

Conciliatory States: Elite Ethno- Demographics and the Puzzle of Public Goods Within Diverse African States

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Abstract

Existing theory associates ethnolinguistic diversity with a host of negative outcomes. This article analyzes the puzzle of Ghana, the 12th most diverse state globally, yet among the most peaceful, democratic, and developed African states. It argues the position of post-independence political elites within ethno-demographic structures helps explain why some diverse African states pursued broad nation-building public goods, mitigating the political salience of diversity. Diversity *encouraged* provision of social goods with broad-based support in states with a modest plurality—not large enough to dominate, but without proximately sized ethnic groups—especially for leaders from a minority. Comparative historical analysis of Ghana is expanded with abbreviated case studies on Guinea, Togo, and Kenya.

Keywords

African politics, ethnic diversity, public goods, political elites

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The 1884 Berlin Conference established Africa's political borders, projecting European interests over little-known geography and peoples. Imposing large, artificial borders without respect to social boundaries produced some of the most ethnically diverse polities in the world (Green, 2012b). As a result, African states dominate the high-end distribution of global cross-national data on ethnolinguistic diversity (e.g., Fearon, 2003). Comparativists should therefore be methodologically and theoretically concerned about getting Africa right. Cross-national research associates ethnolinguistic diversity with myriad negative outcomes: more corruption (Mauro, 1995) and conflict (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004); reduced social trust (Bjørnskov, 2007), redistribution (Dahlberg, Edmark, & Lundqvist, 2012), and public goods (Alesina, Baqir, & Easterly, 1999). Easterly and Levine (1997) famously argued diversity explained African developmental failures. It is therefore striking that their models fail to explain variation *within* the African subsample (Posner, 2004).

Not all African states were doomed by diversity. Ghana is the 12th most diverse country globally (Fearon & Laitin, 2003) yet among the best-governed mainland African countries (World Bank, 2013b). It is arguably the most vibrant African democracy, with several changes of party control through free and fair elections. Ghana has avoided ethnic war and is one of six African countries to never experience anti-government violence (Salehyan et al., 2012). Generalized social trust is among the highest in Africa (Afrobarometer, 2010). Ghanaians are happier with government health services—and fewer report going without needed care—than anywhere in Africa (Afrobarometer, 2010). The Tax services enjoy unparalleled legitimacy (Afrobarometer, 2010). Ghana raises an important question: “Are there conditions under which ethnic heterogeneity leads to *stronger* public goods provision?”

Within Africa, I argue the extent to which ethnicity was politicized was shaped by the initial strategies for ethnicized or public goods provision adopted by the first post-independence African leaders. Those strategies were shaped by political elites' positions within different ethno-demographic structures. Contrasting with prevailing theories, I argue diversity *encouraged* provision of social goods with broad-based support in states with a modest plurality—not large enough to dominate, but without proximately sized ethnic groups—especially for leaders from a minority. Other ethno-demographics encouraged ethnicized goods provision, especially for leaders from plurality groups. Still others encouraged military spending over public goods, especially where the president's ethnicity faced another similarly sized group.

States providing significant public goods on a broad basis acted as “conciliatory states.” Conciliatory states leveraged national public goods

programs, integrating diverse groups and mitigating the political salience of ethnicity, *producing the most stable, peaceful states in Africa*. Conciliatory states blend assimilation and accommodation (Introduction, in press). Like assimilation, conciliatory states attempted to provide public goods without regard to ethnicity, but—unlike assimilation—without enforcing conformity with a “titular ethnic group.” Like accommodation, conciliatory states recognize ethnic differences, acting cautiously to avoid overt favoritism, but unlike accommodation, pursue national public goods provision. Conciliatory states thereby circumvent “institutionalizing ethnic categories in social services and public infrastructure,” which reifies ethnicity’s salience as a basis for political claims in accommodationist regimes.

This piece is intentionally agnostic about particular public goods policy content. It doesn’t debate optimal developmental policies nor whether education better enabled national identification than health or infrastructural goods. Rather, it argues that during the critical independence period, provision of public goods—without visible ethnic preference—cleaved the populace to the project of stateness itself, legitimating the state, minimizing ethnicity in political claims-making, and cultivating citizens’ willingness to contribute.

