appeal, grievance models generate little explanatory power with respect to ethnic conflict in Africa. The levels of grievance among Africans, as measured in the Minorities at Risk (MAR) project, are among the lowest of all regions of the world (Scarritt, 1993: 259; Scarritt & McMillan, 1995: 330–331). Not surprisingly, then, grievances are less robust as predictors of ethnic political violence in

Africa (Scarritt, 1993: 262).² Along these lines, Collier & Hoeffler (2000; see also Collier, 1998) find that 'greed' rather than grievance explains the prevalence of civil war across the continent. Because of the lack of economic growth in Africa, rebellions are more viable financially – governments cannot afford the resources to quell rebellions, and citizens have little to lose by joining a rebel movement.

Thus exclusive reliance on deprivation-based grievances as predictors of ethnic violence is inadequate empirically. It is also deficient theoretically. Collective-action and social-movement theories point out that widespread and deeply felt grievances are not likely to result in collective violence unless counter-elites and mobilizing structures are available to persuade aggrieved individuals to participate in the collective action, convince them that others are likely to participate as well, and produce the rewards – both public goods and selective incentives – that participants demand in return for their support.³ Empirically, Lindström & Moore (1995) show that grievances do not have a direct impact on ethnic conflict. Instead, they affect the ability of groups to mobilize their membership for conflict. If mobilization fails, then conflict may not occur, regardless of the level of grievance. Along these lines, Scarritt & McMillan (1995: 337) found that the effectiveness of mobilization predicts ethnic violence better than indicators of deprivation. Mason (1997) found that structural variables – derived from the distinction between ranked and unranked systems of ethnic stratification – are even better predictors of both mobilization and ethnic conflict

¹ For instance, the Minorities at Risk dataset includes 74 black African minority groups as compared to 43 in Asia, which has a much larger total population. Ethnic minorities constitute 42% of the total population of Africa, compared to a global average of 17%. In three African states, all of the population consists of ethnic minorities that are 'at risk' according to MAR criteria; in eight others, over half of the population consists of 'at risk' minorities, and in another four, over 40% are minorities at risk (Scarritt, 1993: 254–255; Scarritt & McMillan, 1995: 328). Approximately 45% of the ethnic minorities in Africa have engaged in armed rebellion, and almost all of these incidents have occurred after independence (Scarritt, 1993: 260; Scarritt & McMillan, 1995: 331).

² This conforms with Gurr's (1994: 358–359) findings that, across all regions, material inequalities are at best secondary causes of ethno-political conflicts.

³ The literature on the collective-action problem and solutions to it is too extensive to cite here. A useful summary of the literature and the solutions can be found in Moore (1995) and Lichbach (1994). A classic work on resource mobilization and social movements is Tilly (1978).

than are grievances: his model used only six variables to account for as much of the variance in ethnic violence as most grievance-based models did with ten or more variables. In other words, though grievance variables may indicate the potential for ethnic conflict, structural variables are more robust predictors of grievances, mobilization, and the probability of ethnic conflict itself.

This leads us to the purpose of this study: we propose that the structural configuration of ethnic groups – specifically, whether groups are arrayed in a ranked or an unranked system of ethnic stratification – has a direct and profound effect on the willingness and ability of groups to mobilize for collective action. Moreover, the structural configuration of ethnic groups in a society is itself a part of the nation's colonial legacy. Differences in the style of colonial administration practiced by Great Britain and France had profoundly different effects on the structure of inter-ethnic relations in a colony and, therefore, on the likelihood and form of post-colonial ethnic conflict. Specifically, we posit that ethnic conflict should be more frequent and intense in former British colonies precisely because their indirect style of colonial rule left intact traditional patterns of social organization. After the end of colonial rule, these structures facilitated the mobilization of aggrieved minorities for collective action. By contrast, the French strategy of administrative centralization amounted to an assault on traditional social institutions. This left ethnic minorities devoid of the mobilizing structures necessary to mount an organized challenge to the post-colonial state, regardless of the extent of their grievances against the state.

Thus differences in the style of colonial rule should correlate with differences in the frequency and level of post-independence ethnic conflict. Former British colonies should be more prone to organized ethnic conflict than former French colonies because

the British colonial style did less to corrode the traditional mobilizing structures that facilitate ethnic collective action. In the analysis that follows, we discuss the structural causes of ethnic conflict and spell out its linkage with the 'colonial style' thesis. Propositions derived from this theory will then be tested with data from the Minorities at Risk III dataset.

Structural Models of Ethnic Conflict

Ethnic conflict has been frequent and pervasive in post-colonial Africa, and a variety of explanations have been offered to account for this phenomenon. Perhaps the most thoroughly elaborated structural models of ethnic strife rely on the contrast between ranked and unranked systems of ethnic stratification, a distinction that 'rests upon the coincidence or non-coincidence of social class and ethnic origins. Where the two coincide, it is possible to speak of *ranked* ethnic groups; where groups are cross-class, it is possible to speak of *unranked* groups' (Horowitz, 1985: 22). These models suggest that the frequency, intensity, and forms of conflict should vary according to whether inter-ethnic relations are characterized as ranked or unranked.

