

# The Institutional Origins of Ethnic Violence

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The theory of ethnic violence we develop in this article highlights the role of the state's institutionalization of ethnic categories. The institutional focus goes a long way toward incorporating constructivist insights about the origins of ethnicity, which have been largely ignored in broadly comparative scholarly analyses.<sup>1</sup> In particular, we address Rogers Brubaker's attention to the problem of "groupism"—the tendency to take for granted "discrete bounded groups as the basic constituents of social life, chief protagonists of social conflicts, and fundamental units of social analysis."<sup>2</sup> This critique applies to virtually all of the recent cross-national scholarship on ethnic civil wars.

An important set of studies, for example, focuses on the impact of ethnic diversity, in which the presence of multiple ethnic groups is hypothesized to lead to violence. These studies provide a range of explanations based upon various metrics of diversity, and generally find statistical support for claims that particular configurations of group sizes are good predictors of outbreaks of war.<sup>3</sup> However, other influential studies do not find consistent patterns.<sup>4</sup> Not only are findings sensitive to model specification, but no fully defensible metric of diversity has yet to emerge. While we agree that some diversity is a prerequisite for ethnic conflict, there are so many plausible propositions about which configurations of size and numbers of groups heighten the likelihood of conflict that the statistical findings are not particularly robust.

A second strand of scholarship casts ethnic groups as potential challengers to the state. Barbara Walter, for example, claims that a state's likelihood of using violence is a function of the number of potential future challengers who, in turn, will watch how the state addresses threats from any single group. But ambiguity about groups remains. Although Walter uses the "total number of ethnic groups," a measure based on entries from the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, which includes all types of groups, including religious, linguistic, ethnic, or foreign-national,<sup>5</sup> it is extremely unlikely that such counts actually indicate the number of mobilized or salient groups that would be recognized by the state as potential challengers. As an alternative measure, she uses the "ethno-political groups" identified through the Minorities at Risk project. However, and again the author anticipates this critique, there is a great deal of bias in the identification of those groups, who themselves have already been subject to some form of discrimination or repression. Our concern is not the theory itself, which is interesting and plausible, but the notion that the size and number of ethnic challengers exist as exogenous social facts.

A third approach, Andreas Wimmer, Lars-Erik Cederman, and Brian Min's relational and configurational model of ethnic violence, is the most impressive. These scholars go the furthest in providing a plausible political mechanism within a model

of ethnic civil war, arguing that, “ethnic exclusion from state power and competition over the spoils of government breed ethnic conflict.”<sup>6</sup> They make a substantial contribution by recognizing political relationships among groups in their theory and analyses of their ethnic power relations (EPR) dataset.<sup>7</sup> However, their empirical analyses still rely heavily on the number and size of groups, and there remains ambiguity in classification of groups (they employ expert coders but, as we show, several classifications are debatable). Moreover, while we agree that conflict over state power is an important and proximate trigger of ethnic civil war, such violence is routinely part of a broader intergroup conflict, as described below.

### **A Theory of Institutionalized Ethnic Cleavages, Categories, and Conflict**

As an alternative, we develop a theory that endogenizes the formation of ethnic groups. Specifically, we highlight the effects of the state’s institutionalization of ethnic categories on the likelihood of violent conflict. While rejecting the primordialist notion that ethnic conflicts are rooted in “ancient hatreds,” we share Roger Petersen’s view that much ethnic violence is rooted in emotional and cognitive processes.<sup>8</sup> We draw heavily on social identity theory (SIT), a social-psychological approach identifying the micro-level motivations created by the construction of group categories. In our model, when institutions create or reify intergroup comparisons, this signals that a dividing line exists between “us” and “them,” priming relational status concerns and shaping how subsequent facts are likely to be interpreted within a political context. Leaders, in turn, find it easier to successfully mobilize followers to commit acts of violence against ethnic others. We make the link from institutionalization to violence in two parts: first, institutionalization increases ethnic differentiation; second, ethnic differentiation, irrespective of power configurations, creates a competitive dynamic that increases the likelihood of spiraling aggression.

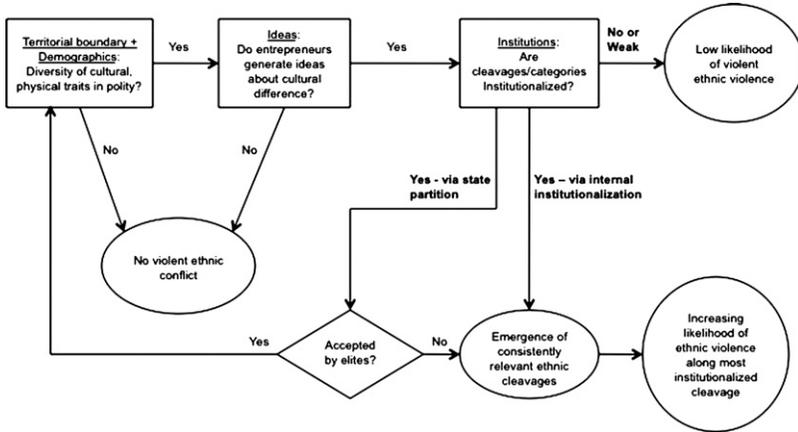
### **Ethnic Institutionalization Increases Ethnic Differentiation**

When making major decisions about how to structure their rule, allocate resources, and enshrine norms of conduct and justice, state leaders must make choices about whether to use ethnic categories. Such choices have enduring consequences for the salience of social identities and intergroup relations. Here, we follow scholars who have shown how state institutions strongly influence the origins of ethnic difference, especially under colonial rule,<sup>9</sup> but we seek to extend those insights in a more systematic manner. While institutionalization is often one component of a strategy of domination, even when institutionalization results from accommodation or incorporation, or for no apparent strategic purpose, we predict similar effects on identity salience.

We depict our theory of the role of state institutions in the structuring of violent ethnic conflict in Figure 1. We treat the emergence of linguistic, religious, and

phenotypical diversity within countries as largely exogenous shocks associated with the drawing of territorial boundaries and the movement of people around the world through various conquests and diasporas. Certainly by the mid-twentieth century, almost all countries enjoyed a measurable degree of trait diversity.

**Figure 1** Institutions and Ethnic Violence



But such diversity of traits is only a starting point because traits must be recognized and mobilized.<sup>10</sup> A second necessary, but not sufficient, condition for the development of ethnic salience is the generation of ideas about which traits ought to be identified as relevant markers or boundaries. That is, political entrepreneurs must broadcast the observation that people with different skin color, height, language, ancestral home, style of dress, or other (combination of) traits are, in fact, distinct and separate communities. In the absence of a consistent heuristic for recognizing trait differences as a marker of group differences, the outcome is essentially the same as if there were trait homogeneity—either way, the society is imagined as being without relevant divisions or cleavages.

In order for ethnicity to become a relevant factor in the political arena, such ideas must become institutionalized. That is, there must be some establishment of common sense norms that certain sets of traits are meaningful markers of ethnic distinctions. Such institutionalization may happen informally, through steady diffusion of ideas and social networks such that there is stable agreement on the rules of ethnic identification; or this may happen more formally, through the decrees and policies of governing authorities. We focus on formal institutions that are projected with state resources and therefore most likely to be consequential for subsequent challenges to the state. When categories are informally institutionalized in society, but not formally recognized by the state, this opens up room for greater flexibility in the use of alternative categories and aggregations. While we advance a theory that locates state elites as

the actors with the agency to make influential choices, we recognize that they do so in response to other pressures.<sup>11</sup>

We do not theorize here about why certain categories and not others become institutionalized and in what manner. Political elites act strategically to advance their interests, but depending upon competing ideas of cultural difference, prevailing norms of institutionalization, geographic dispersion of traits, and other contingent factors, they make choices to advance their interests. No single parsimonious explanation will account for the wide variation in institutional forms, and therefore we treat institutional choice as an exogenous variable, the product of historical contingency.

