4-2009

Explaining Ethnic Peace: The Importance of Institutions

Rebecca Tong
Illinois Wesleyan University

Recommended Citation

Tong, Rebecca (2009) "Explaining Ethnic Peace: The Importance of Institutions,"
Res Publica - Journal of Undergraduate Research: Vol. 14
Available at: https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/respublica/vol14/iss1/11

Explaining Ethnic Peace: The Importance of Institutions

Abstract

This paper examines the cause of ethnic peace, and subsequently, the cause of ethnic violence. Varying arguments have been used to 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 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 which enable ethnic peace. Better political institutions foster civic trust amongst citizens, and ensure peaceful means for the demonstration of political and economic frustrations.

EXPLAINING ETHNIC PEACE: THE IMPORTANCE OF INSTITUTIONS
Rebecca Tong

Abstract *This paper examines the cause of ethnic peace, and subsequently, the cause of ethnic violence. Varying arguments have been used to 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 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 which 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 had to live side by side. The world has witnessed multiple genocides, and silently stood by; they have seen the result of collective violence and blamed historic grudges. The "us against them" mentality may be a true in the minds of individuals, 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. What is it that leads some nations down a spiral of violence, and sometimes to genocide, while others are able to 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. The world is becoming more interconnected and ethnic groups are facing 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 answer two questions. First, what are the causes of both ethnic violence and ethnic peace? Second, how have master narratives, scarce resources, and democratic institutions influenced the occurrence or absence of ethnic peace?

Africa presents interesting cases of ethnic diversity, scarce resources, varying historical experiences with colonialism, and a wide variance in institutional strengths. In selecting the dependent variable we can isolate certain causal factors. Sub-Saharan African nations on average are poor, and this helps to control for any economic factors at play. The level of ethnic diversity in Africa is also ideal for such a study; often it is the case that nations have ethnic variety ranging over a hundred. Finally, colonial experience has influenced how African nations have attempted to develop, and the way in which democracy has been pursued. 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. Possible other explanatory variables which will be considered are economic competition, political manipulation by elites, varying constructions of citizenship, and political institutions.

While there are multiple explanations I believe political institutions best explain the occurrence of ethnic peace. Such things as free press, independent legislatures, and viable opposition parties provide peaceful ways to resolve competitions between ethnic groups. Scholars have

presented and supported a variety of explanations for ethnic peace: primordialism, instrumentalism (economic interests or political manipulation by the elites), and constructivism (institutions).

I define the three explanations below, but an objection to primordialism and instrumentalism is that although such things as cultural identity, scarce resources, and the political manipulation by elite are explanatory variables they are insufficient for grasping all facets of ethnic violence. Without politically viable ethnic cleavages there is nothing for elites to exploit, nor is there any sort of ethnic basis to such conflicts. This primordialist explanation has no peaceful solution except mass exodus, and it over simplifies the lives of individuals. It writes off people as being either irrational or rationally choosing to exterminate races. Many have responded to this oversimplification with studies correlating economic competition with ethnic violence. They argue it is when these political cleavages stack up nations become prone to ethnic violence. This statement may be true, but it leads to an explanation where ethnic identity is reduced to something fluid and purely instrumental. This study argues it is institutions which are key because they best explain the causes of ethnic peace and not just violence. Even if a nation has an ascriptive master narrative, and economic competition it is strong institutions such as elections, "civilian control over the military, independent legislatures and courts, viable opposition parties, and voluntary association, [and] free press" that prevent nations—otherwise pegged as being at risk—from dissolving into violence (Bratton, 1997, p. 69).

The primordialist approach views ethnicity as fixed. As is the nature of ascriptive identities they are ranked, written, and fixed. From an evolutionary perspective it makes logical sense that individuals are biologically predisposed to protecting members of their own group and in some cases fighting rival groups, all for the sake of passing on their genes. In addition, Frank P. Harvey explains that according to primordialists "ethnic ties are inherently more potent (and fit) as an organizing force than…ties based on class or occupation" (2000, 40-41). For example, Malay and Chinese in Malaysia have been in conflict since the first Chinese traders landed there. These are two distinct cultures that compete politically, economically, and socially; Donald Horowitz reasons that these are the lines of interaction and dominant cleavages along which people align (1971). The rationale of ethnic violence is ethnic differences. Therefore where there are multiple ethnicities, there is ethnic violence (Lake and Rothchild 1998). This does not mean that violence or conflict is a constant state, but that identity is the root cause. The history of bitter rivalry, age old conflicts over land, and vengeance killings, or preemptive slaughter of populations can easily be attributed to identity.