Hechter (1975, 1978) and others characterize vertically integrated or 'ranked' systems of inter-ethnic relations as systems of 'internal colonialism' marked by a 'cultural division of labor'. The cultural division of labor refers to a pattern of structural discrimination such that 'individuals are assigned to specific types of occupations and other social roles on the basis of observable cultural traits or markers' (Hechter, 1974: 1154). Social stratification is synonymous with ethnic identity in the sense that the social structure of the nation-state is characterized by one ethnic group being subordinate to the other. In short, ethnicity and class coincide. Social mobility for subordinate group members is

therefore restricted by the ascriptive criteria of ethnic markers (see Horowitz, 1971: 232; 1985: 23–25). As a consequence, ethnic identity is reinforced and ethnic solidarity is intensified because one's ethnic identity cannot be divorced from one's economic status and political interests (Leifer, 1981: 26; Birch, 1978: 326–327; Nielsen, 1985: 133). Where the system of social stratification links ethnic identity and economic status so closely, it confers meaning to ethnic identity that will persist so long as the linkage between status and the ascriptive stigmata of ethnicity remains.

The alternative to ranked systems is the unranked or horizontally integrated structure of ethnic stratification. Where the cultural division of labor has broken down (or never existed), a pattern of 'competitive ethnicity' emerges, as groups find themselves in competition for the same resources and the same occupational roles in the society's status hierarchy (Bates, 1974; Olzak, 1983). Unlike the ranked system, this competition is unconstrained by a cultural division of labor that assigns one group, on an ascriptive basis, overwhelming competitive advantages over the others. In an unranked system, there are opportunities for upward mobility within each group, and the exploitation of those opportunities by members of one group does not necessarily bring them into competition with members of the other group. In this instance, social status is not synonymous with ethnicity. The relative autonomy of groups with respect to status hierarchy is often reinforced by their concentration in relatively distinct geographic enclaves within a single nation-state. Indeed, Horowitz (1971: 234) has characterized intergroup relations in unranked systems as more nearly approximating international relations than the clientelist dependency typical of ranked systems.

We argue that these structural variations did not simply arise across Africa. They have

historical roots that can be traced to colonial institutions and their impact on the pattern of inter-ethnic relations in the colonial states.

The Impact of Colonialism

Prior to the 19th century, European contact with Africa, though extensive, was largely confined to a limited number of coastal enclaves. The vast interior remained of little interest to Europe, at least so long as traders could obtain what they needed from indigenous middlemen operating out of those enclaves.⁴ The industrial revolution changed this. As their specializations moved towards manufacturing, European powers began to import agricultural goods and raw materials. This burgeoning demand motivated a wave of colonial expansion focused on Africa and Asia. In order to guarantee supplies of these commodities, Europe used colonialism to assume direct administrative control over the territories that produced them (Migdal, 1988; Young, 1994).

Two aspects of the colonial legacy are especially relevant to this study, in that they delineate key ways in which the indigenous social structures were disrupted. First, in dividing Africa among themselves, the colonial powers showed little regard for the natural boundaries of existing ethnic groups. Each colony encompassed multiple ethnic groups within its newly imposed territorial boundaries, and many ethnic nationalities were divided between two or more colonial entities. With independence, these boundaries gained international (though not necessarily domestic) legitimacy as the borders of newly sovereign nation-states. However, the disjunction between state borders and the geographic distribution of ethnic groups immediately confronted the new African states with the twin problems of secessionist sentiments within their borders

⁴ See, for instance, Migdal (1988), Young (1988, 1994), Akinrainade & Falola (1986a,b), and Wolf (1982).

and the threat of irredentist wars across their borders.

Second, in establishing administrative control over their colonial territories, European powers transformed productive relations within the society. In so doing, they inevitably undermined long-standing patterns of social organization and authority. The industrial revolution had generated unprecedented demand for crops such as palm and peanut oil as well as cotton, all of which were needed as production inputs to certain industries. By the end of the 19th century, rising incomes among Europe's industrial working classes generated demand for a second category of agricultural goods: food crops of a type that had been considered luxuries affordable only to Europe's elite prior to the industrial revolution. Included among these were coffee, tea, cocoa, and sugar (Young, 1994: 84–85). To ensure adequate production of these crops, the colonial powers instituted a variety of measures to force the native population into production of these crops. These devices included 'head taxes' that forced peasants to grow cash crops, outright mandates that they devote a certain portion of the land to cash crops, and even forced displacement of peasants from the land to make room for commercial plantations (Young, 1994: 126, 179). Patterns of social organization that had afforded communities reliable subsistence strategies were undermined by this transformation (Migdal, 1988). Institutions of social control and social organization that had evolved over centuries according to the rhythms of local needs, local markets, and local communities were disrupted as the productive base of society was transformed to serve the demands of European markets.

The multi-ethnic character of African colonies did not vary much between different colonial powers because the criteria used to draw colonial boundaries had nothing to do with ethnic boundaries. However, the extent

to which traditional patterns of social organization were disrupted by the colonial power varied with the style of colonial rule. It is our contention that variances in these ruling 'styles' had significant consequences for post-colonial patterns of ethnic conflict.

The Colonial-Style Thesis

Although each colonial system was distinct from others, we focus on the differences between the French and British systems because they exercised wider areas of control in Africa than Belgium, Portugal, or other European powers. Moreover, both ended their colonial presence in Africa at roughly the same time, in the early to mid-1960s.⁵ Both French and British colonial policy in Africa was driven by economic imperatives. These imperatives dictated that colonial administration had to be as nearly self-supporting as possible (Young, 1994: 97). Consequently, neither nation relied heavily on colonization by settlement.⁶ Both installed a minimal staff of Europeans to manage the machinery of the colonial state, with lower level positions in the colonial administration being occupied by European-trained indigenous people. Thus, for instance, Nigeria had only one British administrator for every 100,000 Africans, with a colonial army of 4,000, only 75 of whom were not Africans. In French West Africa, the ratio of Europeans to Africans was 1:27,000 (Wilson, 1994: 12–13).