Other scholars offer plausible propositions concerning the determinants of shifts in ethnic salience. For example, both Kanchan Chandra and Daniel Posner stress that voters seeking to be members of “minimum winning coalitions” make strategic choices about identities.<sup>12</sup> However, these particular theories apply only to democratic contexts, and the choice sets are themselves constrained by existing institutions of the type considered here. Once chosen, state institutions often cast a long shadow on patterns of ethnic salience. Nonetheless, as these authors demonstrate, institutions can be changed as the product of strategic choices, often in the context of exogenous shocks, such as violent outbreaks, regime changes, or changes in electoral rules.

We identify three broad patterns of state institutionalization, and associated effects.

1. No or weak institutionalization: At most, the state uses a set of ethnic categories in just one institution; or it uses ethnic categories in multiple institutions, but in an inconsistent manner, with varied rules and categories, such that intergroup boundaries are unlikely to be clear. In this case, we expect that ethnic categories will have a lower salience in the social and political arenas. Ethnic categories may become relevant under such conditions, but this lack of institutionalization will either reflect the absence of clear ideas of difference or substantially limit the intensity of levels of attachment to such labels, in which cases we expect those identities to be highly flexible.
2. Institutionalization via partition: The state alters the territorial and/or legal boundaries of citizenship so that previous ethnic categories now differentiate citizens from non-citizens. The effects are conditional upon whether elites agree to the separation. Peaceful boundary redrawing tends to occur only at moments of simultaneous reconfigurations, particularly in the dissolution of empires. Following such moments, the likelihood of ethnic conflict will depend on the configuration of traits and institutions within the respective new polities. When partition attempts are rejected, this is likely to exacerbate ethnic differentiation because attempts at partition tend to heighten the salience of ethnic group categories.
3. Strong internal institutionalization: The state deliberately and consistently identifies ethnic categories in at least two institutions. Within this category, one can observe gradations of institutionalization in terms of the number and consistency of the use of the same ethnic categories (ranging from moderate to strong to very strong). We predict that the strong institutionalization of

ethnic categories will strengthen ethnic differentiation, diminishing the potential for group permeability or assimilation.<sup>13</sup> Citizens will routinely be forced to choose from the categories presented by the state. They will become less likely to use hybrid or other categories, and more likely to use state labels to identify themselves and to recognize co-ethnics. Individuals may find it difficult to conceive of the possibility of joining a different group, especially because of fear of sanctions from members of their own group who would view such defection as an affront.<sup>14</sup>

### **Ethnic Differentiation Generates Violence**

In turn, high levels of intergroup differentiation will increase the likelihood of violent conflict among relevant groups because boundary drawing generates emotional, conflict-prone dynamics. Various experiments premised on SIT have demonstrated that in-group bias occurs even in the absence of objective or material incentives.<sup>15</sup> On its own, group membership can motivate group mobilization, though the addition of relative deprivation can be particularly powerful.<sup>16</sup> As contrasted with “Realistic Group Conflict Theory,” in which antagonism between groups is rooted in “opposing claims to scarce resources,” SIT posits that incompatible group interests are neither sufficient nor necessary for the development of competition and discrimination between groups.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, individuals, as members of groups, strive to pursue a relatively favorable group reputation or status. They do this not merely to pursue material gains, but because individuals value membership in a well-respected group, and resist the notion of inferior status—a claim articulated by Donald Horowitz in his seminal work.<sup>18</sup> Once groups are created and perceived, individuals strive for a positive sense of social identity and, therefore, are more likely to mobilize if they perceive a threat to the group’s dignity.

When categories are highly institutionalized, prejudice is more likely to be practiced and perceived, and can be more easily mobilized for conflict and violence. Sabine Otten highlights that when social categorization is routinely practiced, aggressive actions are likely to be interpreted very differently depending upon who commits the act. She provides the vivid example of the likely responses of a soccer fan to being bumped from behind with a spilled drink. The “victim” is likely to react very differently to the same infraction by someone supporting the “other” team than someone supporting “our” team.<sup>19</sup> In an analogous manner, when states institutionalize ethnic categories, this provides a convenient set of labels and relevant sets of facts for information brokers to report on “unfair” distributions of resources and/or biased policies and practices. Moreover, the state’s use of categories may facilitate the expression of grievances, recruitment, and mobilization. Those recruited fighters may be more likely to make corporeal sacrifices due to a perceived threat to dignity and to demonstrate moral standing among co-ethnics. While we agree with Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler that longstanding or objective grievances are not necessary for violence,<sup>20</sup> our theory implies that ideas about grievance can be manufactured as part of a process of intergroup conflict.

Stathis Kalyvas cautions that there may be substantial disjunctures between the “master cleavage” of a conflict and the motivations for violence “on the ground.”<sup>21</sup> Indeed, we recognize that highly institutionalized categories may generate isomorphic, micro-level antagonisms or simply may provide a ready heuristic for interpreting parochial conflicts in terms of broader, macro-categories, in turn intensifying those conflicts and inspiring others. Across localities, individuals are more likely to interpret their own frustrations as part of a larger narrative of conflict, and in turn to form real or symbolic “alliances” along ethnic lines if ethnic categories are well institutionalized.<sup>22</sup> Individuals ultimately choose whether to participate in campaigns of violence, but in the context of well-institutionalized ethnic categories, their preferences and strategies will be conditioned in terms of intergroup relations.

When there are multiple institutionalized cleavages, following SIT, we expect that conflict will occur where categories are most deeply institutionalized. If such institutions are changed or removed, and particularly if such categories become less frequently used within informal institutions, we expect to see less conflict around those cleavages and/or that other institutionalized cleavages will become the new focus of “us-them” conflicts. Where categories have been deeply institutionalized for a very long time, we do not expect to observe an immediate decline in salience following official deinstitutionalization, as ethnic rhetoric, organization, and historical memories are likely to persist. But over the longer term, categories will become less salient, and to the extent that violence is avoided in the years following deinstitutionalization, the likelihood of violence should continue to decrease.

Certainly, the deep institutionalization of ethnic boundaries will not always lead to violence; we posit the link in probabilistic terms. Moreover, many other macro- and micro-level factors identified by scholars of civil war and violence, such as the strength of the state, the availability of “lootable” natural resources, and the nature of the physical terrain, generate additional positive and negative effects on the likelihood of violence. Our particular focus is on the additional factors that lead to large-scale ethnic violence, and on predicting the identity of combatants. We predict that the strong institutionalization of ethnic categories by the state will increase the likelihood of ethnic violence and ethnic civil war. When multiple cleavages are institutionalized violent conflict is most likely along the lines of the most highly institutionalized cleavage.

While our theory is largely unconditional on ethnic demographics, one factor must be considered. For any institutionalized category, there must be sufficient trait diversity for at least 1 percent of the population to be so classified. Absent such a minimal threshold of diversity, it is unlikely that a large-scale intergroup conflict would arise.

## **Comparative Historical Data and Analysis**

We test our propositions through a set of qualitative, comparative historical analyses,<sup>23</sup> complemented by country-level estimates of predicted ethnic violence based

on large-sample quantitative analyses.<sup>24</sup> The strength of this approach lies in its ability to make a set of well-controlled and contextualized comparisons that draw upon a rich and varied set of data sources, to classify cases, to establish correlations, and to identify process-tracing evidence that links cause to effect. The limitation of our design is that the examination of a relatively small number of cases makes it difficult to evaluate the generality of the claims, which must be considered in future research.

