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## Explaining Ethnic Peace: The Importance of Institutions

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## Explaining Ethnic Peace: The Importance of Institutions

By  
Rebecca Tong

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### Abstract

*This paper examines the cause of ethnic peace, and subsequently, the cause of ethnic violence. Varying theories explain ethnic violence: primordialism, instrumentalism, and constructivism. The question central to this study is how master narratives, scarce resources, and democratic institutions have influenced the occurrence of ethnic violence. Small n comparison is used to analyze two pairs of sub-Saharan African nations in order to control for other explanatory variables: (1) Cote d'Ivoire and Ghana, and (2) Kenya and Tanzania. In each pair, one nation is relatively peaceful and the other relatively violent. Drawing from ethnographic research papers, and news sources this paper finds that while cultural and economic factors play heavily into ethnic violence, it is the carrying capacity of political institutions that enable ethnic peace. Better political institutions foster civic trust amongst citizens, and ensure peaceful means for the demonstration of political and economic frustrations*

States have become increasingly multicultural. As a result, individuals of varying ethnicities have to live side by side. In recent decades, the world has witnessed multiple genocides, and silently stood by; most pundits blame historic grudges as the reason for collective violence. The “us against them” mentality may be accurate, but it is insufficient in explaining occurrences of ethnic violence. The same is true for competition over resources; there are multicultural nations where food, water, and jobs are scarce, and peace is abundant. This study seeks to understand why some nations spiral into violence, and even to genocide, while others foster peaceful coexistence. In a future of uncertainty where genocides continue to occur and where nations are in constant danger of slipping into the mire it is necessary to discern what causes ethnic violence, or what causes ethnic peace—different sides of the same coin. As the world becomes more interconnected and ethnic groups face one another more often, in order to ensure peace, nations must learn how to cultivate societies of civic trust across ethnic lines. The purpose of this study is to determine the causes of both ethnic violence and ethnic peace, and to understand how master narratives, scarce resources, and institutions of democracy and civil society influence the occurrence or absence of ethnic peace.

The causal reasons for ethnic violence have been widely debated. Most studies on this subject can be grouped into three categories: primordialism (essentialist), instrumentalist (economic interests or political manipulation by the elites), or constructivism (institutions). However, the study of ethnic peace has not been a scholarly pursuit. This study will attempt to discern reasons for ethnic peace in order better understand how nations may engage in advancing it. It is first of all necessary to understand the three theoretical divisions in order to measure the proper variables, second how these theories have been applied to scholarly research, and finally,

an in depth case study analysis using small-N comparison for pairs of Sub-Saharan African nations.

Before a substantial discussion can be had about ethnic peace it is necessary to make a distinction between ethnic conflict and ethnic violence, and also to define ethnic peace. Ashutosh Varshney asserts that any ethnically plural society allowing political demands to be expressed will inevitably have ethnic conflict.<sup>1</sup> Such conflict is not negative though, it may be the sign of legitimate democratic debate, while the lack of ethnic conflict may signal an authoritarian regime preventing ethnic mobilization.<sup>2</sup> The problem is when ethnic conflict becomes violent. Conflict may occur in institutionalized forms such as debate within legislatures, but it can also occur in terms of rioting, or pogroms. Ethnic violence is also frequently used interchangeably with political violence, such as poll violence during election time or political imprisonment and torture, but ethnic violence is only applicable when there is an ethnic facet to the violence.<sup>3</sup> Ethnic violence ranges from genocide to protests turned violent; it can be a lynching or a beating.<sup>4</sup> The consequences and actions of ethnic conflict and ethnic violence are very different, and so explanations for both must be looked at separately. Ethnic peace therefore is not just the absence of violence but the channeling of ethnic conflict through institutions in order to reach

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<sup>1</sup> Ashutosh Varshney, *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life: Hindus and Muslims in India* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002). Varshney is Professor of Political Science at the University of Michigan, Anne Arbor, and this work won the Gregory Luebbert Prize of the American Political Science Association.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> Amy Chua, *World on fire: How Exporting Free Market Democracy Breeds Ethnic Hatred and Global Instability* (New York: Doubleday, 2003). Chua is a Professor of Law at Yale Law School and this work is New York Times bestseller.

<sup>4</sup> Kiyoteru Tsutsui, "Global Civil Society and Ethnic Social Movements," *Sociological Forum* 19, no. 1 (2004); Tsutsui is a Professor of Sociology, at Stony Brook University, Stony Brook, New York.

mutually satisfying resolutions.<sup>5</sup> It is interethnic cooperation where violence does not become a tool for ethnic groups to use.<sup>6</sup>

### *Primordialism*

As stated before, ethnic identity is conceived mainly in three ways with varying labels. The primordialist approach views ethnicity as fixed and culturally distinctive groups are ethnocentric, according to Kiyoteru Tsutsui a sociologist at Stony Brook.<sup>7</sup> As is the nature of ascriptive identities they are ranked, written, and fixed. This theory arises out of evolutionary theory; ethnic identities are genetically imbedded leading individuals to favor their own kin in order to insure the survival of their genes.<sup>8</sup> Adolf Hitler stated it quite simply in a 1938 speech in Konigsberg, “blood binds more firmly than business.” For ethnic conflict to be rational within a framework of primordialism a few ideas are assumed: (1) ethnic identity is genetic and fixed, and (2) individuals perceive ethnic groups as extended kinship, making ethnic groups “inherently more potent as an organizing force.”<sup>9</sup> Ethnic difference is the reasoning behind ethnic violence. There have been numerous empirical studies correlating ethnic diversity with increased ethnic violence.<sup>10</sup> The main explanatory independent variable within primordialist theory is plural society, making the only solution ethnic homogeneity. However, primordialists fail in explaining the emergence of new identities, or shifts in societies that create different ethnic divisions.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Varshney, *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life*

<sup>6</sup> James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, “Explaining Interethnic Cooperation,” *The American Political Science Review* 90, no. 4 (1996). Fearon and Laitin are political science professors at the University of Chicago.

<sup>7</sup> Tsutsui, “Global Civil Society”

<sup>8</sup> Frank P. Harvey, “Primordialism, Evolutionary Theory and Ethnic Violence in the Balkans: Opportunities and Constraints for Theory and Policy,” *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 33, no 1 (2000)

<sup>9</sup> Harvey, “Primordialism, Evolutionary Theory and Ethnic Violence,” 40

<sup>10</sup> Tatu Vanhanen, “Domestic Ethnic Conflict and Ethnic Nepotism: A Comparative Analysis,” *Journal of Peace Research* 26, no. 1 (1999). Vanhanen is Professor of Political Science at the University of Helsinki

<sup>11</sup> David Lake and Donald Rothchild, *The International Spread of Ethnic Conflict: Fear, Diffusion, and Escalation* (New York, Princeton University Press, 1998); Lake is Professor of Political Science at University of California, San Diego, and Rothchild is Professor of Political Science at the University of California, Davis.

Scholars have mostly eschewed primordialist claims because they assume ethnic violence is inevitable in diverse societies. While varying ethnicities are necessary for ethnic violence to occur, it is insufficient in explaining the cause.

### *Instrumentalism*

If primordialism assumes fixed identities, instrumentalism assumes extremely fluid definitions of ethnicity. Instrumentalism is a theory stringently based in rational action theory, rather than evolutionary biology, meaning it assumes individuals to be rational. In regards to joining ethnically based groups, individuals will enter into a cost/benefit analysis, and only if the individual benefit outweighs the individual costs for each member the group, will people engage in collective action.<sup>12</sup> For the purposes of this study, this means individuals will identify most strongly with certain parts of their identity for economic or political gain. James D. Fearon and David D Laitin, political science professors at the University of Chicago also term this theory rationalist: “Rationalist theories view ethnic groups as coalitions formed to extract material benefits from others or to defend possessions.”<sup>13</sup> Under this assumption many scholars assert that ethnic identity is much more fluid; it is not based on genetics, but rather on competition. People create identity to use opportunistically as a tool for furthering a group’s aims.