Indeed identity can be an extremely compelling reason, but one criticism of this approach is that it operates under the assumption that identities are fixed. It fails to explain the emergence of new identities (Lake and Rothchild. 1998, 5). For example in the former Yugoslavia through history people have changed the way they identify themselves, be it an Austrian, Serb, Yugoslavian, or Muslim. What matters it not ethnicity purely, but ethnicities which are politically salient, where there is an "us against them" construction to these identities. This point leads us to a second kind of explanation.

Instrumentalism is the understanding that groups or collectives make a rational choice to most strongly identify with a certain part of their identity for economic or political gain, whether this is a linguistic, religious, or racial difference. Simply put, identity is a tool. This opportunistic use of identity is precisely what Fearon and Laitin (2003) expect to see. Therefore, the likelihood of ethnic violence or conflict is dependent upon whether the overall outcomes benefit and exceed the transaction and coordination costs (Fearon and Laitin 2003). Primordialism links violence directly with identity differences; instrumentalism does almost the complete opposite by citing economic interests as being predominant. Political elites can and do use ethnic divisions to their advantage, in the colonial experience of many European-colonized African states where ethnic divisions were capitalized upon in order to keep groups from rising up against the imperial governments. The Hutu

were played off against the Tutsi and more formally separated racially so that one group could oppress the other, leaving the dominant ethnic group dependent on colonial support as well. More recently, this can be conceptualized through the Malay-Chinese division in Malaysia. The Chinese are what Amy Chua (2002) terms a market-dominant minority in Malaysia. Therefore this isn't a conflict based on ethnic identities strictly, but rather on economic inequality. The citizens of Malaysia have chosen to align along a Chinese-Malay line, rather than a Muslim-Christian, or native-foreigner way, and politicians have been able to use identity for political purposes.

In this line of thinking ethnic conflicts and their causes are applicable to all conflicts. Ethnic conflict is simply a part of an overarching ongoing conflict (Lake and Rothchild. 1998, 6). Although seductive instrumentalism assumes that individuals or leaders can choose their identity, this is something "embedded within and controlled by the larger society" (Lake and Rothchild. 1998, 6). You can not choose your identity. It is something individuals are born into. French Muslims, for example, may conceive themselves to be French citizens, but to society at large they are Muslims first, and therefore will always have a foreign element. If ethnicity is purely elastic and instrumental then there would be little for political elites to exploit because conflict would be purely economically motivated. Identities need to be politically salient to be useful for exploitation. Therefore there is something to be said for group identification, it is compelling enough to average citizens to make them riot, or mass murder people. It could be that instrumentalism is true for the elite and the upper class, but it is less convincing in the lower class. Furthermore, while instrumentalism may explain ethnic violence, it cannot explain ethnic peace.

This brings us to the final approach, constructivism. It 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 that ethnicities are not chosen and that they change as a society changes. However, unlike primordialism it does not assume that ethnicity inherently leads to conflict or violence, thus the onset of violence still needs to be explained. For the constructivist, violence rises up out of a combination of factors from economic pressure to loss of political rights. Constructivists believe that social systems give rise to conflicts along ethnic lines, so the question for them is what has led to these sorts of social systems. The institutional approach is able to explain the occurrence of ethnic peace. Under a constructivist framework institutions can make all the difference. They can prevent instances of political manipulation. For example in Kenya Daniel arap Moi was able to use the military to stir up ethnically based conflict, but if the military is controlled by civilians and not by politicians, such occurrences of political abuse would be unattainable. Institutions such as free press, elections, and opposition parties not only give citizens ways to express their demands in a peaceful way, but if people trust these institutions they believe there is a way to enact change without violence. In the case of free press it means individuals can criticize the government so that political frustrations can be aired and dealt with openly. Institutions create social trust which leads to ethnic peace.

Primordialism and instrumentalism are theories which explain ethnic violence. This is why the choice of sub-Saharan Africa is significant. The cases chosen are ethnically diverse, and poor. There are ethnic tensions and a lack of resources, but not necessarily ethnic violence. I posit it is institutions which best explain the phenomenon of ethnic peace in a nation when all the factors seem as though they would lead to violent ethnic conflict.