The British and French systems of colonial administration were based upon

⁵ Belgium, Portugal, Germany, and Italy entered the colonial scramble later than Britain and France, and their holdings were never as extensive as those of the British and French. For a discussion of their styles of colonial rule, see Schraeder (2000: 98) and Young (1988, 1994).

⁶ The exceptions, of course, were British settlements in South Africa and East Africa, including Kenya and Rhodesia. There, the construction of a plantation-based agricultural economy encouraged a more substantial European settlement and more direct colonial administration of local order.

different ideologies and methods of control. As depicted by Young (1994: 99), the British colonial state was distinct for its

less centralized historical personality, a less thorough impregnation with an earlier absolutist tradition, and a less prefectural model of regional administration. . . . France stood at the other end of the spectrum, with the powerful Cartesian, Jacobin impulses that . . . [gave rise to a] potent legacy of a fully formed absolutist tradition, modernized in the Bonapartist rationalization of the state, [that] informed the inner spirit of republican institutions.

These differences in the strategy of colonial administration contributed to differences in the systems of ethnic stratification and ethnic conflict that emerged in each system after independence.

The French System: Assimilation and Centralization

The French approach to colonialism was based on the ideal of integrating its colonial peoples into a 'Greater France' through cultural assimilation and administrative centralization (Clapham, 1985). Indeed, French colonial subjects even became citizens of France in 1946 (Delavignette, 1970: 259). All aspects of French colonial rule reflected this push for a centralized state, which incorporated individuals from different regions and ethnic groups into a single social system, all under the control of an administrative state modeled after and controlled by the French state. A primary instrument of assimilation was the use of French as the language of commerce and government (Clapham, 1985: 21). This commitment to integration through cultural immersion also can be noted in the number of French colonial subjects who were educated in France and the extent to which the French language was disseminated through their colonial territories.

Within this 'Greater France', the French sought to create a system of control modeled after the centralized bureaucracy of the

French state. Formal authority to enact legislation for the colonies was vested in the government in Paris, but in practice colonial law was usually a matter of presidential decree or ordinances enacted by the colonial governor (Young, 1988: 35; 1994: 116). Very little discretion was left up to indigenous local elites. A French Governor General issued a directive in 1917 stating that,

there are not two authorities in a *cercle* [the unit of local administration], French and indigenous authority; there is only one. Alone, the *cercle* commandant commands; alone he is responsible. The indigenous chief is only an instrument, an auxiliary. (Young, 1988: 43)

Indeed, 'African chiefs were allowed to head only the lowest echelons of the administrative pyramid', and even that concession was allowed only so long as the particular chief remained subservient to French directives (McNamara, 1989: 26).

Locally, this centralization meant that agents of the colonial state replaced traditional authorities, and traditional institutions were supplanted by bureaucratic agencies of the colonial state. Colonial subjects became directly linked to the colonial state through such devices as taxation, land tenure laws, and mandatory labor dues on public-works projects. No longer were their relations with the central state mediated by traditional local elites. Traditional bonds of community were eroded accordingly as the authority of the traditional patrimonial elites was superseded by the administrative power of the colonial state.

Initially, the colonial institutional machinery was designed for a European administrative elite to govern through a local, educated elite (McNamara, 1989: 28). However, these local leaders were not drawn from among the existing indigenous authorities. Instead, the French created a new elite by conferring a French education on ambitious but cooperative locals. They were trained in French language and culture and in

the administrative skills required to serve as effective agents of the colonial state. As the functionaries of the European administration, the newly assimilated elite also served as an indigenous counter-weight to traditional indigenous authorities.

However, assimilation was never uniform across any given colony. Inevitably, certain ethnic groups within the colony gained disproportionate access to French education and, therefore, disproportionate access to high-status positions in the French colonial administration. In some cases, this was a function of geography: the ethnic group whose traditional homeland happened to include the administrative capital of the colony and its major commercial enclaves simply had greater access to French educational opportunities. These opportunities were available in the interior of the colony only to the extent that French commercial interests required an extensive French presence in the interior, which seldom was the case. Thus, despite the ideal of cultural assimilation, opportunities for assimilation through education were not available equally to different ethnic groups in the colony. This set the stage for post-colonial stratification along ethnic lines.

The French administrative machinery remained largely unchanged during the transition to independence. Simply put, 'the machinery changed hands but not the parts' (Delavignette, 1970: 276). By capturing control over the administrative machinery of the post-colonial state, the 'modernized' elite that the French had empowered remained in positions of authority, to the exclusion of other groups within the society. At the same time, other groups had seen their own ability to mobilize for collective action undermined by the penetration of this same centralized administrative structure. French colonial officials had supplanted their own leaders, and the bureaucratic machinery of the colonial state had undermined indigenous insti-

tutions of social organization. Consequently, they lacked both the leadership and the mobilizing structures necessary to mobilize their members for collective action aimed at advancing their claims on the post-colonial state. In short, ethnic groups that failed to assimilate found themselves disadvantaged in the post-colonial political order.

British Colonial System: Indirect Rule

In contrast to the French system, the British style of colonial rule was much less dominated by the *metropole*. The UK depended much more heavily upon local elites to manage the day-to-day affairs of the colony (Emerson, 1964). Rather than colonize their African holdings with a large number of British citizens, the British government preferred to leave in place indigenous local elites and simply coopt or coerce them into serving as agents of British rule (Wilson, 1994: 19). Through this means, the British colonial state established a network of indigenous intermediaries 'who combined the useful authority derived from some customary title to office with the literate skills and exposure to basic administrative training that would make them serviceable auxiliaries of the would-be Weberian state' (Young, 1994: 150). This strategy was especially successful in Uganda and northern Nigeria, where the British found strong structures of social control already in place and willing collaborators among those in charge of those structures (Young, 1988: 42–43). Thus, rather than dismantling indigenous social structures, as the French did, the British left traditional patterns of social organization intact.