For the most part the literature discussing instrumentalism relies heavily on economic measures for cost and benefit. Psychological factors are explained in rare cases and as a side note because these variables are almost impossible to measure satisfactorily, however, that does not mean they are unimportant. Psychological factors claim people join ethnic groups for an intrinsic

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<sup>12</sup> Mancur Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971). Olson was an American economist and social scientist, this work was radical in its time, founding ideas about the free rider problem.

<sup>13</sup> Fearon and Laitin, “Explaining Inter Ethnic Cooperation,” 717

human need to belong.<sup>14</sup> However, any attempt to find an empirical study with psychological factors as an independent variable, or even an explanation longer than a paragraph proved fruitless.

One very specific theory within instrumentalism is market dominant minorities.<sup>15</sup> The Chinese dominate the Malaysian market, therefore the conflict while having a framework of ethnic division is actually and economic conflict.<sup>16</sup> This is also known as the stacking up of political cleavages. The reason for the conflict is not just ethnic identities, but also economic inequalities. The citizens of Malaysia have chosen to align along a Chinese-Malay line, rather than a Muslim-Christian, or native-foreigner because this enables them to use identity for political purposes.<sup>17</sup> The benefit of ethnic mobilization increases when more factors separate a group from society at large, such as racial, linguistic, religious, geographical, or economic differences.<sup>18</sup> This has also been termed grievance theory: “disadvantages and ensuing grievances among a group of people lead to collective action.”<sup>19</sup> While very compelling, scholars criticize grievance theory for its inability to predict the onset of ethnic violence.<sup>20</sup> Some scholars cite the need for more resources and political opportunity along with grievances for the occurrence of ethnic mobilization.<sup>21</sup> Grievances are a factor of importance, but are limited in explaining all occurrence of ethnic violence. Furthermore they do not inevitably lead to ethnic violence, or even ethnic mobilization. In rare cases they lead to quiescence; ethnic groups are so

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<sup>14</sup> Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action*

<sup>15</sup> Chua, *World On Fire*

<sup>16</sup> Ibid

<sup>17</sup> Ibid

<sup>18</sup> Ted R. Gurr, “Ethnic Warfare on the Wane.” *Foreign Affairs* 79, no. 3 (May-June 2000); Gurr is Distinguished University Professor emeritus at the University of Maryland, and one of the world’s leading authorities on political conflict

<sup>19</sup> Tsutsui, “Global Civil Society,” 73

<sup>20</sup> Tsutsui, “Global Civil Society”

<sup>21</sup> Fearon and Laitin, “Explaining Inter Ethnic Cooperation”; and Tsutsui, “Global Civil Society”

used to inequalities, and from experience know there is little chance for change, leading to no mobilization despite egregious injustices.<sup>22</sup>

There are holes in instrumentalist theory, aside from those specific to grievance theory, as well. It assumes there are similar motivations for ethnic violence and other types of conflict, and places ethnic violence as part of an overarching conflict.<sup>23</sup> The assumption is ethnicity is somehow a choice, rather than genetic or societal. The instrumental nature of ethnicity is true to some extent. David N. Posner proposes a new measure of ethnic groups based on this theory.<sup>24</sup> It is useless for social scientists to count how many different ethnic groups there are, but rather only those which engage in politics, or are organized in interest groups. It is these politically relevant ethnic groups which are important because theirs is not a latent potential, but actualize.<sup>25</sup> What Posner ignores in his study is that if ethnicity is purely elastic and instrumental then there would be little for political elites to exploit because conflict would be purely economically motivated.<sup>26</sup> Therefore, identities need to be politically salient, to be useful for exploitation.

There is something to be said for group identification, it is compelling enough to average citizens to make them riot, or even turn them into ‘fanatics.’ The main problem with instrumentalism is it does not explain ethnic peace. For example there are nations which have ethnically based political parties, and according to democratic theory this is not only problematic but detrimental.<sup>27</sup> This is evident in Spain where Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA), a violent

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<sup>22</sup> Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action*

<sup>23</sup> Lake and Rothschild, *The International Spread of Ethnic Conflict*, 6

<sup>24</sup> David N. Posner, “Measuring Ethnic Fractionalization in Africa,” *American Journal of Political Science* 48, no. 4 (2004); Posner is Assistant Professor of Political Science at University of California, Los Angeles.

<sup>25</sup> Posner, “Measuring Ethnic Fractionalization in Africa”; and Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action*

<sup>26</sup> Varshney, *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life*, 29

<sup>27</sup> Kanchan Chandra, “Ethnic Parties and Democratic Stability,” *Perspectives on Politics* 3, no. 2 (2005); and Robert A. Dahl, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971); Chandra



separatist organization, also has a political wing, Batasuna, later outlawed for funding the ETA with public money. Conversely there are particularist political parties such as India's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), a Hindu nationalist party, which was elected to power from 1998 to 2004, over the secular Congress Party due to the public's dissatisfaction with the corruption within the Congress Party.<sup>28</sup>

There are also cases where ethnic groups have grievances and/or political parties, but where ethnic mobilization does not turn violent.<sup>29</sup> Ethnic cooperation is the main focus of this study. Instrumentalism does not hypothesize about how ethnic peace occurs; it hypothesizes as to what keeps ethnic violence at bay, whether it is due to a lack of grievances, or lack of resource for ethnic mobilization. Instrumentalism may explain the occurrence of ethnic conflict, but it does not explain ethnic violence.

### *Constructivism*

A new discourse is arising out of ideas of social capital and civil society. Constructivism is essentially a bridge between primordialism and instrumentalism. It posits that ethnicity is a social identification, not just an individual one. Unlike instrumentalism, constructivism recognizes ethnicities are not chosen and that they change as society changes.<sup>30</sup> So while ethnic violence may have some basis in competition it is competition along historical lines upheld by society. In the case of the United States this means it makes logical sense that race relations are tense between blacks and whites, but not between whites of eastern European and western

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is Associate Professor of Political Science at MIT; Dahl is the Sterling Professor emeritus of Political Science at Yale University, as well as a past president of the American Political Science Association

<sup>28</sup> Ashoutosh Varshney, *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life*

<sup>29</sup> Bruce E. Heilman and Paul J. Kaiser, "Religion, Identity and Politics in Tanzania," *Third World Quarterly* 23, no. 4 (August 2002); Fearon and Laitin, "Explaining Inter Ethnic Cooperation"; Heilman is in the Department of Political Science and Public Administration at the University of Dar es Salaam; Kaiser is at the African Studies Center at the University of Pennsylvania.

<sup>30</sup> Lake and Rothschild, *The International Spread of Ethnic Conflict*

European descent. Unlike primordialism, it does not assume multiple ethnicities in one nation to be inherently problematic.<sup>31</sup>

Social capital explanations arise out of constructivist ideas because this theory does not accept that identity is purely instrumental, and therefore rejects purely economic or politically based solutions to ethnic violence. Social capital originated in sociological studies; social capital theories believe social networks create trust between individuals which fosters more trusting individuals.<sup>32</sup> Social capital, or civil society, is often operationalized in surveys asking individuals whether they are more likely to trust others, or whether one can never be too careful about other.<sup>33</sup> According to Varshney civil society is any “non-state space of collective life.”<sup>34</sup> This encompasses an infinite amount of association excluding family and state; it could be anything from book clubs to trade unions.<sup>35</sup>

Along with the social capital approach there is the institutional approach. The assumption is that ethnic violence or peace arises out of a social system, and it is institutions that create societies.<sup>36</sup> Important institutions like free press, elections, opposition parties, independent legislatures and courts, and civilian control of the military channel ethnic conflict so that it does not turn violent.<sup>37</sup> Civilian control of the military refers to military intervention in political affairs, which is most often seen when militaries back a certain candidate and that individual gains office regardless of election results.<sup>38</sup> Institutions and social capital both work to foster