Specifically, we analyze the eleven countries of continental (non-island) Southern Africa. This group provides sufficient scope to ensure that we are not “cherry-picking” cases that tilt in favor of our explanation, while being a manageable number to adequately explore our claims. The examination of contiguous cases allows us to control for diffusion effects—for example, Nicholas Sambanis highlights regional effects on civil war outbreaks—and shared regional histories, including similar cultural characteristics.<sup>25</sup> It also constrains us to consider cases that may not fit well with our theory. Any small set of cases could be argued to be unique in some particular way, and Southern Africa’s history of settler colonialism is one obvious distinction, but this does not apply uniformly, nor is it fully unique to this region.

In Table 1, we identify the key explanatory variables used in recent quantitative analyses of ethnic civil war, in order to contextualize our findings. We compare the mean scores and standard deviations from the Southern African region to all other countries in the world, and to all other countries in sub-Saharan Africa. In most respects, there are no statistically significant cross-regional differences. However, like the rest of Africa, the region is poorer and more ethnically diverse than the group of all other countries. A similar proportion of countries have experienced ethnic civil war, as is true in the full sample of countries (though somewhat less than in Africa as a whole), and regional patterns are not markedly distinctive on the key explanatory variables identified by Andreas Wimmer et al.<sup>26</sup> Thus, when generating prior expectations about the likelihood of ethnic civil war, or estimating the fit of our theoretical model, there is no reason to believe that the context is particularly unique.

The remainder of the article focuses on the puzzle of variation in the incidence of ethnic civil wars within the Southern African region during the period from 1945 (or independence, if later) to 2005. In Figure 2, we plot the average annual predicted probability of ethnic civil war based on our replication and reanalysis of James Fearon and David Laitin’s model.<sup>27</sup> Those predictions are estimated from the large sample of almost 6,000 country-year observations based on a range of covariates, including per capita income, percent mountainous territory, population size, and measures of ethnic diversity, but not any ethnopolitical variables. Also based on the Fearon and Laitin dataset, we identify six ethnic civil wars contained within four (South Africa, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, and Angola) of the eleven countries.

In Table 2, for each country we present the ethnolinguistic fractionalization estimate and the average and maximum scores for the two key ethnopolitical variables analyzed by Wimmer et al.—the percent of ethnically relevant population excluded

**Table 1** Ethnic Civil War and Related Correlates, Southern Africa, 1945 (or independence) to 2005

	Southern Africa		All other countries		All other African countries	
	<b>mean</b>	<b>sd</b>	<b>mean</b>	<b>sd</b>	<b>mean</b>	<b>sd</b>
Share of countries with at least one ethnic civil war	<b>0.36</b>	0.50	<b>0.35</b>	0.48	<b>0.57</b>	0.50
Linguistic Fractionalization	<b>0.64</b>	0.21	<b>0.38*</b>	0.28	<b>0.65</b>	0.26
Per Capita income (natural log)	<b>2.78</b>	2.26	<b>6.14*</b>	6.47	<b>1.57</b>	2.29
Population (natural log)	<b>8.51</b>	1.24	<b>9.10</b>	1.33	<b>8.62</b>	1.10
Percent mountainous terrain (natural log)	<b>2.04</b>	1.28	<b>2.16</b>	1.42	<b>1.46</b>	1.48
Average anocracy score	<b>0.24</b>	0.26	<b>0.24</b>	0.25	<b>0.28</b>	0.14
Per capita oil production (natural log)	<b>0.20</b>	0.66	<b>2.28</b>	11.38	<b>0.47</b>	1.99
Share of ethnically-relevant population excluded from power (average)	<b>0.16</b>	0.23	<b>0.15</b>	0.18	<b>0.27</b>	0.24
Number of ethnic groups in power (average)	<b>2.41</b>	2.85	<b>1.56</b>	1.59	<b>2.41</b>	1.48
Percent years under imperial rule	<b>0.57</b>	0.19	<b>0.52</b>	0.32	<b>0.54</b>	0.22
Number of countries	<b>11</b>		<b>144</b>		<b>30</b>	

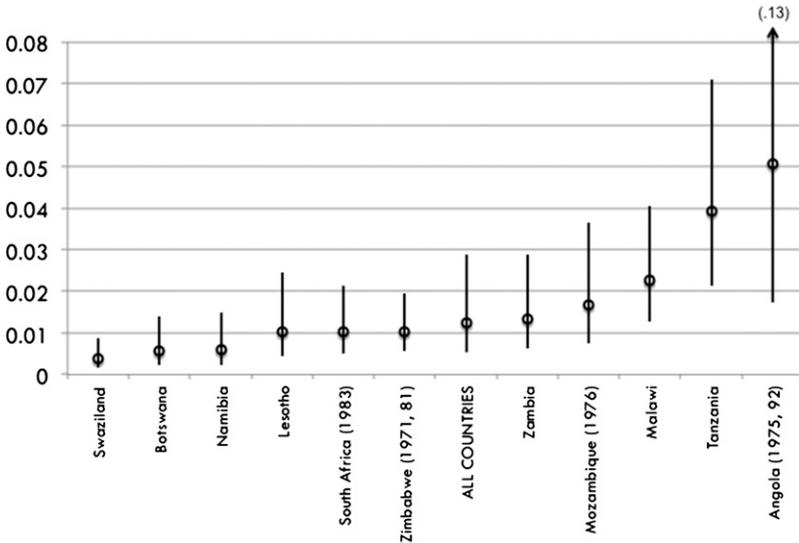
Note: Country-level variables created by averaging annual values for years with available data.

Source: Cederman, Wimmer, and Min, "Ethnic Power Relations dataset." Author reanalysis by subgroup (Southern African countries listed in Table 2).

\*Statistically different from Southern African sample ( $p < .05$ ).

from power and number of power-sharing partners.<sup>28</sup> (We compare how Wimmer et al. and Posner have classified politically relevant ethnic groups in online Appendix 1.<sup>29</sup>) We also present summaries of the degree of institutionalization of ethnic categories based on our investigation of state institutions, including census questionnaires and identity documents, employment and education preference policies, and institutions that could identify ethnic categories through regulation of space, territory, voting, holding office, or language use.<sup>30</sup> We describe the state's institutionalization of ethnic categories for each of three potential cleavages—race, religion, and ethnicity/language.<sup>31</sup> The research underpinning Table 2 and the case studies below drew upon a range of sources, including actual census documents, constitutions, various scholarly secondary sources,

**Figure 2** Average Annual Predicted Probability of Ethnic Civil War Onset\*.



\*Based on replication of Fearon and Laitin (2003) model. Years are start dates of ethnic civil war onsets based on Fearon and Laitin (2003) dataset. Markers indicate point predictions; lines indicate 95 percent confidence intervals.

encyclopedia source books, and online searches, all of which we detail with citations in online Appendix 2.<sup>32</sup>

### Cases of Ethnic Civil War

Why did ethnic civil wars occur in South Africa, Zimbabwe, Angola, and Mozambique during the last quarter of the twentieth century? In all four countries, there is a high degree of ethnic fractionalization, but linguistic diversity is only slightly higher on average (.71) compared with the group of cases that did not experience civil wars (.59). This factor is not a good predictor of ethnic violence, nor does it help to identify the combatant groups. The EPR dataset identifies exclusion of ethnic groups from power, representing very large shares of the population in the first three cases, and, in turn, these cases contribute to the statistically significant findings in Wimmer et al.'s large-sample analysis.<sup>33</sup> Their model generates solid predictions and a generally plausible account of many cases in the region, but is sensitive to some subjective judgments about which ethnic groups are politically relevant, and we challenge the causal model in some cases. Our focus on institutionalized ethnic categories makes classification more transparent, and we find a good fit in predicting the location of (non)violence, the identity of combatants, and associated motivations for action.