In preserving pre-colonial social institutions, the British practiced a 'divide and rule' strategy (Clapham, 1985), whereby they purposely maintained opposing traditional structures of control in order to keep the different ethnic populations within a colony from forming a coalition to challenge British hegemony. This system of indirect rule was an

attempt 'to stop Africans from following the Indian model of anti-colonial nationalism' (Wilson, 1994: 21). For instance, in a multi-ethnic colony, the British would often choose one of the smaller minority groups – one that had been relegated to subordinate status by the larger ethnic groups in the territory – to receive British education. That group came to dominate the colonial civil service and police/military forces. Thus, military units came to be dominated by the Tiv in Nigeria, the Acholi in Uganda, and the Kamba in Kenya (Young, 1994: 105). By exploiting ethnic divisions and minority resentments, the British were able to prevent the formation of anti-colonial alliances across ethnic groupings.

By allowing traditional institutions to remain, the British did not force all subjects of a given colony to integrate into a single centralized system of formal bureaucratic control, as was the French practice. In fact, the British system encouraged the opposite: it maintained control by cultivating factional rivalries among the different ethnic communities within a colony. Horowitz (1985: 150) notes that 'building colonial administration on a substructure of ethnic government helped insure that disparities would be interpreted through the lens of ethnicity'. Thus the British structured ethnic conflict into their system.

Though their systems had the same broad goal – control of the African polities – the British and French colonial administrations were based on different philosophies and had different organizational characteristics. The outcomes of these differences in colonial strategies can be found in the patterns of ethnic stratification and ethnic conflict in the post-colonial states.

Colonial Style and Post-Colonial Conflict

The differences in the French and British styles of colonial administration should

generate corresponding differences in the patterns of ethnic stratification confronting the post-colonial states. Specifically, the British left in place an unranked system of ethnic stratification, while the French created a system that more closely approximated a ranked system. These structural differences, we argue, had a significant impact upon the frequency and severity of ethnic conflict after the fall of colonialism.

Because the extent of this assimilation and the benefits that accompanied it were unevenly distributed across ethnic groups in French colonies, socio-economic status, mobility, and access to positions of power became linked to ethnicity. Opportunities for upward mobility, education, and power were severely limited outside the dominant group. With independence, this assimilated elite was able to capture control of the state machinery and use that machinery to assert its hegemony within the post-colonial state. Uneven assimilation also impeded the ability of subordinate groups to mobilize for collective action. As noted earlier, the imposition of a centralized system of bureaucratic authority undermined local authorities and social institutions. As a result, subordinate groups were less able to develop either the political leaders or the organizational capacity to mobilize their members for collective action of any sort, whether violent or nonviolent. The dominant group was able to use its monopoly of civil service positions to dominate not just national politics but the local machinery of government as well. This allowed it to more easily monitor and repress the activity of dissident members of the subordinate group before those dissidents could assemble the resources necessary to mobilize a challenge to the status quo. Consequently, if subordinate group members were to mobilize, their activity was more likely to take a more militant form because conventional nonviolent activity was pre-empted by the ability of the dominant group to monitor and suppress it.

Such political dominance was often accompanied by economic hegemony at both the local and national levels. Assimilated groups possessed the resource base to enforce their supremacy while denying subordinate groups the material resources needed to support and sustain a challenge to the state. Through their ability to manipulate access to jobs, land, and subsistence guarantees, the dominant group could discourage non-elites within the subordinate group from actively challenging the status quo. Thus, even if widespread latent support for a challenge existed, economic incentives and social controls prevented the active mobilization of such resistance. Moreover, the relegation of the subordinate group to lower status occupations suggests that members of this group were less likely to have the time and resources to invest in ethnically based collective action.

In contrast, British reliance on the existing decentralized network of traditional authorities and institutions suggests an unranked system of ethnic stratification. The preservation of traditional authority structures allowed each ethnic group to maintain its own elites. As long as those elites complied with British rule and preserved order among their own constituents, they were not subjugated to the authority of rival ethnic groups. British 'divide and rule' tactics discouraged the creation of a single dominant ethnic group. As such, class lines in British colonies did not fall neatly along ethnic divisions.

With independence, a pattern of competitive ethnicity typical of unranked systems emerged. However, the goal of the competition was now control over the machinery of the post-colonial state. Ethnic groups could be driven to collective action by the fear that, if another group gained control over the institutional machinery of the state, they would use it to subordinate other groups in a ranked system of ethnic stratification. However, the British system left intact each group's leadership, its authority structures,

and its institutions of social organization, and these served as mobilizing structures for ethnic collective action.⁷ Thus, groups excluded from control of the state in former British colonies still had the capacity to mobilize their members for collective action, including both violent and nonviolent opposition activities.

Thus our central hypothesis is that ethnic conflict should be more frequent in former British colonies precisely because of the legacy of their colonial rule. Specifically, their indirect style left intact traditional patterns of social organization that facilitated the mobilization of aggrieved minorities for collective action. By contrast, the French strategy of administrative centralization left ethnic minorities devoid of the mobilizing structures necessary to mount an organized challenge to the post-colonial state. Simply put, the distinctive colonial styles had generalizable differences in the mobilization structures of the African polities, and these differences are a significant determinant of the frequency and severity of ethnic conflict. We turn now to the testing of this proposition.