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid

<sup>32</sup> Tsutsui, “Global Civil Society”

<sup>33</sup> World Values Survey, “WVS 2005-2006 Wave, Root Version.” <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org>

<sup>34</sup> Varshney, *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life*, 4

<sup>35</sup> Varshney, *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life*

<sup>36</sup> Lake and Rothschild, *The International Spread of Ethnic Conflict*

<sup>37</sup> Michael Bratton, “Deciphering Africa’s Divergent Transitions.” *Political Science Quarterly* 112, no. 1 (Spring 1997): 69; Bratton is Professor of Political Science at Michigan State University, and a contributor to Afrobarometer

<sup>38</sup> Bratton, “Deciphering Africa,” 84

trust amongst citizens, and as trust increases so does civic trust.<sup>39</sup> Groups, whether ethnic or not, view institutions as offering viable avenues for airing grievances whether real or perceived. Under a constructivist framework institutions can make all the difference; they can prevent instances of political manipulation. The key criticism of social capital is that it is a cure all for the ailments of society; it is difficult to measure, and yet is asserted as the key factor. Civil society is not an empirical measure, and can only be demonstrated, but social scientists are still unsure of the causal mechanisms behind it.

The literature on ethnic violence and ethnic peace is vast, but each theory falls either squarely in these three frameworks, or in between. These are not mutually exclusive ideas, especially since constructivist theory is essentially a combination of primordialism and instrumentalism. Despite the lack of consensus on which approach is more accurate, it is necessary to define these frameworks in order to ensure the proper variables are analyzed.

### **Empirical testing of Three Models**

The literature on ethnic violence can almost completely be divided by these three approaches. All of course have their caveats, and valid points. There are a few outlying explanations, although most are irrelevant to this study.

#### *Primordialism*

It would seem logical that primordialist reasoning for ethnic violence would be limited to non-empirical research, but this is precisely what Tatu Vanhanen has set out to demonstrate in an empirical study of 183 nations between 1990 and 1996.<sup>40</sup> Vanhanen takes the theoretical standpoint that “all human populations share the same evolved behavioral predisposition to

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<sup>39</sup> Jim M. Sanders, “Ethnic Boundaries and Identity in Plural Societies.” *Annual Review of Sociology* 28, (2002); Sanders is at the Department of Sociology at the University of South Carolina

<sup>40</sup> Vanhanen, “Domestic Ethnic Conflict”

ethnic nepotism.”<sup>41</sup> His study takes a common assumption and attempts to back it up with statistical significance. What he finds is that the evolutionary explanation holds true. As he explains, “we have evolved to favour our relatives in the struggle for existence because it has been an adaptive behavior pattern.”<sup>42</sup> Thus, the more ethnic heterogeneity found in a nation the more likely there will be ethnic conflict; he finds that this is the trend in the numbers. Minor variation between states is explained by other explanatory factors like democratization, human development, and gross domestic product per capita (PPP, purchasing power parity). The thesis of an “evolved disposition to nepotism” does allow for a general theory which can be tested. This represents a theoretical improvement over scholars who use culturally specific factors, which are inherently unfalsifiable.<sup>43</sup>

Vanhanen however broadly defines ethnic conflict; there are measures included for non-violent conflict such as ethnic partisanship which are added to a nation’s total ethnic conflict score. Vanhanen does a very poor job of disguising ordinal levels of measure as interval in measuring a nation’s ethnic conflict score. The difference between ratings is explained in intervals of ten, but Vanhanen does not explain the difference between a score of ten versus one of twelve.<sup>44</sup> Further, Vanhanen includes ethnically aligned political parties as adding to violence under the assumption that particularism on a non-violent level either leads to or accompanies violent ethnic bias. As cited before, Varshney would criticize the lack of division between measuring ethnic conflict and ethnic violence. Thus, Vanhanen is measuring the wrong variables, as conflict does not inherently lead to violence.

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid, 55

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, 66

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 56

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, 62

This critique of Vanhanen's study is not meant to throw primordialist explanations completely out the window, but rather to demonstrate identity is not purely ascriptive.<sup>45</sup> Although culture is not the sole explanation, it is important and necessary to discuss it when considering ethnic violence. Culture is important for a collective, after all people have killed over cultural difference. Genocide is by definition is systematic killing with the design to exterminate an entire group. The danger is putting too much stake in culture and reducing explanations for ethnic violence to simple primordialism. Culture and ethnic identity is the field on which violence can cast its seeds and cultivate. It is culture plus other factors that lead to ethnic violence: "there are...significant difference in the use of motives and interests as explanatory mechanisms which are central to the difference between cultural and rational choice explanations."<sup>46</sup>

### *Instrumentalism*

Instrumentalism allows for a much more malleable interpretation of identity and for more explanations of ethnic violence. The literature points out a vast array of theories, and factors that play into the complicated, intricate web on which ethnic violence rests. As stated before there are interest-based models and those which point solely to elite manipulation as explanations. Dauda Abubakar points out groups are prone to elite manipulation only if elite views echo current public concerns: "ethnic identities become seriously amenable to political manipulation either when suppressed groups feel marginalized from the political and economic process affecting

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<sup>45</sup> Amin Maalouf, *In the Name of Identity* (New York: Penguin Books, 2000); Lake and Rothschild, *The International Spread of Ethnic Conflict*; Heilman and Kaiser, "Religion, Identity and Politics"; Maalouf is a Lebanese novelist whose books focus on the experience of civil war and migration.

<sup>46</sup> Marc Howard Ross, "The Relevance of Culture for the Study of Political Psychology and Ethnic Conflict," *Political Psychology* 18 (2007); Ross is Professor of Political Science at Bryn Mawr College.

their lives of when privileged groups feel that their rights are threatened.”<sup>47</sup> Abubakar goes on to describe the case of Nigeria and how “the accumulated impact of decades of ethnic minority marginalization; and the imposition of an economic adjustment program that increased poverty, unemployment, and despair in the society.”<sup>48</sup> Instrumentalism is also termed the modernist theory.<sup>49</sup> The idea behind this theory is that colonizing nations such as the British and French exacerbated ethnic rivalry when they used divide and conquer strategies. This was followed by structural adjustment, demanded by the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, which intensified poverty, leaving nations deeply fractured and poor. Thus it was the stacking up of cleavages that led to the onset of ethnic violence. As stated previously the puzzling thing about arguments heavily based on cultural arguments is that nations which seem to fit the criteria for balancing on the brink of peace and chaos are in fact remarkably peaceful, meaning there must be other explanations for ethnic peace not encompassed under instrumentalist theories.

Fearon and Laitin empirically test GDP per capita, and the population share of the largest ethnic group, with the likelihood of civil war.<sup>50</sup> Amongst their hypotheses is the common assumption the more diverse (or the smaller the population share of the largest ethnic group) and the lower the GDP per capita, the more at risk a nation is for civil war. In a study of 127 conflicts out of a sample of 6,610 country years, Fearon and Laitin find that ethnic diversity is not a major cause of civil war; the key explanatory variable found in their study was per capita income.<sup>51</sup> However, this does not make ethnic diversity inconsequential because it may still “cause civil

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<sup>47</sup> Dauda Abubakar, “Ethnic Identity, Democratization, and the Future of the African State: Lessons from Nigeria,” *African Issues* 29 (2001): 32

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, 34

<sup>49</sup> Varshney, *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life*

<sup>50</sup> Fearon and Laitin, “Explaining Inter Ethnic Cooperation”

<sup>51</sup> Ibid

war *indirectly*, if it causes a low per capita income.”<sup>52</sup> Per capita income has much more to do with civil war than ethnic diversity. For example, nations with a GDP per capita over 3000 US dollars have almost no risk of civil war no matter what the ethnic composition, and nations that are 90% homogenous, but with a GDP per capita of under 500 US dollars have a 30% chance of civil violence.<sup>53</sup>

In one model Fearon and Laitin limit the cases to ethnic wars and find that the strong effect of per capita income remains.<sup>54</sup> This does not answer whether the cause of ethnic violence is economic scarcity; it merely indicates civil war is more likely in poor nations. It also does not address how some poor nations are peaceful. Although there may be correlation this does not justify causation, and civil war and economic scarcity can be self reinforcing, meaning as nations grow unstable and poor they are likely to continue to be so, which will be discussed later. The question remains, whether ethnic violence is the tool of a political or economic group. One important factor they tease out is that nations are more than five times as likely to enter into civil war if there has been “instability in governing arrangements in any of the previous three years.”<sup>55</sup> This indicates that a nation with better and more legitimate institutions, despite economic or demographic factors, is less likely to descend into violence either ethnic or civil.