**Table 2** Predictor Variables for Ethnic Violence in Southern Africa, 1946–2005

Country	Ethno-linguistic fractionalization*	Ethnopolitical Configuration*		Institutionalization of Ethnic Categories**			Outcome (post-independence)
		<u>Ethnically relevant Population excluded %</u>	<u>N ethnic groups in power</u>	<u>Race</u>	<u>Language and/or Tribe</u>	<u>Religion</u>	<u>Ethnic civil war</u>
South Africa	0.88	.45/.60	2/6	V. strong; strong after 1994	Partition rejected; strong after 1994	Weak/none	1 civil war
Zimbabwe	0.54	.44/.97	1.8/3	V. strong; strong after 1975	Strong	Weak/none	2 civil wars
Angola	0.78	.62/.62	1/1	V. strong; weak/none after 1975	Strong	Weak/none	2 civil wars
Mozambique	0.65	.12/.17	1.7/2	V. strong; weak/none after 1975	Weak/none	Weak/none	1 civil war
Namibia	0.68	.16/.16	6/6	V. strong; weak/none after 1990	Partition rejected; Weak/none after 1990	Weak/none	ambiguous (see text)
Botswana	0.51	.02/.02	0/0	Moderate; none after 1966	Weak/none	Weak/none	no
Lesotho	0.22	0/0	0/0	Moderate <sup>†</sup> ; none after 1966	Weak/none	Weak/none	no
Swaziland	0.39	0/0	0/0	Moderate; none after 1968	Weak/none	Weak/none	no
Malawi	0.62	0/0	7/7	Strong <sup>†</sup> ; none after 1964	Weak/none	Weak/none	no
Zambia	0.82	0/0	7/7	Strong <sup>†</sup> ; none after 1964	Moderate; weak after 1968	Weak/none	no
Tanzania	0.93	0/0	0/0	Strong <sup>†</sup> ; none after 1961	Moderate; Weak after 1961	Weak/none	no

Sources: \*Cederman, Wimmer, and Min, “Ethnic Power Relations dataset”; \*\*Text and online Appendix 2. <sup>†</sup>Extremely limited trait diversity (membership in second largest category <1 percent of population).

### South Africa

As depicted in Figure 2, based on the Fearon and Laitin model, South Africa was not a particularly likely candidate for ethnic civil war. This is because that model obviously failed to capture key aspects of the political relations that led to violent conflict. By contrast, Wimmer et al.’s theoretical explanation, concerning the effects of ethnopolitical exclusion, is clearly relevant. According to the EPR dataset, for the period 1946–1993, five ethnic groups representing more than 50 percent of the population—the Xhosa, Zulu, English-speakers, Coloreds, and Asians—were consistently excluded from power.

There are, however, two key difficulties with an explanation that links the exclusion of these groups to the rebellion against the apartheid regime. First, these groups and the politically powerful Afrikaners do not readily map onto the ethnic conflict that actually occurred. We find it strange to identify Xhosa and Zulu as “politically relevant” ethnic

groups for the period from 1946–1990. By contrast, Posner identifies groups strictly in terms of race, which we believe much better reflects the nature of political organization during that period.<sup>34</sup> Indeed, none of the central rebel groups, including the armed wings of organizations such as the African National Congress, the Pan African Congress, and the Azanian People’s Organization, described themselves as being either Xhosa or Zulu, or as explicit coalitions of these groups. To the extent that “English-speakers,” “Coloreds,” and “Asians” participated in rebellion, they generally did so in support of these organizations and their affiliates, and certainly not with overt claims of gaining political power for those ethnic subgroups. Rather, they were all engaged in a struggle against white supremacy, and all either advocated a nonracial future or made claims for black or African liberation, rejecting intraracial distinctions. Second, while the armed rebellion was plausibly a response to exclusion from power, the conflict was more fundamentally about citizenship rights and equal treatment within society. Popular support for these struggles had at least as much to do with quotidian indignities perpetrated by the state and within society as it did with a lack of political representation. Moreover, while English-speakers are classified in the EPR dataset along with four non-white ethnic groups as politically excluded during this period, English-speakers enjoyed full citizenship rights as whites, including representation in parliament and free movement. It was implausible, that as a group, they would mobilize in the same manner as people of color, and indeed, there is no evidence of any armed English-speaking groups.

The focus on institutionalized categories and cleavages does a fine job of predicting the dynamic of conflict. While the South African state institutionalized ethnic categories along multiple cleavages, the extent and consistency of its institutionalization of race was unprecedented. Beyond consistent counting on the census, pass laws made racial distinctions; land and public facilities were designated according to race categories; and jobs and educational opportunities were restricted based on one’s racial identity. As Deborah Posel points out, “the ubiquity of the state’s racial designations...meant that apartheid’s racial grid was strongly imprinted in the subjective experience of race.”<sup>35</sup>

Although the apartheid state also used ethnolinguistic categories as part of a strategy of dividing an African majority, and legitimizing exclusion through the creation of separate Bantustans (an attempt at partition), these categories did not provide the same cognitive and mobilizational heuristics as the racial cleavage, which was institutionalized to a much greater degree under apartheid government. Most black political elites and the international community rejected the notion that the homelands were legitimate new states. Thus, although Xhosa and Zulu were clearly identifiable groups prior to the formation of the Union of South Africa during the first decade of the twentieth century, our theory correctly predicts that the deep institutionalization of race categories would make these subcategories, and thus the ethnolinguistic cleavage, far less politically salient, and less likely than race to be the basis for organized rebellion.

Since the end of apartheid government there has been less imbalance in the institutionalization of racial categories as compared to ethnolinguistic ones. Not only does the state recognize eleven official languages, several of the provinces are clearly

identifiable in ethnic terms—Kwazulu-Natal for Zulus and the Eastern Cape for Xhosas—and many towns and cities within those provinces have been renamed with ethnically identifiable terms. If this persists, it would be reasonable to predict increased interethnic conflict along linguistic lines, and one can already observe increased ethnic rhetoric, including President Jacob Zuma's repeated self-identification as a Zulu. However, for the moment, race continues to be the most highly institutionalized, and the most salient cleavage in South Africa as affirmative action policies are institutionalized in terms of race, not language, categories.

Moreover, the theorized mechanism of status competition predicts many of the historical links between institutionalization and violent conflict. As just two examples, the initial nonviolent protest of burning pass books and a subsequent massacre by the state in Sharpeville (1960) and the widespread rebellion of black students in Soweto (1976) in response to the imposition of Afrikaans language instruction in schools were clearly collective responses to indignities.

## **Zimbabwe**

The Fearon and Laitin model also does not lead to strong predictions of ethnic civil war in Zimbabwe. Nonetheless, competitive ethnic political competition goes a long way toward providing a useful explanation of the two wars that occurred during this period. The EPR dataset identifies Europeans and Africans as the politically relevant ethnic groups for the period 1965–1979, and indeed the wholesale political exclusion of black Africans, who constituted more than 90 percent of the population, led to the armed rebellion of the black liberation groups, ZAPU and ZANU.