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.

<u>Primordialist</u>

It would seem logical that primordialist reasoning for ethnic violence would be limited to non-scholarly research, but this is precisely what Tatu Vanhanen (1999) has set out to demonstrate in an empirical study of 183 nations between 1990 and 1996. Vanhanen takes the theoretical standpoint that "all human populations share the same evolved behavioral predisposition to ethnic nepotism" (55). His study takes a common assumption of many 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" (66). 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 we can test. This represents a theoretical improvement over scholars who use culturally specific factors only, which are unfalsifiable (Vanhanen 1999, 56).

However, the problem is Vanhanen broadly generalizes what ethnic conflict is; there are measures included for non-violent conflict such as ethnic partisanship which are added to a nation's total ethnic conflict score out of 200. The textbook case of poorly attempting to disguise ordinal levels as interval levels is the "feeling thermometer," and that is precisely what Vanhanen has attempted to do. The paper lays out the difference between rating in intervals of 10, but there is no explained difference between a score of say 10 versus one of 12 (Vanhanen 1999, 62). 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.

By contrast, this study will focus on the outbreak of violence. There are political parties with violent or terrorist branches such as the Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA) in Spain and their affiliated political party Herri Batasuna. Parties like Herri Batasuna are examples of how politics becomes consumed with ethnicity and these collectives become actors in politics "seeking affirmative action for the achievement or restoration of privileges and life chances in the name of ethnic (or racial) equalization (Tambiah 1989, 344). Ethnically aligned political parties, while most likely problematic, are not necessarily inherently negative aspects of a nation's political system. For example Varshney points out that the Bharatiya Janata Party—a Hindu nationalist party—beat out the secular Congress party because it was seen as being less corrupt despite the less tolerant religious platform (2002). So while there has been an attempt to debunk primordialist explanations the demonstration seems to be inadequate. The stories of communal identities are compelling to groups and they set the tone for how groups have interacted and how they conceive themselves. This is not to justify the idea that groups will never get along, but rather that there is something both ascriptive and instrumental about identity (Maalouf 2000) (Lake and Rothchild 1998) (Heilman and Kaiser 2002).

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, and thus important to explore. Genocide is by definition systematic killing with

the design to exterminate an entire ethnic group. The danger is putting too much stake in culture and reducing it to a simple primordialist explanation. Culture and ethnic identity is the field on which violence can cast its seeds and cultivate. It is culture plus other factors which 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" (Ross 1997, 308). The problem is that many studies look at the obvious examples of complete conflict like Bosnia, and Rwanda and in these extremes, arguments of groups bitterly fighting and being unable to find peace and stability hold up, but this is a cultural distance which has grown too large. It is much like a self-fulfilling prophesy; cultures view themselves as distinct and distant from another so rather than foster connections, distrust is built up and leads to a greater distance in culture, and even less interaction (de la Roche 1996). Some scholars point to culture as having other roles in ethnic conflict. It sets up the framework for conflict to take place.

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 which play into the complicated, intricate web 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 that groups are prone to elite manipulation only if it echoes their current concerns: "ethnic identities become seriously amenable to political manipulation either when suppressed groups feel marginalized from the political and economic process affecting their lives of when privileged groups feel that their rights are threatened" (2001, 32). 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" (2001, 34). Instrumentalism is termed the modernist theory. The idea behind this theory is that colonizing nations, such as Britain and France, exacerbated ethnic rivalry when they used divide and conquer strategies; this was followed by structural adjustment which intensified poverty, leaving nations deeply fractured and poor. Thus, it was the stacking up of cleavages which 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.

Fearon and Laitin (2003) test empirically GDP per capita, and the population share of the largest ethnic group, with the likelihood of civil war. Amongst their hypotheses is the common assumption that 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(2003) finds that ethnic diversity is not a major cause of civil war; the key explanatory variable found in their study was per capita income. However, this does not make ethnic diversity inconsequential because it may still "cause civil war *indirectly*, if it causes a low per capita income" (Fearon and Laitin. 2003, 82). 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 which are 90% homogenous, but with a GDP per capita of under 500 US dollars have a 30% chance of civil violence. In one model they limit it to ethnic wars and find that the strong effect of per capita income remains (Fearon and Litin 2003, 84). This does not answer whether or not the causes of ethnic violence is economic scarcity though; it indicates that the causes of civil war tend to be economic. It also does not address how some poor nations are peaceful.