Another facet of instrumentalism is political entrepreneurs or manipulation of ethnicity by elites for political gains. The history of certain African nations illustrates this point all too well. Daniel arap Moi, Umaru Yar’Adua, and Laurent Gbagbo are just a few examples of cunning—if not morally repugnant—political leaders who have incited ethnic violence for their

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid, 82

<sup>53</sup> Ibid

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, 84

<sup>55</sup> Ibid, 85

political gain. Kenyans seem to understand best how ethnicity can be utilized for politics as they continue to experience outbreaks of violence every time they hold an election since their first multiparty elections in 1992. This reasoning is compelling, and probably helps in explaining quite a few cases of ethnic violence. What instrumentalism fails to explain is when ethnic groups use peaceful avenues for ethnic conflict, rather than turning to violence. While the occurrence of political prospecting cannot be prevented, political institutions do control for institutional openings available for exploiting ethnic groups, and allow for the peaceful expression of political dissent.

### *Constructivism*

The other major explanation put forth is the importance of institutions. This is also the most compelling in answering the causes of ethnic peace. Institutions has been the opposition to the primordialist based arguments and papers. One concept that is part of this is the idea that political liberalization will first lead to an increase in violence, and once democratization occurs there will be a decrease in ethnic violence. Liberalization, here, is defined as the loosening of political control, such as allowing freedom of press, getting rid of arrests without charges, freedom from torture, or the “institutionalization of procedures for popular government.”<sup>56</sup> The explanations and variables for ethnic peace are similar or exactly the same as those presented for democratization theories. Smith focused on Sub-Saharan Africa, and showed that liberalization in fact leads to a decrease in violence, and democratization has little to no visible effect after that.<sup>57</sup> Unlike Vanhanen, Smith found purchasing power parity, once again a proxy for human development, to have a robust inverse relationship with ethnic violence.<sup>58</sup> This reconfirms that

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<sup>56</sup> Smith, “The Impact of Political Liberasation,” 58

<sup>57</sup> Ibid

<sup>58</sup> Ibid, 33



interests are a key factor of ethnic violence, but that “institutions sometimes can and do overcome the constraints imposed on them by structural determinants.”<sup>59</sup>

When there are viable political institutions for individuals and collectives to express their interests the violent reaction to interest based factors is reduced because there are democratic outlets for these concerns. Ethnic violence is based on concerns over such things competition over resources, and security, but when the citizenry can utilize things like elections, or even more simply when they feel that the state is addressing their anxieties or the media is voicing their opinion, then the likelihood of ethnic violence lessens.<sup>60</sup> As stated before institutions such as a free press can be key to ethnic peace, as can a civilian controlled military. For example in Burundi it was the Tutsi who controlled the military, and so what propagated the onset of some of the killing sprees was Tutsi fear of a Hutu uprising and so in order to protect themselves they had the military kill thousands of Hutu either with no reason or with rumored killings of Tutsi villages by Hutu people.<sup>61</sup>

Varshney rejects an institutional explanation because according to him it fails to explain regional differences in ethnic violence.<sup>62</sup> In the case of India this seems to be true; different areas of India share all the same institutions. But some cities and regions experience numerous riots and killings, while others are completely or relatively peaceful. He posits that the actual make-it-or-break-it factor is civil society. However fascinating a regional case study like Varshney’s translated for a few African nations would be, the availability of data is an overwhelming

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid, 35

<sup>60</sup> Lake and Rothschild, *The International Spread of Ethnic Conflict*; Bratton, “Deciphering Africa’s Divergent Transitions”

<sup>61</sup> Peter Uvin, “Ethnicity and Power in Burundi and Rwanda: Different Paths to Mass Violence,” *Comparative Politics* 31, no. 3 (April 1999); Uvin is the Henry J. Leir Professor of International Humanitarian Studies at Tufts University.

<sup>62</sup> Varshney, *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life*, 38

obstacle. Varshney read different Indian newspapers for years and interpreted incidences like riots as either ethnically driven or not; he was also in India.<sup>63</sup> The problem is there really is no way to verify Varshney's study; the reasoning may be compelling, but it could be that India is an isolated incident because it is such a huge nation. Also it is difficult to discern whether or not strong democratic institutions encourage civic engagement.

### **Research Design**

Africa presents interesting cases of ethnic diversity, scarce resources, varying experiences with colonialism, and a wide variance in institutional strengths. The dependent variable for this study is ethnic violence, but because conflict and violence do not occur in a vacuum a multitude of political and historical factors must also be analyzed. Selecting the dependent variable can isolate certain causal factors. This study will look at two pairs of sub-Saharan African nations: (1) Cote d'Ivoire and Ghana, and (2) Kenya and Tanzania. One nation is relatively violent and the other relatively peaceful, respectively. By using small-n comparison method, the finer details of what causes ethnic peace can be teased out. These nations have specific master narratives, or ways in which they construct their national identity; they are all developing nations; and they have varying institutional factors.

The hypothesis to be explored is that institutions absorb conflict either by creating peaceful mechanisms or by preventing abuse in political systems. This institutional carrying capacity, or the ability for institutions to channel conflict into peaceful avenues, is what best explains the occurrence of ethnic peace in nations at risk. The expected results are that master narratives will be oppositional and particularist, showing that ethnic conflict while present, does

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid

not necessarily lead to ethnic violence. The resources of all will be scarce and so the conflict or violence will not be a product of economic battling, but over political rights. Nations with strong institutions such as, elections, free press, separate legislatures and courts will not be marred by ethnic violence, even though the minority groups may seem ripe for it. In other words many of these nations have demographics which make them more than likely candidates for ethnic conflict, but the exact opposite has been true, especially in the case of Tanzania. Gurr termed these groups minorities at risk, and so this study seeks to answer how to make risky national minorities safe.<sup>64</sup>

The dependent variable therefore is ethnic violence. This study will limit this to violent interactions with an ethnic flavor, such as rioting, lynching, or murders. These may not be very specific numbers but since this is a comparative study a general presence of such violence may be able to suffice, of course depending on the lack of violence in the peaceful nations. Unlike Varshney's this study will focus on nations and not regions. And, since there are better measures for national violence, rather than regional, the overall peacefulness of a nation can be determined more easily.<sup>65</sup> An ordinal level measure can be employed for ethnic violence.<sup>66</sup> This will allow for a varying level to be ascertained, although allowing for a great deal of leeway.

Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire share a border, are both coastal western nations, and have demographics that are fairly similar. Ghana is relatively peaceful and in fact the poster child of structural adjustment and Cote d'Ivoire is mired in problems, even with the presence of 9,000

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<sup>64</sup> Gurr, "Ethnic Warfare on the Wane"

<sup>65</sup> Rogers Brubaker and David D. Laitin, "Ethnic and Nationalist Violence." *Annual Review of Sociology* 24 (1998); Brubaker is Professor of Sociology at the University of California, Los Angeles

<sup>66</sup> Zeric Kay Smith, "The Impact of Political Liberalisation and Democratisation on Ethnic Conflict in Africa: An Empirical Test of Common Assumptions." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 38, no. 1 (March 2000): 27; Smith is Senior Research Associate at Walker Institute of International Studies at the University of South Carolina

UN forces.<sup>67</sup> The one obvious problem in this pairing is that Ghana was colonized by the British, and Cote d'Ivoire by the French. Different colonial powers vastly change the experience of each nation, and thus make them irrelevant to compare. Obviously the colonial experience has shaped each of these nations very differently, and so this is not an area which should simply be ignored; this is a key possible explanation for the vast difference between these neighbors. These nations have similar GDP per capita, poverty levels, ethnic and religious break downs; the key difference is their colonial past.

Tanzania is one of the most stable and peaceful nations in Africa. Muslims are dominant in the region of Zanzibar comprising almost 99% of the population, and as a whole 35% of the total population.<sup>68</sup> In neighboring Kenya, President Daniel arap Moi buckled to pressure and allowed for multi-party elections, although warning that parties would polarize the country on ethnic lines.<sup>69</sup> It seems he was right. The problem of this pair is that Tanzania is 30% Christian whereas Kenya is at least 70% Christian, with its Muslim estimates varying.<sup>70</sup> Varshney would probably object to this pairing, citing it as a case of comparing apples to oranges. However, what this pairing does show is the huge difference trust in institutions can make. Although there are nations with comparable religious break downs, Kenya allows a comparison of neighbors, two east coast nations, and controls for similar ethnic or lingual divides. Both are former British colonies with very different histories pre World War II, but their post-independence history and government policies have diverged even more.

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<sup>67</sup> CIA World Factbook, "Cote d'Ivoire," <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/iv.html>

<sup>68</sup> CIA World Factbook, "Tanzania," <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/tz.html>

<sup>69</sup> BBC, "Kenya," [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/country\\_profiles/1024563.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/country_profiles/1024563.stm)

<sup>70</sup> CIA World Factbook, "Kenya," <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ke.html>; CIA World Factbook, "Tanzania"

## Data and Analysis

In order to create a cohesive story of each country, data will be presented nation by nation. The history of ethnic conflict or violence will be detailed, then the relevant economic factors, meaning the distribution of wealth and socioeconomic standing as seen between ethnic groups, and finally the role institutions have in allowing ethnic violence or channeling ethnic conflict peacefully.<sup>71</sup>

### *Ghana*

Ghana was the first sub-Saharan nation to gain independence from the British in 1957 and set the example for other nations.<sup>72</sup> Like most African nations Ghana is extremely diverse. There are approximately 100 different cultural and linguistic groups. The major ethnic groups are Akan, Ewe, Mole-Dagbani, Guan, and Ga-Adanbe.<sup>73</sup> There are cultural, historical, and linguistic differences and they are rooted in historical competition for trade and land control.

The history of Ghana is highly unique because it was the first African nation to break from colonialism. Some attribute this freedom to the fact that it was the time for such changes: “the wind of change is blowing through the continent...the growth of national consciousness is a political fact and we must take account of it.”<sup>74</sup> Most scholars and pundits however give credit to its first president Kwame Nkrumah who helped to lead the independence movement from Britain more than fifty years ago. It is difficult to see how Ghana’s history has been particularist at all when analyzing Nkrumah who espoused pan-Africanism and in many cases was able to practice

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<sup>71</sup> While infinite examples could be given this study strives to present key examples for the sake of concision and clarity.

<sup>72</sup> BBC. “Ghana” [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/country\\_profiles/1023355.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/country_profiles/1023355.stm)

<sup>73</sup> CIA World Factbook, “Ghana,” <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/gh.html>

<sup>74</sup> BBC On This Day, “1960: Macmillan speaks of 'wind of change' in Africa,” [http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/february/3/newsid\\_2714000/2714525.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/february/3/newsid_2714000/2714525.stm)

what he preached.<sup>75</sup> Nkrumah looked not just beyond the needs of his ethnic group, but beyond the needs of his own nation, perhaps to Ghana's detriment. Famously he supported loans to newly independent Guinea after the French left it on the brink of collapse.<sup>76</sup> Nkrumah envisioned and strived for a Ghana as well as an Africa where its people would command the natural and agricultural resources without the west, and where poverty would be eradicated.<sup>77</sup> This vision was the ideal, and Nkrumah fell unfortunately far from it. He may have had a dream, but in attempting to realize it Nkrumah turned into an autocrat instituting detention for up to five years without trial in 1958, and declaring himself life president in 1964.<sup>78</sup> A coup in 1966 led to Nkrumah's exile to Guinea where he died in 1972 of cancer.<sup>79</sup> What Nkrumah did accomplish is admirable in some respects though; he set up a particular political culture in Ghana and where expansions in education and healthcare remain his legacy.<sup>80</sup>

This is of course a highly selective tale of recent Ghana history. Amid all of Nkrumah's aspirations were the troubles of a fledging nation, fears over "internal fighting between various tribes in the region over a new constitutions."<sup>81</sup> Furthermore ethnic rivalry has not been absent from Ghana's history. As recently as June 2008 so called 'ethnic clashes' broke out in the northeastern town of Bawku.<sup>82</sup> BBC news states the clashes are part of a long rivalry; the dispute is over a chieftaincy between the Kusasi and Mamprusi and has resulted in a military presence

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<sup>75</sup> BBC, "Ghana"; Yao Graham, "Africa: Nkrumah at 100 – Lessons for African Leadership," *Pambazuka News*, April 9, 2009. <http://allafrica.com/stories/200904100166.html>

<sup>76</sup> Graham, "African: Nkrumah at 100"

<sup>77</sup> Kwaku Sakyu-Addo, "The Architect of Ghana's Independence," *BBC News*, March 2, 2007. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/6382237.stm>

<sup>78</sup> BBC, "Ghana"

<sup>79</sup> Ibid

<sup>80</sup> Donald Ray, *Ghana* (London: Frances Pinter, 1986)

<sup>81</sup> BBC On This Day, "1957: Ghana Celebrates Independence," [http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/march/6/newsid\\_2515000/2515459.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/march/6/newsid_2515000/2515459.stm)

<sup>82</sup> BBC News, "Bid to End Deadly Ghana Clashes," June 25, 2008, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/7474005.stm>

and a night curfew since the beginning of year. At least thirteen people have been slaughtered with machetes in this latest dispute, including women and children.<sup>83</sup> Preceding this incident women and children had not been killed, which has been pointed out as a sign of escalating violence.<sup>84</sup> While ethnicity has not played the role in Ghana as in other African nations it continues to play a role in politics. Political leaders and commentators continue to preface controversial topics with the fact they are not trying to stir up ethnic rivalry, showing how ethnic conflict is very much something to be mindful of. What these two differing tales of Ghana do show is that the history of ethnic conflict violent, or peaceful has been ambiguous in Ghana, as it has been in all nations with multiple ethnicities.