Yet there is also room for a prior institutional explanation. Rhodesia's colonial history was similar to that of South Africa in terms of the institutionalization of racial categories and the glue this would provide for otherwise ethnolinguistically diverse people. British colonial rule had long made extremely strong distinctions between whites and blacks in terms of work, education, and land in Southern Rhodesia. After the British government declared a policy of no independence without majority rule, in 1965 white elites made a "unilateral declaration of independence" (UDI) and erected increasingly rigid institutional distinctions between whites and blacks in various realms, including access to government office and separate voter rolls, in turn sharpening white-black divides. Black Africans faced the indignities of harsh pass laws and separate land apportionment. While their exclusion from executive power was certainly important, our theory correctly predicts that long-standing patterns of institutionalization of racial categories played a critical role in the mobilization of Africans as a largely unified force, despite some intra-African ethnic tensions. As in South Africa, the quest for power also motivated resistance; but the indignities of white rule proved particularly important and the in-group/out-group conflict between white and black prevailed as the dominant cleavage until a multiracial government took power in 1978, followed by the 1980 election of ZANU-PF president Robert Mugabe.

Soon thereafter, however, there was yet another ethnic civil war. In 1983 Ndebele guerillas led an insurgency, and the state, largely dominated by Shonas, carried out mass murders of Ndebeles. How does one account for this sudden shift in the relevant dimension of conflict? If one were to look strictly at the previous year of the EPR data, the Wimmer et al. model could be used to predict the outcome. For the period 1980–2005, the Ndebele-Kalanga (Tonga) and Shona are identified as politically relevant ethnic groups,<sup>36</sup> and for the period 1980–1981 as power-sharing partners. Prior to this, Wimmer et al. classified all Africans as a single group. According to their model, both exclusion and power sharing among politically relevant ethnic groups are likely to lead to violent conflict, so this shift in classification leads to a heightened expectation for civil war.

However, the exogenous shift in the groups identified as politically relevant, and their power statuses, cannot be disaggregated from observations of intergroup conflict and violence themselves. Within such a short span of time it is virtually impossible to separate cause and effect, and we need to account for the rise of the salience of these groups and their violent conflict. Specifically, we find patterns of institutionalized ethnic differentiation of the Ndebele ethnolinguistic group from the Shonas, which predate the observations in the EPR dataset, and get to the core of this latter civil war conflict in the manner our theory predicts.

What became known as the Shona-speaking language group was a series of cultural groups that had migrated from Northeastern Africa since about 1000 A.D., whereas the Ndebele arrived in Southwestern Zimbabwe from South Africa, one of several Ngoni language groups, in the late nineteenth century.<sup>37</sup> When the British arrived, they institutionalized a strong distinction, and recognized separate territories, Mashonaland and Matabeleland, as ethnically distinct lands for Shona and Ndebele respectively, by identifying them first as British protectorates in 1891 and then as provinces of Rhodesia in 1923. A common identity would be forged among those categorized as Shona, and the Ndebele successfully persuaded others to identify as part of their group, so that by about 1980 approximately 50 percent of those who would identify as Ndebele almost certainly originated from other cultures.<sup>38</sup> Since the early twentieth century, “Native” education policy included the institutionalization of Ndebele and Shona in respective majority areas. Because these categories were routinely reinforced by the state in reporting various statistics and in patterns of administration, these groups subsequently could be mobilized for conflict. When race-based institutions were strongly in place, as our SIT-based theory would predict, the intra-African cleavage was subsidiary; but it would become the basis for intergroup competition following the partial deinstitutionalization of race in the late 1970s. Moreover, and this fact distinguishes Rhodesia/Zimbabwe from the South African case, whites were always a very small minority in the country—less than 10 percent of the population—and starting in the late 1970s they began to exit the country in large numbers. While our theory does not rely heavily on ethnic demographics for predicting political dynamics, the deinstitutionalization of race categories, combined with very small numbers of people who could be recognized as white, led to a decline in the relative political salience of race, allowing for an increase in the salience of the Ndebele-Shona cleavage.

Again, we ask whether the initiation of conflicts between Ndebele and Shona can best be explained in terms of a quest for power at the executive level or because of broader patterns of social conflict triggered by the institutionalization of these categories. We argue that the tensions between ZANU and ZAPU, and the Ndebele guerilla activity observed beginning in 1983, were more deeply rooted in intergroup competition than in the mechanisms postulated by Wimmer et al. First, there were nascent tensions throughout the liberation struggle, prior to either group being in power, but these were held at bay in the context of interracial conflict. Second, there is substantial evidence that, once in power, despite inclusion in the executive branch, intergroup conflicts escalated over the symbolism and interpretation of various appointments. Based on his interviews with people in Bulawayo in 1990, Abiodun Alao describes reactions to perceived slights within a cabinet shuffle and tensions associated with group status:

“[M]any Ndebele people believed that offices allocated to ZAPU Ndebele members were relatively insignificant ones....The transfer (of Nkomo) to a Minister without Portfolio was considered by many as a demotion, which many ZAPU members considered as insulting to a politician of Nkomo’s standing in the country. This feeling, according to some Ndebele-speaking people, was made worse by the jest they alleged the Shona people made of them, that their leader was a “Minister without job”... It was certain that when the dissident operation started, there was an almost neat ethnic framework within which it could fit in and manifest. The dissidents did not need to divert energy into convincing the people of Matabeleland that there was need for some form of unconventional protest... What later proved certain was that the dissidents obviously exploited the prevailing ethnic mood to pursue their operation.<sup>39</sup>

Ndebele exclusion from power was rooted in, and is not analytically separable from, a larger institutionalized conflict between groups, which generated sensitivities over status and a framework in which elites and ordinary citizens could quickly interpret acts by the ethnic “other” as biased and discriminatory.

### **Angola and Mozambique**

Both Mozambique and Angola were embroiled in a series of regional and international (Cold War) conflicts<sup>40</sup> which, among other factors, contributed to the onset of ethnic civil wars in both countries. Nonetheless, the evidence indicates that patterns of institutionalizing ethnic categories also played a role in shaping the structure of conflicts in these cases, providing additional insights beyond approaches that are premised on the existence of coherent ethnic groups.

### **Angola: Ethnic Civil War (1975-) and Cabindan Secessionist Attempt (1991/2-)**

The EPR dataset identifies the exclusion of four groups, representing 62 percent of the population, for the entire period 1975–2005, and one would correctly predict the long

running ethnic civil war, which began in 1975—largely fought among the MPLA, FNLA, and UNITA—based on a theory of ethnic exclusion. But is the prediction correct for the right reasons? Given the immediacy of the interethnic conflicts after Portuguese withdrawal in 1975, we believe that it is implausible to treat concerns about power imbalance in the first independence government as exogenous causes of the subsequent political conflict. Notwithstanding, there is certainly support for the notion that ethnic groups sought self-rule. For example, one account highlights that the FNLA was “primarily a Bakongo Organization” whose goal was the “restoration of the Bakongo Empire.”<sup>41</sup> Moreover, while the 1991–1992 FLEC rebellion and attempted secession from Angola is well predicted by the political configurational model and the EPR data, the high percentage of the excluded population belies the fact that the Cabindan-Mayombe group represented only 2 percent of the total population, leading us to question this measure of group size as the real driver of secessionist activity.

Consistent with our theory, we find that the prior use of ethnic categories by the state structured the dynamics of conflict. As in colonial projects throughout Africa, Portuguese rule emphasized racial categories in various institutions, but the unique and rigid institutionalization of “middle” categories—*mestiço* (mixed-race) and *assimilado*—proved consequential in structuring patterns of conflict. While the state counted racial categories on censuses and made distinctions in terms of education, jobs, land, and other policies, these small groups would enjoy privileged citizenship as compared with those relegated to “uncivilized” or *indigenato* classification. These state classifications were imprinted into pass books and were tickets to citizenship rights. Though such categories were used throughout the twentieth century, the 1954 Native Law would create a bureaucracy for registering individuals as such.<sup>42</sup> Mbundus were routinely afforded *assimilado* or “civilized” status, and as a result, this category became increasingly politically salient.