Neither colonialism nor pre-colonial state centralization explains the Ghanaian puzzle. Despite different colonizers, Anglophone Ghana and Francophone Senegal are more similar than Kenya and Togo who had, respectively, the same colonizers. Other work suggests pre-colonial state centralization explains contemporary public goods patterns (Gennaioli & Rainer, 2007). Yet Ghana’s pre-colonial centralization is near the African median—quite similar to Senegal, Togo, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DR Congo), and Angola. Given Ghana’s middling position and similarity to states with widely divergent state capacity and public goods outcomes, pre-colonial state strength remains an insufficient explanation for Ghana.

Departing from pre-colonial or colonial explanations, I join scholars arguing independence was pivotal, affording opportunities for diverging pathways (Allen, 1995; Lange, 2009). The independence era was key for convincing the populace of the project of statehood: that a formal administration could provide goods enhancing quality of life. Public goods were a culturally potent symbol, distancing new states from coercive colonial practices. Optimism about statehood pervaded this period, leading states to engage in the longer term gamble of public goods provision. Many independence-era leaders in tenuous democracies believed that rapid, expansive, public goods delivery was possible, and would safeguard their power.

Independence established the “rules of the game” of political administration, including what independent states could do in the minds of the populace, garnering loyalty and legitimacy or disappointment and disengagement.

Independence afforded a latent opportunity—varying in its actualization—to redefine ethnic cleavages variously reified by colonization. States delivering valued *public* goods—distributed broadly even if none were perfectly egalitarian—cleaved the population to the statehood project, mitigated ethnicity’s political salience, and established greater willingness to participate in the fiscal contract. States’ distributing collective resources openly as ethnic patronage also had enduring legacies. Independence-era leaders established whether ethnolinguistic differences would be divisive in post-independence politics, partially structuring opportunities available to subsequent wielders of state power.

To simplify, I focus on cases with significant state revenues from non-lootable resource structures, setting aside debates about the effect of resource opportunity structures (Ross, 2006; Snyder & Bhavnani, 2005). This examines the less-frequently addressed question of why some peaceful, relatively well-resourced African states engaged in public goods provision, while others did not, omitting cases where lootable resources predominate—for example, Angola—or those severely lacking revenue opportunities—for example, Niger. States dominated by lootables—high value, easily extractable, portable resources like alluvial diamonds—had difficulties capturing revenue and were vulnerable to insurgents activating ethnicity for rebellion (Snyder & Bhavnani, 2005), resulting in a cycle of diminished public goods, diminished state capacity, and increasing ethnic salience. Resource-starved states, like Niger, could not engage in substantial public goods spending, resulting in enduring public indifference to the state.

Below, I propose modifications to how diversity is operationalized, supplanting ethnolinguistic fractionalization (ELF) with a proportional framework of ethno-demographic opportunity structures, which captures legible social facts influencing elite actors’ strategies. Then, I analyze Ghana’s ethno-demographic opportunity structures, demonstrating how foundational mechanics of state capacity and public goods establish identification patterns that mitigate ethnic political salience. Finally, I compare Ghana with abbreviated case studies of Togo, Guinea, and Kenya—illustrating how this approach explains a range of differing outcomes.

Rethinking Diversity and Public Goods

As mentioned earlier, cross-national research associates ethnolinguistic diversity with negative outcomes; in particular, scholars argue diversity causes suboptimal public goods provision (Alesina & Ferrara, 2000; Dahlberg et al., 2012; Desmet, Ortuño-Ortín, & Weber, 2009). Research identified several mechanisms through which ethnic heterogeneity negatively affects

public goods provision, namely, ethnic egoism and inter-ethnic animus (Alesina et al., 1999; Poterba, 1997), divergent preferences (Habyarimana, Humphreys, Posner, & Weinstein, 2007), and collective action failures (Alesina & Ferrara, 2000; Miguel & Gugerty, 2005). Yet these mechanisms, like ELF, capture citizens' face-to-face interactions in community settings and poorly reflect the motivations of national political elites.