Colonial Legacies: Comparison and Assessment

Our thesis hinges on the different mobilization opportunities available to ethnic groups in former British colonies versus former French colonies in Africa. Given our emphasis on the substate characteristics of these polities, we use the Minorities at Risk (MAR) dataset. MAR is unique in that it provides a rich, varied, and comprehensive set of measures of the characteristics of ethnic groups and their relationships with each

⁷ Hechter & Levi (1979) argue that ethnic groups are more likely to engage in collective action if they have an infrastructure of pre-existing voluntary organizations and sufficient resources to sustain organized activity, both of which are more likely to be found in unranked systems of ethnic stratification than in ranked systems.

other and with the state. As shown in our variable list (Table I), MAR also supplies information on the mobilization structures and opportunities that ethnic groups have within their respective polities, as well as where these minorities stand – economically, politically, and culturally – with respect to other ethnic groups in the nation.

Given this wealth of information on sub-national units (i.e. ethnic groups), MAR is particularly useful in examining the causes of internal strife. In particular, MAR allows for explanations that better assess the proximate causes of such conflict. State-level measures, including wealth, natural resources (Collier, 1998; Collier & Hoeffler, 2000), and ethnic

domination (Ellingsen, 2000) tap into contextual factors and sources of grievances that may facilitate domestic conflict. Though these variables are certainly related to conflict, the presence of these conditions does not directly bring about domestic violence – despite the incentives the above factors may provide, actual conflict will not occur without the mobilization of forces. Thus while aggregate measures may provide clues into the permissive causes of internal conflict, MAR data are unique in providing insights into the proximate causes.

The colonial-style thesis leads us to confine our analysis to ethnic minorities in former British and French colonies in

Table I. Variables From the Minorities At Risk Dataset

<i>Variable</i>	<i>MAR variable</i>	<i>Description</i>
Total Rebellion	REBEL80X; REBEL85X; REBEL90X	Additive total of the greatest degree of rebellion which occurred over three five-year periods (1980–84; 1985–89; 1990–95)
Group Concentration Index	GROUPCON	Scale representing the degree of spatial distribution of ethnic group.
Cultural Differentials Index	CULDIFX	Scale of cultural status relative to that of the dominant group
Political Differentials Index	POLDIFX	Scale of political status relative to that of the dominant group
Economic Differentials Index	ECDIFX	Scale of economic status relative to that of the dominant group
Political Discrimination Index	POLDISX8	Extent of political discrimination faced by group throughout its existence
Economic Discrimination Index	ECDIS90	Extent of economic discrimination faced by group throughout its existence
Index of Communal Conflict	COMCON8X; COMCON9X	Additive total of intercommunal conflict apparent across the 1980s and the 1990s
Open Mobilization Index	OPMOB9	Scale representing degree of open and legal mobilization (incorporates both the level of organization and degree of support)
Militant Mobilization Index	MILMOB9	Scale representing degree of militant and illegal mobilization (incorporates both the level of organization and degree of support)
Average Autocracy Score: 1980–94	NAUT84; NAUT89; NAUT94	Average degree of autocracy apparent across three five-year increments

Table II. Descriptive Statistics: Anglophone and Francophone Africa versus the Non-African World

Variable	Sample			Rest of world	
	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Mean	n
Total Rebellion	0	21	3.56 (n = 48)	3.88	182
Group Concentration Index	0	3	2.54***	1.95***	199
Cultural Differentials Index	1	4	2.13***	2.93***	199
Political Differentials Index	-2	4	1.02***	1.74***	186
Economic Differentials Index	-2	4	1.29**	1.93**	188
Political Discrimination Index	0	4	2.27	2.07	124
Economic Discrimination Index	0	4	1.48	1.90	122
Index of Communal Conflict	0	10	3.02	2.59	199
Open Mobilization Index	0	9	2.42	3.00	199
Militant Mobilization Index	0	4*	0.60	0.79	199
Average Autocracy Score, 1980-94	0	8	5.50***	2.93***	199

* Out of a possible score of 9.

** Significant at the 0.05 level.

*** Significant at the 0.01 level.

Two-tailed tests; equal variance across samples not assumed.

Africa.⁸ Of the 48 cases analyzed here, 32 involved former British colonies, while 16 cases are former French holdings. Temporally, analysis focuses on the period between 1980 and 1995. This represents the longest time-span for which comprehensive data are available on all of the cases. Our observation strategy consists of two steps. First, descriptive statistics will permit us to highlight the differences and similarities between ethnic groups subject to the two colonial legacies. Next, we will employ multiple regression to test the impact of the differing colonial legacies on the frequency and intensity of

rebellious action across former French and British colonies.

Descriptive statistics, presented in Table II, provide some insights into the characteristics of ethnic groups in Anglophone and Francophone Africa, as well as how these groups compare to others throughout the world. The variable for rebellion, which ranges from 0 to 21, represents the additive total of the most intense rebellious action that occurred across three different five-year time-spans.⁹ As indicated by the mean, not every ethnic group has engaged in open rebellion; indeed, just over half of the cases experienced no significant rebellious activity. Also, groups within our sample are geographically more concentrated than ethnic groups outside of Africa. As noted earlier, such geographic concentration implies the existence of predominantly unranked ethnic systems. Moreover, it shows that pre-colonial patterns of geographic concentration along ethnic lines survived the disruptions of

⁸ Though France and the UK claimed colonies throughout the world, analysis will focus on cases within Africa. First, because the impact of the colonial legacy is greater in Africa, it provides an excellent 'laboratory' for research into the relative impacts of the different colonial practices. Additionally, focusing on the continent will serve to better isolate the impact of the respective colonial legacies. Factors that tend to vary with geographic areas, such as level of development, degree of ethnic fragmentation, and the frequency of ethnic conflict, are relatively constant across the cases. Africa was largely split up between Britain and France during the peak of colonialism and, thus, the continent contains a comparable number of cases involving each legacy. Finally, both Britain and France practiced different styles of colonial rule elsewhere in their colonial empires (see Clapham, 1985).