The state institutionalized other ethnolinguistic categories, which would help increase their salience, providing the basis for later intergroup conflict. Precolonial Ovimbundu institutions were simultaneously retained and challenged with new structures, heightening the salience of that category.<sup>43</sup> Starting in the 1880s, the territory of Cabinda was recognized as a distinct political entity—notably, many decades before the discovery of oil—and enjoyed varied levels of autonomy until Angolan independence, but not after. Moreover, in the 1950s, the Portuguese colonial state also began the practice of counting individuals on the census by linguistic and tribal categories.

In turn, these two sets of institutionalized categories established fault lines for the types of ethnic conflicts our theory predicts.<sup>44</sup> First, the key conflict between the MPLA, comprised largely of Mbundu-*mestiços*, and UNITA, comprised largely of Ovimbundu, divided along this institutionalized cleavage. Second, the outcome of a FLEC rebellion pressing for Cabindan secession in 1991–1992 also fits well with our model, given a history that reinforced geographic separation with institutionalized ethnic categorization.

Moreover, we find substantial evidence of the type of status competition specified in our theory. For example, Savimbi criticized the MPLA’s “intellectual aloofness from ‘the broad masses,’” a comment with ethnic overtones as the more urbanized *mestiços* had received privileged treatment under colonial rule.<sup>45</sup> To be clear, conflict across these

groups predated the Mbundu-mestiços (MPLA) taking power, reinforcing our earlier point that competition over state power was at most a highly proximate cause or last straw leading to violent rebellion.

### **Mozambique: Ethnic Civil War (1976–1977)**

Most scholarly accounts indicate that ethnicity was an important aspect of, but not central to, the origins of civil war in Mozambique. Rather, the war “teased out and inflamed regional and ethnic antagonisms.”<sup>46</sup> In 1962 the *Frente de Libertação de Moçambique* (FRELIMO) initiated a campaign against Portuguese rule, and soon became embroiled in regional conflicts over white rule and broader Cold War antagonisms. At independence in 1975, the *Resistência Nacional Moçambicana* (RENAMO) was formed as an anticommunist organization to challenge FRELIMO rule, and was substantially supported by the South African and Rhodesian states, and an extremely violent sixteen-year conflict ensued.

Nonetheless, both parties can be characterized in ethnic terms. FRELIMO’s support base has been among Shangaan-speaking Southerners and mestiços, while the rebel RENAMO organization was based primarily in the North with the support of the Ndaou ethnic group.<sup>47</sup> The latter formed during the liberation movement when FRELIMO tried to knit together various groups into a common front, but found itself fractured in the early 1960s. Dissenting elites charged that, “Frelimo was a southern-dominated scheme to use young Makonde men from northern Mozambique as foot soldiers without giving them a proportionate say in the party leadership,”<sup>48</sup> and charges of “Southern bias” would recur.

The EPR dataset identifies the Shona-Ndaou as an excluded group during the period 1975–1994, and the Tsonga-Chopi and Makonde-Yao as partners in control of the state. These characterizations of the configuration of political power are consistent with a model that links exclusion to war onset. On the other hand, given shifting ethnic alliances, including (as described above) perceptions of Makonde exclusion and the secondary nature of ethnic organization, it would be a mistake to infer that ethnic exclusion of the Shona-Ndaou from power triggered the war.

Our institutional approach provides useful albeit limited insights for explaining the dynamics of this conflict. The deep institutionalization of a separate *mestiço* category helps explain the disproportionate influence of this group relative to its size. Moreover, the pattern of institutionalizing racial categories by the Portuguese was similar to that of Angola, as a 1928 indigenato policy institutionalized the oppression of most black Africans while also allowing for *assimilado* status for some professional Africans, Asians, and *Mestiços*.<sup>49</sup> As in Angola, it was those people classified in the relatively privileged *mestiço* category who initiated protest against Portuguese rule,<sup>50</sup> and this group is routinely identified as a key elite faction of FRELIMO.

Although the census asked questions about language and tribe for most of the twentieth century, we did not identify any other institutions that clearly demarcated language

or tribal categories. This relatively superficial institutionalization of such categories is consistent with the fluid quality of Mozambican ethnic politics more generally, as political relevance was often fragmented within these broader grouping, and organized and understood along regional lines.<sup>51</sup> While our approach does not lead to strong expectations of civil war along ethnolinguistic lines in Mozambique, our theory correctly predicts the role of *mestiços* and avoids reification of language groups as combatants.

## **Namibia**

Namibia gained independence in 1990 and, since that year, has not experienced a civil war. It is difficult, however, to ignore the fact that the longstanding violent conflict, which raged between the Southwest Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) and the South African state from 1966 until the late 1980s, paralleled the violent conflict of South African liberation organizations described earlier. During this period, Namibia was essentially administered as a fifth province of apartheid South Africa,<sup>52</sup> and characterized by a deep institutionalization of race categories. The incentives to mobilize along racial lines were well predicted, as racial bias and discrimination provided the glue for decades of recruitment in a hard-fought conflict. Given the postindependence deinstitutionalization of ethnic categories, our theory also correctly predicts the subsequent absence of violence.

## **Cases of Low Ethnic Violence in High Diversity Countries**

As shown in Figure 2, the Fearon and Laitin model estimates higher probabilities of ethnic civil war for Malawi, Tanzania, and Zambia than in the positive cases of Zimbabwe and South Africa. Thus, the question why these cases, all generally classified as highly diverse ethnically, did not experience ethnic civil war between independence and the present is extremely consequential for adjudicating among theoretical perspectives.

The EPR dataset identifies no politically relevant ethnic groups in Tanzania, and based on the Wimmer et al. model, one would correctly predict no ethnic civil war. However, in the cases of Malawi and Zambia, where they identify substantial interethnic power sharing across the entire postindependence period with seven ethnic groups in power in each country, based on their theory of the effects of a segmented center, we should have seen violent in-fighting. Thus, these cases are not well predicted by their model. While this might simply be part of a stochastic process—virtually all models, including ours, predict only increased likelihood, not certainty, of outcomes—it is worth probing further.

For all three countries, EPR dataset classifications are again at odds with Posner's, identifying four politically relevant ethnic groups in Zambia, three in Malawi, and four in Tanzania. Moreover, even though small-scale, Lozi-based violence in Zambia would be consistent with the logic of their model, our focus on institutionalization provides

a better prediction of mechanisms and avoids coding and classification ambiguities. We find that all three are cases of weak institutionalization of ethnic categories, but we also identify some nuances within the Zambian and Tanzanian cases.

Although the race cleavage was strongly institutionalized in both Zambia (Northern Rhodesia) and Malawi (Nyasaland) under colonial rule, including through systems designed to provide steady flows of cheap African labor (the Thangata system in Malawi), at independence the miniscule numbers of whites/Europeans rendered race an implausible cleavage for conflict.