Although there may be a correlation this does not justify causation. As we will find out later, civil war and economic scarcity can be self reinforcing, meaning that as nations grow unstable and poor they are likely to continue to be so. The question remains, is ethnic violence the instrumental 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" (Fearon and Laitin 2003, 85). What this indicates is that nations with stronger institutions despite economic or demographic factors are less likely overall to descend into violence either ethnic or civil.

Another facet of instrumentalism is the political entrepreneurs or manipulation of ethnicity by elites for political gains. This is well illustrated by Africa's history. 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 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. However, both economic and political instrumentalism fails to answer how ethnic peace occurs. While the occurrence of political prospecting cannot be prevented, political institutions do control for institutional opening available for exploiting ethnic groups, and allow for the expression of political objections peacefully.

Constructivism

The other major explanation put forth is the importance of institutions. This is also the most compelling in answering the question of this study, namely what are the causes of ethnic peace. This 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 (Smith 2000). Liberalization is used here to mean political control being taken down, such as allowing freedom of press, getting rid of arrests without charges, freedom from torture, or the "institutionalization of procedures for popular government (Smith 2000, 25). The explanations and variables for ethnic peace are similar or exactly the same as those presented for democratization theories. Smith (2000) 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. Unlike Vanhanen, Smith found purchasing power parity, once again a proxy for human development, to have a robust inverse relationship with ethnic violence (Smith 2000, 33). This reconfirms that interests are a key factor of ethnic violence, but that "institutions sometimes can and do overcome the constraints imposed on them by structural determinants" (Smith 2000, 35).

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 (Lake and Rothchild 1998), but when the citizenry can utilize things like elections, or even more simply when they feel that their anxieties are being addressed or voiced by the media, then the likelihood of ethnic violence lessens (Bratton 1997). 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 (Uvin 1999).

Varshney rejects institutional explanation because according to him it fails to explain regional difference in ethnic violence (2002, 38). In the case of India this seems to be true; they 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 obstacle. Varshney read different Indian newspapers for years and interpreted incidences like riots as either ethnically driven or not; he was also in India. 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 civic engagement is encouraged by strong democratic institutions.

Research Design

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 scarce in resources, all being developing nations; and they have varying institutional factors.

My hypothesis is that institutions absorb conflict either by creating peaceful mechanisms or by preventing abuse in political systems. This institutional carrying capacity is what I believe best explains the occurrence of ethnic peace in nations at risk. The expected results are that master narratives will be oppositional and particularist; the resources of all will be scarce and so the conflict of 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 (1993) termed these groups "minorities at risk," but what is it that makes risky national minorities safe?

The dependent variable therefore is ethnic violence. This study will limit this to violent interactions such as rioting, lynching (or something similar), and 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 we have better measures for national violence, the overall peacefulness of a nation can be determined (Brubaker & Laitin 1998). An ordinal level measure can be employed for ethnic violence (Smith 2000, 27). 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 UN forces. The one 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, and 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. 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. It seems he was right. The problem of this pair is that Tanzania is 30% Christian whereas Kenya is at least 70% Christian, with it Muslim estimates varying. Is this a case of comparing apples and oranges as Varshney puts it? A possible solution to this is simply limiting the comparison to coastal Kenya. Muslims have concentrated on the coast having moved their way along it. In order to keep Tanzania, an interesting case, Kenya is the most appropriate comparison. 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 British colonies, but it is the post-independence history and government policies which have made them so different.

Data and Analysis

Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire

Ghana was the first sub-Saharan nation to gain independence from the British in 1957 and set the example for other nations. 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-Dagbane, Guan, and Ga-Adangbe (CIA World Factbook). There are cultural, historical, and linguistic differences and they are historically rooted in competition for trade and land control. As late as 1994 the ethnic tensions erupted in violence over what was reported as a historical land dispute (BBC). Although ethnic identification has influences on Ghanaian life and politics, it has been outlawed in political parties. These seem to be historical constructions. There are few social or institutional differences, but nonetheless the history of group solidarity has prevailed. These have arisen from past tribal wars, alliances, territorial disputes, slave trading etc. Each has a stereotypical characterization, e.g., combative, boastful, passive, conservative, cheap. Some groups have written languages; these are often viewed as superior to those with only spoken dialects. It is also interesting to note there are no racially homogenous regions; the various ethnic groups are spread out. Ghana's leader in the independence movement was Kwame Nkrumah, and he envisioned a united Africa under the ideas of Pan-Africanism (Lake 1995).