⁹ Complete explanations of each of these variables are available from the *Minorities at Risk Phase III Dataset Users' Manual*. Descriptions of the substantive meanings behind the values of the variables are drawn from the codebook.

colonial rule. With respect to grievance variables, the ethnic minorities in our sample are subject to a fair degree of social, economic, and political deprivation – the means of the three differentials indices imply ‘slight’ to ‘substantial’ differences between each ethnic group and the dominant ethnic group in the nation. On average, however, deprivation scores of these African groups are significantly less than their non-African counterparts. This implies that the gap between dominant and subordinate ethnic groups within our sample is less than that of their non-African counterparts (see also Scarritt, 1993). Additionally, the polities in which these ethnic groups reside are highly autocratic – the average autocracy score across our sample was almost twice that of the non-African groups.¹⁰ Finally, given their discriminatory treatment and the undemocratic nature of the polities in which they reside, these ethnic groups exhibit a rather low level of political mobilization. The means for open and militant mobilization, 2.42 and 0.6 out of a possible 9, respectively, imply that the number of political movements and the extent of their support were relatively limited across the cases.

Turning to the specific issue of colonial style, Table III compares the means for the MAR variables across former French versus former British colonies. Here we find several significant differences. First of all, the Francophone states were more autocratic than their Anglophone counterparts. Indeed, the mean autocracy score for the Francophone polities, 6.44, is fairly close to the maximum autocracy score of 8. Ethnic groups within former French colonies were also treated worse in relation to the dominant group within their polity, as exhibited by the significantly higher scores on indices of both cultural and political differentiation. These

findings reinforce our characterization of the Francophone states as ranked systems. The autocracy scores indicate a very severe concentration of power and lack of political competition. Moreover, ethnic minorities in former French colonies are more subject to political and economic subordination by the dominant ethnic group. Apparently, the assimilated groups were able to successfully hold on to their colonial-era advantages and maintain control over the institutional machinery of the state after independence, and they appear to have used their hegemony to subordinate other ethnic groups.

Additionally, there are significant differences in the type and intensity of ethnic collective action. Ethnic groups in former British holdings are significantly more likely to engage in intercommunal conflict, implying a greater degree of conflict over power among the various ethnic groups within each polity. This conforms to what we would expect in an unranked system of ethnic stratification. The British style of indirect rule left intact the mobilizing structures necessary for the kind of inter-ethnic competition that is typical of unranked systems. As shown by the scores on the mobilization indices, this struggle for power was carried out through open, rather than militant, mobilization. Thus, while groupings within former British colonies had a significantly greater degree of open and legal political mobilization, political movements among their Francophone counterparts were of a more militant nature. The proliferation of such movements would be expected in a ranked society. To the extent that the dominant ethnic group monopolizes political and economic power, the ability of the subordinate groups to mobilize through legal channels is severely constrained. They have neither the freedom nor the resources to compete within the legal political bounds of the system. Thus when mobilization does occur, it is more likely to be of a militant

¹⁰ Indeed, democracy scores for this sample were so low – only South Africa and Botswana had scores above 4 for the time period covered here – that they are not included here.

Table III. Comparison of Variable Means Across Colonial Legacies

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Mean (French colonies)</i>	<i>Mean (British colonies)</i>
Total Rebellion	4.38	3.15
Group Concentration	2.63	2.50
Cultural Differentials	2.38*	2.00*
Political Differentials	1.44*	0.81*
Economic Differentials	1.37	1.20
Political Discrimination	2.56	2.13
Economic Discrimination	1.50	1.47
Total Intergroup Conflict	2.13**	3.47**
Open Mobilization	1.75*	2.75*
Militant Mobilization	1.25**	0.28**
Average Autocracy	7.06***	5.88***

Total $n = 48$; $n_{\text{French}} = 16$; $n_{\text{British}} = 32$.

* Significant at 0.1 level.

** Significant at 0.05 level.

*** Significant at 0.01 level.

One-tailed tests; equal variances across samples not assumed.

nature because the dominant group does not tolerate more conventional forms of mobilization. Comparing these results with those shown in Table II, it appears that the overall means for the mobilization indices – 2.42 for open mobilization and 0.6 for militant (each out of a possible 9) – understate the actual extent of the political activity of these groups. Ethnic groups in former French and British polities are active and mobilized, albeit through different means.

Overall, two different types of ethnic struggle emerge. British groups face a battle among more-or-less equal actors, marked by relatively more frequent conflict. The reason that conflict is more frequent is that ethnic groups in former British colonies are more effectively mobilized for collective action. As such, the need to resort to militant mobilization is less urgent. Minority groups in former French colonies, on the other hand, are more subject to repression by the dominant group in the political system. Thus mobilization is more difficult to achieve. On the comparatively rare instances when it does occur, it is not likely to take place through

conventional legal channels, but through militant organizations.