Language categories were weakly institutionalized in these two countries. For example, on the Malawian census ethnic questions were asked inconsistently and with inconsistent categories. Moreover, when asked, the language question did not juxtapose multiple African language categories, asking instead, can (name) “read and write the following languages—English, Chichewa, Other,” providing opportunities for Yes/No responses on each. Deborah Kaspin points out that ethnic maps of Malawi in 1950 and 1965 depicted very different groupings, reflecting the resulting ambiguities about which categories were sociopolitically salient.<sup>53</sup> In the case of Zambia, we find only one example of the colonial enumeration of language (in the 1930s), and after independence we observe a great deal of shifting in the enumeration of ethnic and language categories (detailed in Appendix 2).

Both states also dramatically shifted language policy over the years. In Northern Rhodesia, colonial educational policy identified four key language groups, but this was replaced with English, which would become the official language at Zambian independence. All of this is consequential because, as Posner highlights, in Zambia some ethnic groups are identifiable by language spoken, others by attachment to an ethnocultural group. In our framework, these changes reflect weak institutionalization of categories.<sup>54</sup>

Under colonial rule in Nyasaland, a range of different language policies had been implemented throughout the first half of the twentieth century, culminating in a dual language policy of Chewa and Nyanja after WWII.<sup>55</sup> Subsequently, Malawian President Banda’s attempts to nationalize a single language and identity, Chichewa, as early as 1968 bred some resentment, but also had the effect of blurring boundaries between categories, as he tried to incorporate Yao and Lomwe as “Chewa people who did not realize it.”<sup>56</sup> While Chewas were favored in more informal ways, such as through the regional targeting of privileges, such practices were less likely to breed perceptions of permanent exclusion or insider-outside status with the pernicious implications suggested by our theory of the institutionalization of ethnic categories.

Ethnicity undeniably has been a very important part of postindependence politics in both countries, but the weak institution of categories has rendered identities more flexible and less divisive. In the case of Zambia, we found no evidence of official categorization or use of ethnic labels in the allocation of employment or educational opportunities. This is not to deny that at various times politicians have used ethnic appeals to attract votes or to mobilize constituencies; but in the context of such low levels of institutionalization, it is possible for leaders to use shifting messages and appeals without creating sufficiently sharp cleavages between “us” and “them” along lines that could lead to violent conflict.

In the case of Malawi, we found some evidence, albeit limited, of institutionalization. For example, there is evidence of exclusionary policies particularly in the 1980s with respect to Asians, including limits to where property could be held and residency status; but since these individuals mostly held foreign passports, such institutions were really measures addressing categories of nationality, not ethnicity.<sup>57</sup>

However, one important source of institutionalization of an ethnic category was the granting of autonomy to Barotseland in Northern Rhodesia, claimed as a Lozi homeland, particularly in the 1900 Lewanika Treaty under British rule. While Barotseland never achieved the protectorate status of other territories in the region (Bechuanaland, for example), the British were fairly consistent in recognizing the autonomy of the Barotse/Lozi rulers. As Zambia was becoming independent, there was some question about whether Barotseland would emerge as its own independent state, but Lozi and nationalist elites negotiated incorporation into a unitary state. The area was known as Barotse Province from 1964 until 1968, when it became Western Province, a clear change with respect to the institutionalization of an ethnic category. This prior pattern of demarcation, however, led to a more coherent sense of a Lozi identity and to various claims and challenges for increased autonomy and, occasionally, secession, especially during 1990s, which on several occasions led to violent clashes.<sup>58</sup>

The case of Tanzania is notable because of its generally low levels of violent ethnic conflict amidst high levels of ethnolinguistic and religious diversity at independence (there has been insufficient race diversity to constitute a viable cleavage). While nationalist rhetoric may have been important, many other postindependence leaders also espoused titular nationalist appeals but with different effects. In Tanzania the state took a deliberate approach in refusing to institutionalize ethnic categories or to insist upon language homogenization.

In the history of the Tanzanian census, language questions were asked only in 1952 and 1958; a religion question was asked on various censuses from 1948 until 1973; and most notably, although a “tribe” question was asked throughout colonial rule and immediately after independence, the question was removed after the 1973 census and has not been asked since. We find some use of tribal categories in the creation of indirect rule, but these were eliminated by the time of independence.

Although our framework does not accommodate purely regional categories, because we cannot *a priori* distinguish subregions that are “ethnic” categories from those that are not, we also recognize that some scholars have identified Zanzibaris as a relevant ethnic group.<sup>59</sup> Zanzibar cannot be defined in terms of a particular language, race, religion, indigenous origin, or tribe, but the region is culturally distinctive and provides a basis for attachment. From the perspective of institutionalizing categories, Zanzibar was administered as a distinct “Arab state” prior to unification with Tanzania, and was afforded substantial autonomy at independence. Moreover, until 1971, certain laws, especially marriage laws, were distinct across the two territories. In addition, Zanzibar-mainland conflict has included various bouts of violence and claims for secession. Thus, if one were to identify Zanzibar as an ethnic category, these outcomes would be fully consistent with our theory.

### **Cases of No Ethnic Violence in Low Diversity Countries**

The absence of civil wars in the remaining three states of Lesotho, Botswana, and Swaziland is not surprising from the perspective of virtually any study of ethnic civil war onset because there are no substantial, politically relevant ethnic groups. Yet if we step back from a focus on ethnic groups, it becomes clear that institutions played a key role in ensuring the low salience of ethnicity.

In all three cases, we found substantial and deliberate efforts on the part of the postcolonial state to stamp out ethnic categories subsequent to their independence. Moreover, all three states could have been incorporated into South Africa, but were successfully negotiated as separate entities prior to independence.

Botswana, for example, had been a British protectorate since 1885, and under colonial rule the race category was institutionalized to a moderate degree, though certainly not to the extent in South Africa or Southern Rhodesia, and some deinstitutionalization had begun prior to independence. At independence, the state took a very different path from its neighbor: One scholar notes of the founding president, an African man who married a white, British woman, “President Khama [1966–1980] wanted Botswana’s nonracial policy to serve as an example for other states in the region....Botswana and apartheid South Africa represented antipodes of racial etiquette, with Botswana’s relaxed society offering a welcome alternative, particularly to those South Africans who sought an antidote to apartheid.”<sup>60</sup> A deliberate strategy of blurring ethnic boundaries has helped render all ethnic categories politically irrelevant. While tribal categories have been sometimes recognized in Botswana, this has been done in different ways across different institutions over time, rendering such categories weakly institutionalized.

In Lesotho, which was a British crown colony until 1966, we found no substantial colonial legacy of categorization and this has persisted to the present day. Similarly, in Swaziland, although the census asked questions about ethnicity in 1966 and 1976, this practice was discontinued, as was the asking of religious affiliation, which had been asked between 1956 and 1991.

### **Conclusion**

Our comparative analysis of ethnic conflict in Southern Africa generates several solid conclusions about the determinants of ethnic civil war. First, a diversity of cultural traits is not a very good predictor of violence. While some degree of diversity of ethnic traits may be necessary for ethnic conflict, no other strong patterns exist. Moreover, diversity is often itself a function of state building. Only successfully negotiated instances of partition (Swaziland, Lesotho, and Botswana) emerge as “homogeneous” national states, whereas others (the South African Bantustans) became embroiled in larger ethnic conflicts. Despite substantial religious diversity in Southern Africa, religion has not been a fault line for large-scale violent conflict in the region.

Second, we find substantial support for the Wimmer et al. model, particularly the notion that ethnic-based political competition has an autonomous and substantively important impact on organization and mobilization, particularly in a world of national states where authority claims are made in the name of “peoples.” As they argue, exclusion from political power often leads to rebellion, including attempts at secession.