Cote d'Ivoire has been independent from French rule since 1960.There are more than 60 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. In 2002 civil war broke out in Cote d'Ivoire and although fighting has subsided for the most part, the country remains divided with rebels controlling the north, and the government controlling the south. 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 which was meant to denote all people living in Cote d'Ivoire, but unfortunately it has been used to espouse nationalist and xenophobic ideas. Scholars cite the strong leadership of Houphouet-Boigny as the reason that ethnic tensions didn't boil over earlier. Houphouet-Boigny's successor Henri Bedie fled in the 1999 coup by Robert Guei, but managed to spark a movement of

xenophobia against Muslims and so called non-Ivoirians, including Bedie's political rival Alassane Ouattara who was barred from the election due to his non-Ivorian parentage (BBC).

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. Forty-one villagers were killed after more than a hundred Gueres were cut to pieces with machetes and sprayed with bullets. The Guere is derived from a term 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. The exact differences between these groups is very confusing; the Guere in some parts are the Wobe, and the Dioula are dialectically similar to the Wobe, and the Dioula were often called the Guere by early scholars, and both languages are Mande languages (Holsoe 1976). 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.

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 Cote 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. These two nations because they are neighbors influence one another so heavily. So while there is an economic upturn recently in Ghana, there has been a downturn in Cote d'Ivoire. As stability is suspect in Cote d'Ivoire, many companies are diverting their trade to neighboring nations, although businesses suspect that this is not a lasting effect (BBC). So in the case of Cote d'Ivoire it was a military coup with a heavy ethnic element to it which preceded the economic downturn: "Ivory Coast used to be a beacon of peace and prosperity in West Africa, attracting millions of migrant workers and refugees" (BBC).

Instrumentalism also takes the form of political manipulation by the elites. Human Rights Watch in 2001 accused the government of Cote d'Ivoire 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 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" (BBC). The gendarmes who were implicated were found not guilty in spite of the testimony of two survivors.

What is more telling are the differences in their institutions as indicated by Table 1. In structure, both Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire have legislatures and courts independent from the executive branch, but one party tends to dominate in Cote d'Ivoire where that does not occur in Ghana. There are no viable opposition parties at this time in Cote d'Ivoire, but it seems that this may very well be on the brink of change. Elections were called off in October of 2008 and expected to be rescheduled in 2009. Ghana is on the verge of another election, and while eight candidates are running for the presidency four have realistic chances with the major issue being corruption. The viability of parties and many other things is difficult to asses in Cote d'Ivoire because it is still split between the north and the south. As suspected, the freedom of press is much lower in Cote d'Ivoire compared to Ghana as is the level of freedom. There are not yet any numbers out on trust in institutions or trust in individuals for Cote d'Ivoire, but a stark difference in them would not be surprising.

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 present because a greater percentage of Ivoirians live below the poverty line. If we look back at previous poverty levels in Cote d'Ivoire we see that, before the military coup and the beginnings of instability, Ivoirians enjoyed a level of 33% much closer to Ghana's 31.8% in 1992 (oecd.org, data.un.org). Given this it is not economic interests which have spurred the ethnic violence. The coup occurred to oust Bedie who began the 'Ivority' movement against Muslims and foreigners, so the violence preceded the economic problems. Political manipulation in Cote d'Ivoire is another reason espoused by many. Indeed it has been the case that leaders in Africa have used ethnicity to bolster their own support, but I still believe that this is an outcome of weak institutions. The military of Cote d'Ivoire took sides in the politics which is why they were used to incite fear amongst opposition supporters. Had the military stayed out of the political arena then there would have been less means for politicians to use ethnicity. Therefore we are left with the weakness of Ivorian institutions versus the well trusted Ghanaian institutions.