In terms of the economy, Ghana has one of the highest GDP per capita in Africa, although it is still quite dependent upon international aid and assistance.<sup>85</sup> Cocoa has been the main export, which due to its seasonal nature left many without incomes for large parts of the year; however there has been the recent discovery of oil in 2007 which is expected to have a huge impact.<sup>86</sup> Compared to other African nations Ghana's economy is stable and overall things look promising. On the negative side, the depreciation of the Cedi over decades has forced Ghana to introduce a new denomination, the Ghana Cedi, with an exchange rate of one Ghana Cedi for every 10,000 Cedi.<sup>87</sup> Poverty rates in Ghana while lower than in Cote d'Ivoire remain with almost a third of the population below the poverty line, meaning a third of the population lives on less than two US dollars a day.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid

<sup>84</sup> Ibid

<sup>85</sup> BBC News, "Ghana"

<sup>86</sup> Ibid

<sup>87</sup> CIA World Factbook, "Ghana"

<sup>88</sup> CIA World Factbook, "Cote d'Ivoire"

Finally there are the institutional factors. Ghana's institutions have taken the ethnic conflict and channeled it into peaceful competition. There has been much recent scrutiny of Ghana's institutions due to the presidential election in December of 2008.<sup>89</sup> Compared to its neighbors Ghana is a peaceful idyllic nation, which only goes to show the state of democracy in other African nations.<sup>90</sup> It should be noted that in using the term democracy this study would like to stay as far as possible away from an idea of exporting US democracy. Rather democracy, if it is to be at all successful must reflect the society of a nation, to state otherwise would be ethnocentric. One indication of Ghana's uniquely sustainable democracy is its electoral commission. This commission, headed by Kwado Afari-Djan for four elections, although appointed under partisan structures has overseen the fall of incumbent parties and has been a credible organization for conduction free and fair elections.<sup>91</sup> Equally important is Ghana's free media whose only downfall is the lack of technology available for reaching citizens.<sup>92</sup> Because of this free media Ghanaians will be able to hear election results within 24 hours, constraining the ability for corruption to falsify results.<sup>93</sup>

### *Cote d'Ivoire*

Contrasting with Ghana's seemingly picturesque world is Cote d'Ivoire which has been independent from France since 1960. There are more than sixty ethnic groups in Cote d'Ivoire, and due to its relative economic success immigrants from surrounding impoverished nations have flooded in and now comprise over a quarter of the population. Until 2002 when civil war

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<sup>89</sup> Komla Dumor, "Can Ghana Trounce the Bad News?" *BBC News*, December 6, 2008, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/7768061.stm>

<sup>90</sup> BBC News, "Ghana"

<sup>91</sup> Dumor, "Can Ghana Trounce the Bad News?"

<sup>92</sup> Ibid

<sup>93</sup> The presidential election resulted in runoffs reducing the field from eight to two. John Evans Atta Mills won eventually and the government turnover was peaceful and smooth.



broke out Cote d'Ivoire was much like Ghana; it was the nation which other African nations strived to emulate, an example of stable African democracy.<sup>94</sup> Now it has become the example of how very quickly ethnic conflict can escalate into ethnic violence. Although fighting has subsided for the most part, the country remains divided with rebels controlling the north, and the government controlling the south.<sup>95</sup> Amongst reasons often cited for the civil war is the influx of foreigners, predominantly from Burkina Faso, and discrimination of individuals of Burkinabe descent. 'Ivoirity' is a term originally coined to be inclusive and bring together people of Ivorian descent, however Henri Bedie skewed its meaning to serve his own political purposes and encourage xenophobia against Muslim northerners and so called non-Ivoirians (BBC). Scholars cite the strong leadership of Houphouet-Boigny as the reason that ethnic tensions did not boil over earlier. Houphouet-Boigny's successor was Bedie who fled in the 1999 coup by Robert Guei. Interestingly, among non-Ivoirians was Bedie's political rival Alassane Ouattara, who was barred from the election due to his non-Ivorian parentage.<sup>96</sup>

Even in recent news reports Cote D'Ivoire has been the scene of much ethnic violence; mostly in the form of revenge attack by a Guere tribe on a Dioula tribe in the north. Guerres killed forty-one Dioula villagers; in response to a hundred Guerres were cut to pieces with machetes and sprayed with bullets. Guere is a term derived from the word for forest-dwelling people, and is in fact sometimes used in general to refer to people considered uncivilized. Dioula is a variation of a word referring to "the land of slaves captures through warfare."<sup>97</sup> The exact differences between these groups is very confusing; the Guere in some parts are the Wobe, and the Dioula

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<sup>94</sup> BBC News, "Ivory Coast,"

<sup>95</sup> CIA World Factbook, "Cote d'Ivoire"

<sup>96</sup> BBC News, "Ivory Coast"; Lara Pawson, "Ethnic Split Stirs Ivory Coast Crisis," *BBC News*, February 18, 2005, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/3496069.stm>

<sup>97</sup> Svend E. Hosoe and Joseph J. Lauer, "Who are the Kran/Guere and the Gio/Yacouba? Ethnic Identification along the Liberia-Ivory Coast Border," *African Studies Review* 19, no. 1 (April 1976)

are dialectically similar to the Wobe, and early scholars called the Dioula, and both languages are Mande languages.<sup>98</sup> What is clear is that their definitions of themselves are in opposition to one another. What sparked the ethnic killings in 2005 has been reported to be a refusal by the Guere to take part in an indigenous protest organized by the Dioula. Whether or not this is the truth may in fact be irrelevant in light of the escalated response.

Due to Cote d'Ivoire's recent violence, its once rich economy has entered into crisis. Cote d'Ivoire's loss has been Ghana's gain, as stability is suspect in Cote d'Ivoire companies are diverting trade to neighboring nations, although businesses suspect this is not a lasting effect.<sup>99</sup> This means ethnic violence preceded economic problems in Cote d'Ivoire: "Ivory Coast used to be a beacon of peace and prosperity in West Africa, attracting millions of migrant workers and refugees."<sup>100</sup>

These two nations have strikingly different histories. While Cote d'Ivoire's recent politics has been centered on rejection of other Africans, Ghana's history began with ideas of uniting Africans. It might be that economic interests are the root cause. The gross domestic product (GDP) per capita of Ghana (1,516) is lower than that of Cot d'Ivoire (1,775), but a greater percentage of the citizenry is in poverty in Cote d'Ivoire compared to Ghana, 42 to 28.5 respectively.<sup>101</sup>

Instrumentalism also takes the form of political manipulation by the elites. Human Rights Watch in 2001 accused the Ivoirian government of deliberately using ethnic violence for political gains. The gendarmes or paramilitary police were targeting supporters of the opposing candidate Ouattara (the foreigner). The gendarmes during the election sided with Laurent Gbagbo, who

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid

<sup>99</sup> Pawson, "Ethnic Split Stirs Ivory Coast Crisis"

<sup>100</sup> BBC News, "Ivory Coast"

<sup>101</sup> CIA World Factbook, "Cote d'Ivoire"; CIA World Factbook, "Ghana"

won against Guei, the incumbent military ruler. Human Rights Watch claims “200 people were killed in the past year, while others were tortured, raped and arbitrarily detained.”<sup>102</sup> The gendarmes implicated were found not guilty in spite of the testimony of two survivors.

Finally the institution of Cote d’Ivoire paint an even more starkly contrasting picture compared to Ghana. Cote d’Ivoire is dominated by one party and although there are legislatures and courts independent from the executive branch, presidential elections have not been held since 2000.<sup>103</sup> Laurent Gbagbo was elected in 2000 for a five-year mandate, in 2006 the UN in an effort to stabilize the nation gave Gbagbo a seventh successive year, and elections have been set back numerous times, most recently in October of 2008.<sup>104</sup> The Civic Youth Movement of Cote d’Ivoire (MJCC-CI) through rallies and strikes calls for the long over-due elections.<sup>105</sup> Many view successful presidential elections as key to returning the political stability and economic prosperity of Cote d’Ivoire.<sup>106</sup> However, no timeframe has been given for election, and although they are expected to occur sometime in 2009 it would not be terribly surprising if they were delayed again. While there are no numbers yet on trust in institutions for Cote d’Ivoire, violence preventing proper studies of the nation, protests are a strong indication that Ivoirians are dissatisfied with the state of affairs in their nation.