Given the differences across these colonial legacies, what is the overall impact of these colonial influences upon ethnic rebellion? An OLS model is employed to see if any significant differences in rebellious activity across these colonial legacies emerge, once we control for other factors that contribute to rebellion. The respective colonial legacies are incorporated into the model as a dummy variable, with a value of 0 indicating a French legacy and a value of 1 representing British. Owing to multicollinearity concerns, the indices for discrimination and differentiation are additively combined into aggregate scales.¹¹ In addition to the MAR variables, two other control variables are also added, GDP per capita and 'semi-democracy'. The

¹¹ Specifically, the bivariate correlation for the indices of political and economic differentiation was 0.56. Political and economic discrimination indices were also highly correlated ($r=0.59$). Within our model, there were only two instances in which the correlations between the independent variables was over 0.4 – there was a 0.48 correlation between GDP per capita and protest and a 0.51 correlation between total discrimination and total differentials.

former is incorporated to account for the role of wealth as a cause of rebellion (Collier, 1998), while the latter accounts for the widely cited inverted U-relationship between autocracy and ethnic conflict.¹² Ethnic conflict is less likely in both highly democratic and highly autocratic states (Hegre et al., 1999; Singer & Henderson, 2000).¹³

The regression model, shown in Table IV, explains a significant portion of the variation in rebellious activity, as shown by the adjusted r^2 of 0.53. The significance of the F statistic at the 0.01 level of tolerance indicates that the hypothesis that all of the independent variables are equal to zero can be rejected. The coefficient for the Colonial Style variable, which is significant at the 0.01 level, reveals that the type of colonial legacy is significantly related to rebellious ethnic conflict – ethnic groups within former British colonies are significantly more likely to attempt rebellious collective action than their counterparts in former French colonies, once other factors are controlled. As implied by the insignificance of the protest variable, these ethnic groups generally eschew non-violent forms of political participation. Rather, inter-ethnic competition within the

unranked Anglophone polities takes more extreme forms. The only other significant variable for determining rebellious activity is the degree of militant mobilization, which is also significant at the 0.01 level. Thus the presence of militant groupings, and the support they garner, is positively and significantly related to the degree of rebellious activity. The various grievance variables are all insignificant, implying that while such conditions may possibly contribute to mobilization, their direct impact upon rebellion is not significant. Likewise, the wealth variable is insignificant, a finding undoubtedly due to the rather constant presence of poverty throughout our sample.¹⁴

Thus the frequency of rebellious activity is greater in former British colonies. However, what of the intensity of rebellious activity? Is the likelihood of the most severe form of ethnic conflict – civil war – affected by the colonial legacy? To test this proposition, we recoded the dependent variable into a measure of the presence or absence of civil war.¹⁵ The results, shown in Table V, are similar to that of our first model. Once again our model explained over half of the variance in the incidence of civil war, with an r^2 of 0.52. And, once again, we find that militant mobilization is a significant determinant of conflict. Colonial style is also a significant determinant of civil war, albeit at a lower level of significance. Thus colonial style is significantly related to both the frequency and intensity of ethnic conflict.

Overall, our models provide an interesting

¹² In autocracies, the state represses dissident activity before it can escalate to the point of posing a viable challenge to the state. In democracies, dissident groups can be accommodated through elections and other democratic institutions so that there is no need to resort to violence against the state. 'Semi-democracies' have neither the institutional capacity to accommodate aggrieved groups nor the coercive capacity to repress them pre-emptively. Therefore, semi-democracies are more likely to experience violent internal conflict.

¹³ The GDP per capita variable is the mean GDP per capita from 1980 to 1995. Data were obtained from the World Bank dataset on economic growth (<http://www.world-bank.org/research/growth/GDNdata.htm>). The variable is logged to correct for skewness. Following analytic precedent (i.e. Ellingsen, 2000), the variable for semi-democracy is drawn from both the MAR data and directly from Polity III. First, autocracy scores are subtracted from the democracy scores to create an index ranging from -10 to 10. The polities are then collapsed into three categories: democracies (scores from 6 to 10), autocracies (-10 to -5) and semi-democracies (5 to -5). Democracies are coded as a 0, autocracies 1, and semi-democracies 2.

¹⁴ Thus, though economic factors may make Africa, as a whole, more prone to civil conflict (Collier & Hoeffler, 2000), poverty does not explain patterns of ethnic strife within Africa.

¹⁵ Specifically, we recoded the scores for each five-year period. An absence of any rebellious activity was coded as a 0. Periods with some rebellious activity were coded as 1. Along the lines recommended by Gurr (personal correspondence), rebellion values of 4 or above were coded as a civil war (2). These scores were additively combined across each of the five-year periods. The variable thus ranges from 0 for a grouping with no significant activity to 6 for a group that fights a civil war during each of the five-year periods.

Table IV. The Determinants of Violent Ethnic Conflict

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>t-score</i>
Colonial Ties	2.74	2.06***
Group Concentration	0.44	0.51
Differentials Index	0.08	0.33
Discrimination Index	-0.09	0.35
Total Intergroup Conflict	-0.06	0.51
Open Mobilization	-0.01	-0.05
Militant Mobilization	3.87	5.51***
Total Protest	0.06	0.33
Semi-Democracy	0.85	0.58
GDP per capita (logged)	-0.60	-0.41

$n = 48$.

Adjusted $r^2 = 0.526$.

$F = 6.22^{***}$.