Table 1: Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire		
	Ghana	Cote d'Ivoire
Civilian military control *	-	-
Independent legislatures*	Yes	No, one party domination
Viable opposition parties *	Yes	No
Free press: media freedom and private press*	High	Low, and very dangerous to both local and foreign media
Level of freedom**	3- free	12 - not free
Trust in institutions ***	64.9%	NA
Trust of other ethnicities compared to average trust in own ethnicity***	43.5/65.5 66%	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.
***Afrobarometer Round 3- percent responding "a lot" or "somewhat" out of 4 choices
****CIA World Factbook

Tanzania and Kenya

Tanzania and Kenya, both former British colonies are neighbors and share many similarities. The Swahili language pervades both these nations and along with English, it is a way for many to communicate despite varying mother tongues. These nations are also better studied as there have been prominent periods of peace.

Tanzania is almost equally divided in religion between Christians, Muslims, and those who practice indigenous beliefs. However, no particular identity has dominated politic or society. This is not to say that religion is not a divisive issue; according to a nation-wide opinion poll "people objected to interreligious marriages more strongly than to other forms of cross-identity marriages" (Heilman 2002, 695). The religious divide is also the only one to manifest itself in political parties. Nothing formally separates Christian and Muslims, marriages are not outlawed, and it is not uncommon for someone to follow both religions, and although there is no statistical class division, there is a "feeling among many Muslims that the country's educated elite is disproportionately made up of Christians" (Heilman 2002, 698). The 'standard view' of society in Tanzania and the so called master narrative has been presented by many to be one of harmony between Christians and Muslims. 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, which was seen as being part of colonial rule. Julius Kambarage Nyrere, the leader of the Tanganyikan African National Union enacted a law for multi-racial citizenship. Furthermore, many Muslims became leaders of the independence movement while Christian churches discouraged such activities. Thus the story is that Christians joined Muslim leaders in the national struggle.

Two competing narratives are those of Christians and Muslims separately. Muslims want to balance the disparities in education, and thus political power and government leadership. According to Islamists in Tanzania, Muslims are unable to form organizations freely, and are harassed and arrested based on religion. Christians are afraid that religion will enter the political arena and Muslims will undermine the strength of the state by seeking only a Muslim agenda.

Most Kenyans are multi-lingual, speaking English and Swahili, as well as a mother tongue such as Kikuyu or Luo. No single ethnic group holds the majority, but Kikuyu is the most widely spoken language though, only representing a little over 20 percent of the population. Kikuyus led the independence movement in Kenya, and since have enjoyed the benefits of one-party rule (BBC). The oppressive regime of Jomo Kenyatta sought rents for the Kikuyu in terms of land ownership in the Rift Valley, which has been the subsequent scene of much ethnic violence (Human Rights Watch). The situation concerning languages is confusing in Kenya. Swahili is often used in primary school and English in further education. English is the lingua franca thanks to the British and therefore to obtain civil service of bureaucratic jobs it is a must. However in the parliament, Swahili is language of debate, and propaganda. In urban settings, such as Nairobi where Kikuyu form the majority, what is developing is a new sort of vernacular, a Kenyanized Swahili. The Kikuyu are thought of as the "indigenous inhabitants of Nairobi, are a large component of the new elite, [and are well] represented in professional, clerical, administrative and political positions," thus the Kikuyu language is still of use in occupational interactions (Laitin 1989, 56). Since the inception of multi-party elections, Kenya has been plagued by outbreaks of ethnic violence. Kikuyus are the object of resentment because of the relative economic success. Luos have tried to drive Kikuyus from the Rift Valley and Kikuyus have in turn responded. These tensions have also been escalated because of the ethnicities of the presidential candidates Mwai Kibaki being Kikuyu, and Raila Odinga being Luo. Again these identities are constructed not so much on the basis of who the Kikuyu and Luos are but in opposition to one another.

As stated before, these two nations are extremely diverse, Tanzania religiously, and Kenya linguistically. Kenya has not seen an outbreak which escalated into a larger conflict, but it has experienced periods of ethnic violence. Early in 2008 Kenya saw episodes of ethnic violence due to contested election results of Kibaki's victory in light of election rigging (BBC). Tanzania which even has Zanzibar, a possible separatist region, has been notably peaceful.

It may be that economic interests are at play seeing as how Kenya has a larger percentage of citizens below the poverty line than Tanzania, 50 to 36 percent respectively as can be seen in Table 2. Looking at earlier poverty levels, in 1994 Kenya's was 40 percent, and in 1991 Tanzania's was 39 percent (data.un.org). The first occurrence of ethnic violence was in the run-up to the first multi-party elections in 1992, the second occurrence was for the 1997 election and was considered by many to be worse (BBC). In 1997 the poverty level was 52%, higher than it is currently. So once again it would seem that it is not economic strain which causes ethnic violence, but the other way around. Tanzania is still in the top 100 for the percentage of people below the poverty line, and even though it is relatively better off compared to Kenya these are both very poor nations where economic interests are always at play, but do not always play into 'tribal clashes.'