These nations are both ethnically diverse, and this has caused violence, although to varying degrees. So the effect of ethnicity is consistent in that there are ethnicities which do conflict. The effect of economic interests is difficult to deduce because while Cote d’Ivoire has a

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<sup>102</sup> BBC News, “Ivory Coast ‘Fanning Ethnic Hatred,’” <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/1512884.stm>

<sup>103</sup> BBC News, “Ivory Coast”

<sup>104</sup> Ibid

<sup>105</sup> allAfrica.com, “Cote d’Ivoire: Ivoirians ‘Held Hostage’ by Politicians, Youths Say,” April 1, 2009, <http://allafrica.com/stories/200904020671.html>

<sup>106</sup> Ibid

higher percentage of its populous in poverty, it also has a greater GDP per capita.<sup>107</sup> Further, it is difficult to discern where a threshold of poverty might be. So perhaps below a certain GDP per capita or PPP it does not matter about variation because either way the citizenry is poor. The causal mechanism of grievance theory is also unclear. In the case of Cote d'Ivoire it seems the case is more likely that ethnic violence has resulted in economic hardships, rather than the other way around, which instrumentalists would believe. Political manipulation may explain why Cote d'Ivoire has been mired in ethnic violence, while Ghana has sustained peace. Indeed it has been the case that leaders in Africa have used ethnicity to bolster their own support. However, this begs the question as to why Ghanaian politicians are unable to get away with ethnic manipulation. It does not seem likely that Ghanaian politicians intrinsically have a better commitment to free and fair elections, rather institutions like the electoral commission constrain their political tool box. Meanwhile in Cote d'Ivoire the military took sides in politics, and used fear to keep the opposition supporters from the polls. Had the military stayed out of the political arena then there would have been less means for politicians to use ethnicity.

This pairing must concede flaws such as the more ethnically inclusive political history of Ghana. However, what it does show is how institutions are able to channel outcomes of ethnic conflict. Ethnic conflict is present in both Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire, but it is institutions which have prevented the out break of violence in Ghana, such as laws against ethnically based political parties, and stringent laws over elections. So while specific historical instances, like the leadership of Nkrumah, are not generalizable for other nations, the impact of institutions is.

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<sup>107</sup> CIA World Factbook, "Cote d'Ivoire"

**Table 1**

	<b>Ghana</b>	<b>Cote d'Ivoire</b>
Politically active military *	Not since 1981	2002 military uprising
Independent legislatures *	Yes	No
Viable opposition parties *	Yes	No
Free press *	High	Low
Level of freedom **	3 – free	12 - not free
Trust in institutions ***	64.9%	NA
Trust your ethnicity compared to other ethnicities ***	56.5% 43.5%	NA
GDP per capita ****	1,516	1,775
% below poverty line ****	28.5	42

\*determined by interpretive reading of BBC country profiles and articles

\*\*Freedom House- the number is a total of the rating for political and civil liberties, lower being better with 14 as the maximum

\*\*\*Afrobarometer Round 3- percent responding “a lot” or “somewhat” out of 4 choices

\*\*\*\*CIA World Fact book

### *Tanzania*

Tanzania in its present form is the result of the 1964 union of mainland Tanganyika and the island of Zanzibar.<sup>108</sup> Tanzania is almost equally divided almost equally in terms of religion between Christians, Muslims, and indigenous African religions.<sup>109</sup> No particular identity has dominated society, however Zanzibar is almost completely Muslim, and Muslims are more concentrated on the coast of Tanganyika. Similar to Ghana and Nkrumah, Julius Kambarage Nyerere the leader of the Tanganyikan African National Union, detribalized politics in Tanzania; both were proponents of Pan-Africanism.<sup>110</sup> Religion is still a highly divisive issue. According to a nation-wide opinion poll “people objected to inter religious marriages more strongly than to other forms of cross-identity marriages.”<sup>111</sup> The religious divide is also the only one to manifest

<sup>108</sup> CIA World Factbook, “Tanzania”

<sup>109</sup> Ibid

<sup>110</sup> Chambi Chachage, “Africa: African Unity – Feeling with Nkrumah, Thinking with Nyerere,” *Pambazuka News*, April 9, 2009, <http://allafrica.com/stories/200904100140.html>

<sup>111</sup> Heilman and Kaiser, “Religion, Identity and Politics,” 695

itself in political parties with the ruling party of the Tanganyika being mainly Christian, and the ruling party of Zanzibar being mainly Muslim.<sup>112</sup>

The master narrative of Tanzania is even more ambiguous than Ghana's. The independence movement that took place in Tanzania was filled with rhetoric about the need to get rid of second-class citizenship based on racism, something seen as a construct of colonial rule.<sup>113</sup> Nyerere enacted a law for multi-racial citizenship. Furthermore many Muslims became leaders of the independence movement while Christian churches discouraged activities.<sup>114</sup> Thus Christians joined Muslim leaders in the national struggle. Despite this inclusive history of its independence, the "feeling among many Muslims [is] that the country's educated elite is disproportionately made up of Christians."<sup>115</sup> Because Zanzibar is 99% Muslim Zanzibaris view the union of the mainland and the island as unequal, especially in the distribution of resources.<sup>116</sup> Civic United Front (CUF) is the main opposition party, mostly based in Zanzibar; its platform is that Zanzibar's union to the mainland has not been a positive as there has been a drop in living standards, and a deterioration in infrastructure, specifically in education and medical care.<sup>117</sup> Meanwhile, mainlanders view Zanzibar as an economic burden, and critique its poor human rights record.<sup>118</sup>

In 2005 Tanzania went through an economic slump and the tensions between Zanzibar and the mainland increased during that period. It seems clear that economic competition has fueled, if not caused, ethnic conflict and violence in Tanzania. Muslim-Christian tensions are not

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid; Ahmed Rajab, "Tanzania Split Will Go On," *BBC Focus on Africa Magazine*, September, 28, 2005, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/4287890.stm>

<sup>113</sup> Heilman and Kaiser, "Religion, Identity and Politics"

<sup>114</sup> Ibid

<sup>115</sup> Heilman and Kaiser, "Religion, Identity and Politics," 698

<sup>116</sup> CIA World Factbook, "Tanzania"; Statistics on religion are estimated because religious questions were eliminated from the census in 1967.

<sup>117</sup> Rajab, "Tanzania Split"

<sup>118</sup> Ibid

over fundamental religious differences, but over the distribution of jobs, and national resources.<sup>119</sup> However, there has not been a constant state of violence, and really the only violence to occur has been poll violence in Zanzibar, while the mainland has remained peaceful. As much as Zanzibaris may view the union as unbeneficial, there is the competing view that what Zanzibar has given up in autonomy they have gained in economic and political clout, especially in the international arena.<sup>120</sup>

Unfortunately the story highlighted in this study is not clear cut, but causal mechanisms are rarely clear cut outside of the lab. Tanzania's institutions have similarly ambiguous explanations. Chama cha Mapinduzi (CCM) is the ruling party in Tanzania and despite fifteen years of multiparty elections it still acts as a one-party state.<sup>121</sup> In spite of effective one-party rule trust in institutions is remarkably high. Trust in other ethnicities is also extremely high, especially considering how ethnically aligned political parties are.<sup>122</sup> Zanzibar has many institutional barriers protecting its autonomy such as its own parliament, presidency, flag, and football team.<sup>123</sup> The partnership between mainland Tanganyika and the island of Zanzibar has lasted since 1964, although with mixed reviews. Whether this union has lasted because of the federalist structure, or Zanzibar's independent membership in Fifa, it is quite telling that Tanzania has been "spared the internal strife that has blighted so many African nations."<sup>124</sup>

### *Kenya*

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<sup>119</sup> Heilman and Kaiser, "Religion, Identity and Politics"

<sup>120</sup> Rajab, "Tanzania Split"; BBC News, "Tanzania"

<sup>121</sup> Rajab, "Tanzania Split"

<sup>122</sup> Freedom House, "Map of Freedom in the World,"

<http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=363&year=2008>

<sup>123</sup> BBC News, "Zanzibar," [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/country\\_profiles/3850393.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/country_profiles/3850393.stm)

<sup>124</sup> BBC News, "Tanzania"

Kenya gained independence from Britain in 1963. Like Tanzania no ethnic majority.