Third, and most important, we link patterns of political exclusion, and of the political relevance of ethnic categories more generally, to prior institutionalization by the state. Our theory provides additional explanatory power for both positive and negative cases of ethnic civil war. Moreover, it does so without taking for granted the existence of ethnic groups as an exogenous social fact. Not only is this a theoretical advantage given constructivist insights about ethnic politics, but given the enormous ambiguity in classifying which groups exist and are politically relevant, we provide a more tractable and replicable approach. It allows us to focus on observable aspects of historical records, including recurring documents such as census questionnaires. Our theory does not suggest that states create ethnic categories from a *tabula rasa*. We begin from the premise that there must be some degree of trait diversity, and at least informal recognition of ethnic diversity prior to institutionalization. However, we still believe it is appropriate to treat institutionalization as an exogenous variable because, as we observe, states often choose to respond to various levels of ethnic identification and conflict by deinstitutionalizing ethnic categories, and that choice has consequences in the manner we predict. As compared with the extant literature, which treats the existence of politically relevant groups as exogenous, our theory identifies an explanation that is more distal to the outcome under investigation and helps account for the very formation of those groups. Our theory and analyses also provide external validity for laboratory-based findings associated with SIT concerning the potential for violence stemming from intergroup competition.

Some may be skeptical of a study that at first glance appears to be  $N=11$ . We recognize that it has become *de rigeur* for scholars of civil war onset to demonstrate their results with logistic analyses of civil war onsets with a full range of covariates and several thousand country-year observations. It is important, however, to clarify the contributions of this medium- $N$  research. First, these eleven cases represent 360 country-years in the EPR dataset and incorporate many preindependence observations. Second, we complement an essentially correlational analysis with a qualitative assessment of how each case fits various theoretical models, which also allows us to identify and discuss important ambiguities, such as in the Mozambican and Namibian cases. Third, our approach provides a highly transparent conceptual and measurement approach to an explanatory ethnic variable, which ought to be a prerequisite for discussions of the strength of association between variables. Finally, one could also ask whether a region dominated by South Africa, with its patterns of institutionalized racism, makes this region unique? It is important to indicate here that two other world regions with high levels of ethnic civil war, South Asia and the former Soviet Union, are also characterized by behemoths (India and Russia), whose histories of ethnic categorization and nation- and state-building are in many ways comparable in terms of the degree to which the

state became intimately involved in naming and categorizing groups, in turn, creating conflictual cleavages.

Future research should explore whether our model of ethnic violence is a useful representation of the full universe of country cases, and whether the degree of institutionalization *also* affects the provision of public goods and regime stability, outcomes often negatively linked to ethnic diversity. Building on prior case study research highlighting the effects of institutionalizing ethnic categories, this article demonstrates the need to incorporate institutional analyses into comparative scholarship on ethnic politics.

## NOTES

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25. Sambanis.

26. Wimmer, Cederman, and Min, "Ethnic Politics and Armed Conflict: A Configurational Analysis of a New Global Data Set." One exception is the relatively low oil production in the region—only Angola is a major oil exporter. It is also worth noting that there are no "mega-states" with populations greater than 100 million, such as India, China, Nigeria, or Russia/FSU, almost all of which have faced ethnic civil wars. In two sample t-tests, the Southern African region is statistically different from the all-country sample only in terms of ethnolinguistic fractionalization (higher) and per capita income (lower).

27. Fearon and Laitin, p. 84, Table 1, model 2. Data available from James Fearon and David Laitin, <http://www.stanford.edu/group/ethnic/publicdata/publicdata.html>, "Replication Data," accessed November 2008.

28. Wimmer, Cederman, and Min, "Ethnic Politics and Armed Conflict: A Configurational Analysis of a New Global Data Set."

29. Online appendixes are available at [www.institutionalizedethnicity.net](http://www.institutionalizedethnicity.net).

30. Consistent rhetorical use of ethnic categories by state leaders would have a similar effect, but that is beyond the scope of this study.

31. For further discussion, see Evan Lieberman and Prerna Singh, "Conceptualizing and Measuring Ethnic Politics: An Institutional Complement to Demographic, Behavioral, and Cognitive Approaches," *Studies in Comparative International Development (SCID)* 47, no. 3 (2012): 255–86.

32. To be fully transparent about the nature of our findings: substantial portions of the South Africa, Botswana, and Tanzania cases contributed to theory building, while the remaining case analyses can be described as hypothesis-testing.

33. Wimmer, Cederman, and Min, "Ethnic Politics and Armed Conflict: A Configurational Analysis of a New Global Data Set."

34. Daniel Posner, "Measuring Ethnic Fractionalization in Africa," *American Journal of Political Science*, 48 (October 2004): 849–63, supplementary materials provided by author.

35. Deborah Posel, "Race as Common Sense: Racial Classification in Twentieth-Century South Africa," *African Studies Review*, 44 (September 2001): 87–113.

36. In addition, from 1982–1991 a subgroup of the Shona – the Ndaus – are considered excluded.

37. M. Elaine Burgess, "Ethnic Scale and Intensity: The Zimbabwean Experience," *Social Forces* 59 (March 1981): 601–26.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 606.
39. Abiodun Alao, *Brothers at War: Dissidence and Rebellion in Southern Africa* (New York, NY: British Academic Press; In the U.S.A. and Canada distributed by St. Martin's Press, 1994), pp. 113–14.
40. Jeremy Weinstein and Laudemiro Francisco, "The Civil War in Mozambique: The Balance between Internal and External Influences," *Understanding Civil War: Evidence and Analysis. New York and Washington, DC: The World Bank* (2005), p. 163.
41. W. Martin James, Susan Herlin Broadhead, *Historical Dictionary of Angola* (Scarecrow Press, 2004), p. xlv.
42. Linda M. Heywood, *Contested Power in Angola, 1840s to the Present, Rochester Studies in African History and the Diaspora* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2000), p. 94.
43. *Ibid.*, p. xiii.
44. Although we focus on the formal institutionalization of ethnic categories, it is also important to highlight that the *Portuguese* colonial state also frequently used informal rhetoric as well as categorization via administrative boundaries in ways that further strengthened the development of ethnic identities such as that of the Ovimbundu. See, for example, *Ibid.*
45. Thomas Henriksen, "People's War in Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea-Bissau," *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 14 (September 1976), p. 379.
46. Minority Rights Group International, *World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples - Mozambique: Overview*, 2007, <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4954ce46c.html> (accessed July 8, 2010).
47. Karl De Rouen and Uk Heo, *Civil Wars of the World: Major Conflicts since World War II* (Abc-Clio Inc, 2007).
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49. B. O'Laughlin, "Class and the Customary: The Ambiguous Legacy of the Indigenato in Mozambique," *African Affairs*, 99 (2000), p. 9.
50. Thomas Henriksen. *Mozambique: A History* (London, UK: Rex, Collins Ltd., 1978), p. 155.
51. Weinstein, "Mozambique: A Fading UN Success Story," pp. 144–47.
52. Known as Southwest Africa prior to independence.
53. Deborah Kaspin, "The Politics of Ethnicity in Malawi's Democratic Transition," *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 33 (December 1995), p. 598.
54. Posner, *Institutions and Ethnic Politics in Africa*.
55. Leroy Vail, *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa* (London: James Currey, 1989), pp. 165–66.
56. *Ibid.*, p. 182.
57. Richard Carver, *Where Silence Rules: The Suppression of Dissent in Malawi* (USA: Human Rights Watch, 1990), p. 60.
58. Center for International Development and Conflict Management (CIDCM), "Minorities at Risk Dataset," (2009), Lozi group summary.
59. Posner.
60. Richard Dale, "Botswana's Search for Autonomy in Southern Africa," *Contributions in Political Science*, 358 (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1995), p. 6.