The popular reasoning offered by academics and observers is that the onset of Kenyan tribal violence is due to the rise of multiparty elections in 1992. The logic is primordialist; ethnic groups

like the Kikuyu, Luo, Luhya, Maasai, and Kalenjin are involved in a historical conflict which leaders like Moi were able to keep under control with repressive policies. Perhaps this theory is why Moi warned of Kenya's 'inevitable' descent into 'tribal clashes.' It would seem his prediction was correct: Kenya's political parties had dived largely along ethnic lines, and 'tribal clashes' in the rural areas of western Kenya had left hundreds dead and tens of thousands displaced" (Human Rights Watch). However, the occurrence of violence in the Rift Valley of Kenya was actually the conniving orchestration of Moi for political gain. Moi, following the precedent set by Kenyatta, provided rents for his own minority Kalenjin just as Kenyatta did for the Kikuyus (Human Rights Watch).

In quite the opposite fashion the primary reason many cite for Tanzania's remarkable peace is the policies imposed by Julius Nyerere, the founding president of the dominant party Chama cha Mapinduzi. Nyerere was able to detribalize national politics by "adopting Kiswahili as the country's official language and, in so doing, forged a sense of national unity among Tanzanians" (BBC). Perhaps most surprising is how Tanzania has managed to remain peaceful during huge political changes, namely its shift from socialist to capitalist, and then to multiparty elections. In a nation with more enduring institutions it would seem that a shift towards democracy does not lead to more violence, and that it is political manipulation at work, rather than ancient conflicts. Just as in the case of Cote d'Ivoire the weakness of Kenyan institutions, such as a high incidence of election rigging and corruption, has allowed for ethnic violence to take place while in Tanzania high trust in institutions has enabled ethnic peace.

The level of freedom based on Freedom House statistics is equal, but the level of trust in political and civic institutions is remarkably different. Tanzania has such a high rate of trust, and if we exclude "trust in an opposition party" the average in trust is 83.5 percent instead of 75.9 percent. Perhaps this further illustrates that it doesn't matter whether or not institutions are good, only if individuals perceive them to be. The partnership between mainland Tanganyika and the island of Zanzibar has lasted for since 1964, although with mixed reviews. Zanzibar has remained semi-autonomous with its own president and parliament, but some islanders believe that they are suffering in terms of infrastructure, schools, and health (BBC). Whether it is the federalist structure, or the 2004 membership into Fifa—allowing Zanzibar a football team separate from Tanzania's—it is quite telling that Tanzania has been "spared the internal strife that has blighted so many African nations" (BBC).

The stark differences between Tanzania and Kenya truly show how far institutions can aid in maintaining peace. Kenya is ethnically diverse, very poor, and very violent, especially around election time. Tanzania is ethnically diverse, very poor, and very peaceful. The explanation for Kenyan violence seems to be political manipulation by the likes of Moi and Kibaki, but what best explains the ethnic peace is that citizens trust institutions, which allow for gradual and peaceful change in the system through democratic means.

Table 2: Tanzania and Kenya		
	Tanzania	Kenya
Civilian military control *	-	No
Independent legislatures*	Yes	Yes
Viable opposition parties *	No, multiparty elections in 1990	Yes
Free press: media freedom and private press*	High Low in Zanzibar	Self censorship during Kenyatta and Moi,
Level of freedom**	7 partly free	7 partly free
Trust in institutions ***	75.9	56.9
Trust of other ethnicities compared to average trust in own ethnicity***	67.4/80.1 80.5%	31.6/49.3 64%
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.
***Afrobarometer Round 3
****CIA World Factbook

Conclusion

There are three theories or ways of looking at ethnic violence: primordialist, instrumentalist, and constructivist. Primordialism is riddled with assumptions about the nature of ethnicities, and about human nature. It asserts that ethnicity itself is the cause of ethnic violence and so nations which are more diverse are more likely to be violent. In fact, the case seems to be that ethnic diversity has the least to do with violence, although it is a necessary condition for ethnic violence.