While Kikuyu is the most widely spoken mother tongue it represents little over twenty percent of the population. Most Kenyans are multi-lingual and speak English, Swahili, as well as a mother tongue. The major ethnic groups in Kenya are Kikuyu, Luo, Luhya, Maasai, and Kalenjin.<sup>125</sup>

Kikuyus led the independence movement in Kenya, and since have enjoyed the benefits of one-party rule.<sup>126</sup> The oppressive regime of Jomo Kenyatta sought rents for the Kikuyu in terms of land ownership in the Rift Valley, which has been the subsequence scene of much ethnic violence.<sup>127</sup> Policy bias towards Kikuyus has led to their relative economic success, which has made them the object of resentment. The Kikuyu are thought of as the “indigenous inhabitants of Nairobi, [and] are a large component of the new elite, [and are well] represented in professional, clerical, administrative and political positions,” thus Kikuyu is still of use in occupational interactions.<sup>128</sup>

Since the inception of multi-party elections in 1992, Kenya has been plagued by out breaks of ethnic violence.<sup>129</sup> Luos have tried to drive Kikuyus from the Rift Valley and Kikuyus have responded in turn.<sup>130</sup> These tensions have escalated even more because of the ethnicities of the presidential candidates: Mwai Kibaki being Kikuyu, and Raila Odinga being Luo. These rivalries have been exacerbated by a history of particularist leaders like Kenyatta, followed by

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<sup>125</sup> CIA World Factbook, “Kenya”

<sup>126</sup> BBC News, “Kenya”

<sup>127</sup> Human Rights Watch, *Slaughter Among Neighbors: The Political Origins of Communal Violence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995)

<sup>128</sup> David D. Laitin and Carol M. Eastman, “Language Conflict: Transaction and Games in Kenya,” *Cultural Anthropology* 4, no. 1 (February 1989): 56; For the most part English is the lingua franca, Swahili is the language of government officials, and other languages are used on the street and less officially; Eastman is Professor of Anthropology at the University of Washington

<sup>129</sup> BBC News, “Kenya”

<sup>130</sup> BBC News, “Kenya’s Continuing Tribal Divide,” February 21, 2009, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/from\\_our\\_own\\_correspondent/7901609.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/from_our_own_correspondent/7901609.stm)



Daniel arap Moi who sought rents for his own Kalenjin minority.<sup>131</sup> Moi, who was in power from 1978 to 1992 warned that Kenya would fall into tribal clashes as soon as multi-party elections were introduced.<sup>132</sup> However, many Moi as well as Odinga, and Kibaki have been criticized for doing nothing, as well as implicated in inciting violence leading up to elections. In Kenya one political truth is that tribes are the ticket to power which is precisely what politicians have been abusing.<sup>133</sup> Ethnic violence occurred in the run-up to 1992, the first instance of multi-party elections; then again before the 1997 elections, and again before the 2001 elections. Kalenjin rational for communal violence in the rift valley is to send a political message to Kibaki as many believed elections were rigged.<sup>134</sup>

Opportunistic political leaders, like Moi, wanted people to subscribe to primordialist logic, in order to remain in power because repressive policies are the only way to keep ethnic violence at bay. The fact that Kenya did descend into ‘tribal clashes’ as Moi warned would seem to support primordialist theories, however, the occurrence of violence in the Rift Valley was actually the conniving orchestration of Moi for political gain.<sup>135</sup>

Kenyan institutions are not horribly oppressive, and in fact Kenya has the same level of freedom as Tanzania. The first major difference is a politically active military that political leaders have used to rig elections in their favor. The other major difference is the very low levels of trust in Kenyan institutions as well as for other ethnicities. While it is probably impossible to say why Tanzanians are more trusting of the government than Kenyans it can be stated that

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<sup>131</sup> Human Rights Watch, *Slaughter Among Neighbors*

<sup>132</sup> Ibid

<sup>133</sup> Ibid

<sup>134</sup> Pascale Harter, “Inside Kenya’s Burning Rift Valley,” *BBC News*, January 30, 2008, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/7217737.stm>

<sup>135</sup> Human Rights Watch, *Slaughter Among Neighbors*

society creates institutions which intern reinforce societal norms. Perhaps there is a norm of trust in Tanzania. What is clear from these differences is that the actual democratic nature of institutions does not matter nearly as much as whether or not people believe into them. These measures are, after all, western measures of liberal democracy, and therefore inherently ethnocentric. It seems that ethnic violence in Kenya is politically motivated, due to the abuses of power politicians on all sides. It is unclear why Tanzanians trust their institutions and each other more than Kenyans, but what this pair of nations does indicate is that distrust in institutions makes violence an option for airing grievances. Tanzanians trust their institutions to resolve ethnic disputes, and therefore they engage in peaceful conflict, while Kenyans, who really have very few reasons to trust their institutions especially elections, do not have clear peaceful options for resolving ethnic conflict.

**Table 2**

	<b>Tanzania</b>	<b>Kenya</b>
Politically active military *	No	Yes, under Moi 1992-1997
Independent legislatures *	Yes	Yes
Viable opposition parties *	Yes	Yes
Free press *	High, low in Zanzibar	Self censorship
Level of freedom **	7 - partly free	7 - partly free
Trust in institutions ***	75.9%	56.9%
Trust of own ethnicity compared to other ethnicities ***	80.1% 67.4%	49.3% 31.6%
GDP per capita ****	1,354	1,746
% below poverty line ****	36%	50%

\*determined by interpretive reading of BBC country profiles and articles

\*\*Freedom House- the number is a total of the rating for political and civil liberties, the lower the better with 14 as the maximum

\*\*\*Afrobarometer Round 3

\*\*\*\*CIA World Fact book

## Conclusion

There are three theories or ways of looking at ethnic violence: primordialist, instrumentalist, and constructivist. Primordialism possesses assumptions about the nature of ethnicities, and about human nature. It asserts that ethnicity itself is the cause of ethnic violence and so nations that are more diverse are more likely to be violent. While ethnic diversity may be a necessary condition for ethnic conflict, it does not always lead to ethnic violence.

Instrumentalism, very convincingly, explains that ethnic violence results from economic and political competition. Either political elites use ethnic groups, or individuals make the rational choice to compete with other ethnic groups over scarce resources or access to political power such as executive office. While economic scarcity empirically correlates and explains some cases of violence it fails to explain how it is that so many poor countries are peaceful. The same can be said for political manipulation, which is present in many cases of violence. The instrumental use of ethnicity can explain ethnic conflict, but does not explain why conflict leads to violence.

Finally constructivism, or the institutional argument, posits that the strength of political institutions best explains the occurrence or absence of ethnic peace. It is the only approach which answers how it is peace comes. In an answer to instrumentalist arguments constructivists find that institutions prevent circumstances such as political manipulation, and channel ethnic conflict into nonviolent forums. Strong institutions also create civic trust which means citizens believe that the ballot is more powerful than the bullet, or in many African cases the machete. Democratic outlets such as free and fair elections, viable opposition parties, and a free press enable individuals to enact change in the political system without murdering their neighbors.

One question unanswered is how outside forces affect ethnic violence. It could be that ethnic groups have an incentive to remain peaceful due to economic prosperity associated with peace or other geopolitical calculations. It could be the case that national minorities are better off as minorities in a larger nation rather than as majorities in a nation of their own, without any resources. Exogenous shock is completely left out of this study mostly because of the small N comparison design. Further research with more cases would better answer this problem in a generalizable way.

The question of what causes ethnic peace has been ignored by scholarly research, and it is fundamentally different from the question of what causes ethnic violence. In looking at the other side of the coin this study has been able to observe different factors at play which will help in the prevention of future ethnic violence. Despite intransitivity in some of the findings of this study what has been clearly indicated by these comparisons and thick descriptions of the situation in these nations is that economic and political factors are not enough. They are certainly causal factors, but they do not capture all variance and so as scholars we must continue to investigate other variables.

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