*** Significant at the 0.01 level (one-tailed test).

and parsimonious explanation for the determinants of ethnically based rebellious activity in Africa. Indeed, over half of the variance in rebellious activity in Africa is explained essentially in terms of two variables, militant mobilization and colonial style. Rebellion is linked to the presence of militant mobilization, which is more likely to occur in French polities. However, once we control for militant

mobilization, groupings within former British colonies are more likely to engage in rebellious activities. Moreover, their rebellious activity is more intense. Ethnic groups in former French colonies have the potential for rebellion if they can mobilize their population for such activity. Given the structure of inter-ethnic relations in former French colonies, that mobilization is most likely to take a militant form from the

Table V. The Determinants of Ethnic Civil War

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>t-score</i>
Colonial Ties	0.73	1.60*
Group Concentration	0.07	0.25
Differentials Index	0.03	0.27
Discrimination Index	-0.04	-0.41
Total Intergroup Conflict	0.02	-0.03
Open Mobilization	0.03	0.37
Militant Mobilization	1.28	5.42***
Total Protest	0.05	0.67
Semi-Democracy	0.53	1.06
GDP per capita (logged)	-0.35	-0.71

$n = 48$

Adjusted $r^2 = 0.522$.

$F = 6.13^{***}$.

* Significant at the 0.1 level.

*** Significant at the 0.01 level.

One-tailed tests.

start. However, militant mobilization is a comparatively rare venture; thus the overall incidence of rebellion is lower. Ethnic groups in former British colonies, on the other hand, are more likely to engage in all forms of political violence, largely because they possess a wider variety of mobilizing structures, a condition that is itself a part of the British colonial legacy. In this case, British colonies do not have to await the emergence of militant mobilization. Rather, inter-ethnic competition, which can take place through conventional channels, can quickly intensify into violent conflict that escalates to civil war. Hence the unranked nature of Anglophone polities – a direct result of their colonial legacy – provides the mobilization structures that facilitate violent collective action.

Finally, the generalizability of our study should be addressed. There is a trade-off inherent in using MAR data. Despite the richness of substate information it provides, MAR contains data only on the sample of ethnic groups that are considered ‘at risk’ – not every African country with a British or French colonial legacy is included, nor is every country that had a violent domestic conflict. In order to probe the robustness of our findings across a broader sample, we ran a parallel analysis based on Tanja Ellingsen’s study of ethnic fragmentation and conflict (Ellingsen, 2000), which relies upon Correlates of War data as well as her original data on ethnic fragmentation. Using her figures and methods, we analyzed the relationship between colonial style and civil war across the complete sample of former British and French colonies for the period 1965–92. The results of this replication analysis corroborated our findings: British colonial rule was positively and significantly related to civil war in Africa.

Conclusion

Colonial legacies, and charges of neo-colonialism, are often cited as a primary

obstacle to African stability and development. By fragmenting the traditional ethnic groupings within Africa in their quest to divide up the continent among themselves, the European powers created the potential for ethnic conflict. Despite the importance of the colonial legacy to understanding ethnic conflict within Africa, it has not been examined in a systematic fashion. This work has sought to fill this analytic gap by examining ethnic conflict across the two major colonial legacies. Specifically, we raised two sets of questions:

- (1) Are there generalizable differences in the patterns of inter-ethnic relations that can be attributed to differences in colonial legacy?
- (2) If so, did these differences affect the frequency and intensity of ethnic conflict within the former colonies?

Our analysis suggests that differences in the British and French colonial legacies contribute to both the frequency and intensity of post-colonial ethnic conflict. Ironically, the French strategy of assimilation and centralization, based on assumptions about the fundamental equality of humankind, contributed to the development of a ranked system of ethnic stratification. Within these polities, assimilation was uneven, and those groups that did assimilate more thoroughly were able to assert their hegemony in the post-colonial regime, subordinating other ethnic groups in such a way as to impede their ability to pursue political grievances through conventional political channels. Violent ethnic conflict may have been less frequent in former French colonies, but that is largely because the French colonial legacy deprived subordinate groups of the mobilizing structures by which they could pursue redress of grievances through means other than militant collective action. When mobilization did occur, it was militant and revolutionary, aimed at destroying the hegemony of the dominant group.

By contrast, the British style of indirect rule was based on the assumption that colonial peoples would never be the equals of the English. Therefore, they were best left to their own institutions of social organization. These assumptions led to policies that left in place traditional social institutions that could later serve as mobilizing structures in the post-colonial state. Ethnic minorities in former British colonies were more able to organize for political action than their French counterparts. However, given the autocratic nature of the state under which they lived, nonviolent collective action was typically met with repression. This compelled those groups to shift tactics from nonviolent conventional political action to violent rebellion, a transition that they were better able to do since traditional mobilizing structures were still in place.

In addition to systematically examining an important aspect of the colonial legacy within Africa, this study has provided some insights into the broader study of ethnic conflict. Specifically, the British and French created two distinct societal structures. British policies reinforced an unranked system of ethnic stratification, while the centralized French strategy facilitated the development of a ranked system of ethnic stratification. These structures were a significant determinant of both the frequency and intensity of rebellious activity. The typical grievance indicators, inter-ethnic discrimination and differentiation, were not found to be significantly related to the incidence of rebellious activity. Indeed, the French policies, despite having a significantly higher degree of grievances than their British counterparts, were found to be less likely to rebel. Thus our findings corroborate those of Scarritt (1993) with regard to ethnic violence in Africa. Additionally, this study also lends support to the structural arguments for ethnic conflict (i.e. Lindström & Moore, 1995; Scarritt & McMillan, 1995; Mason,

1997). Overall, while we believe our findings uncover the basis for explaining ethnic conflict in Africa – namely, the structures created by colonial legacies are a significant determinant of rebellious activity in Africa – the results of this study lend further credence to the broader argument that structural determinants of ethnic conflict provide a more compelling and robust explanation for ethnic violence.

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