Instrumentalism, very convincingly, explains that ethnic violence is based on economic and political competition. Ethnic groups are either used by political elites, or the 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 reasoning for how it is elites are unable to pull the strings in other nations is absent.

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 peace comes about; peace is not just the absence of violence. In an answer to instrumentalist arguments constructivists find that institutions prevent circumstances such as political manipulation. Strong institutions 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. The study of ethnic peace allows us to observe different factors at play and it will help in preventing further atrocities.

References

Abubakar, D. (2001). Ethnic Identity, Democratization, and the Future of the African State: Lessons from Nigeria. *African Issues, 29,* 31-36.

Boone, C. (1995). The Social Origins of Ivoirian Exceptionalism: Rural Society and State Formation. *Comparative Politics, 27,* 445-463.

Bratton, M. (1997). Deciphering Africa's Divergent Transitions. *Political Science Quarterly, 112,* 67-93.

Bhavnani, R. & Becker, D. (2000). Localized Ethnic Conflict and Genocide: Accounting for Differences in Rwanda and Burundi. *The Journal of Conflict Resolution, 44,* 283-306.

Brubaker, R., & Laitin, D. D. (1998). Ethnic and Nationalist Violence. *Annual Review of Sociology, 24,* 423-452.

Chua, A. (2003). *World on Fire.* New York, NY. Doubleday Inc.

De la Roche, R. S. Collective Violence as Social Control. *Sociological Forum, 11,* 97-128.

Faure, Y. (1993). Democracy and Realism: Reflections on the Case of Cote d'Ivoire. *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute, 63,* 313-329.

Fearon, J. D., & Laitin, D. D. (2003). Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War. *The American Political Science Review, 97,* 75-90.

Gurr, T.R. (1993). *Minorities at Risk.* Washington, MD. United States Institutes of Peace.

Harvey, F. P. (2000). Primordialism, Evolutionary Theory and Ethnic Violence in the Balkans: Opportunities and Constraints for Theory and Policy. *Canadian Journal of Political Science, 33,* 37-65.

Heilman, B. E., & P. J. (2002). Religion, Identity and Politics in Tanzania. *Third World Quarterly, 23,* 691-709.

Holsoe, S.D., & Lauer, J. J. (1976). Who are the Kran/Guere and the Gio/Yacouba? Ethnic Identifications along the Liberia-Ivory Coast Border. *African Studies Review, 19,* 139-149.

Horowitz, DL. (1971). Three Dimensions of Ethnic Politics. In *World Politics (*pp. 232-244).

Human Rights Watch. (1995). *Slaughter Among Neighbors: The Political Origins of Communal Violence*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Laitin, D., & Eastman, C.M. (1989). Transactions and Games in Kenya. *Cultural Anthropology, 4,* 51-72.

Lake, O. (1995). Toward a Pan-African Identity: Diaspora African Repatriates in Ghana. *Anthropological Quarterly, 68,* 21-36.

Lake, D.A., Rothschild, D. (1998). *The International Spread of Ethnic Conflict.* Princeton, NJ. Princeton University Press.

Maalouf, A. (2000). *In the Name of Identity: Violence and the Need to Belong.* New York, NY. Penguin Books.

Ross, M. H. (1997). The Relevance of Culture for the Study of Political Psychology and Ethnic Conflict. *Political Psychology, 18,* 229-326.

Sambanis, N. (2001). Do Ethnic and Nonethnic Civil Wars Have the Same Causes? : A Theoretical and Empirical Inquiry (Part I). *The Journal of Conflict Resolution, 45,* 259-282.

Smith, Z. K. (2000). The Impact of Political Liberalization and Democratization on Ethnic Conflict in Africa: An Empirical Test of Common Assumptions. *The Journal of Modern African Studies, 38,* 21-39.

Tambiah, S. J. (1989). Ethnic Conflict in the World Today. *American Ethnologist, 16,* 335-349.

Uvin, P. (1999). Ethnicity and Power in Burundi and Rwanda: Different Paths to Mass Violence. *Comparative Politics, 31,* 253-271.

Vanhanen, T. (1999). Domestic Ethnic Conflict and Ethnic Nepotism: A Comparative Analysis. *Journal of Peace Research, 36,* 55-73.

Varshney, A. (2002). *Ethnic Conflict and Civil Life: Hindus and Muslims in India.* Yale University Press.