Some argue diversity's negative effects are greatest in states with mid-range diversity where a sizable minority confronts a modest-sized majority (Caselli & Coleman, 2006; Horowitz, 1985; Montalvo & Reynal-Querol, 2005), operationalized as 45% to 90% of the population (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004). Scholars posit such groups are unable to dominate nor forced to compromise, thus open to challenges from the sizable minority. In Africa, the population share of the largest ethnic group ranges from 99.7% for the Sotho of Lesotho to 17% for the Baganda of Uganda (*CIA World Factbook 2013-14*, 2013). In a third of African countries, the largest ethnicity falls into the high-risk mid-range. However, that clustering combines peaceable developmental successes (Ghana and Botswana) with conflict-torn failed states (Zimbabwe and Somalia), suggesting it is eliding relevant variation among mid-range cases.

Mauro's (1995) influential use of ELF asserted its value precisely because "it can be assumed to be exogenous both to economic variables and to institutional efficiency" (p. 683). Yet this contradicts the long-recognized constructionist nature of ethnicity (Barth, 1969), whereby "ethnic groups are now recognized to be social constructions with histories of expansion and contraction, amalgamation and division" (Posner, 2004, p. 850). For example, urbanization may encourage shifting ethnic allegiances as urban migrants identify with a group large enough to provide protection and social capital in unfamiliar urban areas (Wallerstein, 1960). Urbanization positively correlates with greater national than ethnic identification (Green, 2012a; Robinson, 2009).

The assumption that ethnicity is exogenous to state capacity has come under scrutiny. Wimmer (in press) argues ethnic diversity "should be viewed as the consequence of the history of state-formation and nation-building that at the same time shapes contemporary capacity to provide public goods." Bates (1974) similarly articulates the link between the persistence of ethnic salience and state capacity—through provision of ethnicized "club" goods: "Ethnic groups persist largely because of their capacity to extract goods and services from the modern sector and thereby satisfy the demands of their members for the components of modernity" (p. 471). Laitin and Posner (2001) acknowledge ethnicity as endogenous to state capacity and public goods provision, specifically that political stability and economic prosperity may occasion high rates of assimilation; conversely, state collapse (e.g., Somalia) may

motivate assertions of linguistic differentiation as a basis for claims to political autonomy. Failing to provide public goods—important incentives for citizens’ support—leaves leaders with no recourse other than ethnic appeals: “Unable to deliver the goods . . . successive Nigerian regimes have turned to political solutions; manipulating cultural and primordial loyalties to divert attention from the real issues” (Ake, 1981, as quoted in Rothchild & Chazan, 1988, p. 235). Thereby, ethnicity’s political relevancy reflects party or government “success in preventing or weakening ethnolinguistic mobilisation” (Poteete, 2009, p. 557).

Scholars increasingly agree that what matters is not diversity per se, but whether diversity is *politicized* such that ethnic difference maps differences in political inclusion, economic dominance, or social status (Baldwin & Huber, 2010; Østby, 2008; Stewart, 2008; Wimmer, Cederman, & Min, 2009). Conversely, where high ethnic diversity is coupled with low inter-regional inequalities, stability and nation-building are more likely to succeed (Green, 2011). These recent analyses substantiate arguments suggested in earlier case studies (Bates, 1974; Olzak, 1983). Econometric analyses based on localities within the United States—a ranked racial hierarchical system—find within-group socioeconomic variation increases support for welfare spending, whereas between-group variation decreases it (Lind, 2007). In Africa, wealth disparities between ethnic groups may similarly lead to divergent policy preferences (Lieberman & McClendon, 2012).

The mounting consensus that politicizing ethnicity is of central concern is consonant with the newest wave of Africanist scholarship on diversity, which emphasizes the importance of “political settlements” (Abdulai & Hulme, 2015; Hirvi & Whitfield, 2015) or “elite bargains” (Lindemann, 2011a), the extent to which different groups are incorporated into positions of state power. Proponents argue political settlements are important because power relationships determine which interests shape policy and institutions (Abdulai & Hulme, 2015), which are critical for development (e.g., Acemoglu, Johnson, & Robinson, 2000). Political settlements draw attention to the action of and relations among political elites—focusing not on diversity alone but also on the *political management of ethnic differences*. Some elites have sought political stability through ethnic balancing within inclusive ruling coalitions (Poteete, 2009), a “grand coalition” beyond the electoral calculus of a minimum winning coalition, which may “be sufficient to overcome adversarial politics” (Rothchild & Chazan, 1988, p. 238). For example, Lindemann makes the case that the inclusive ethnic balance of cabinet-level posts in Zambia (2011a) led to more stability than in less-inclusive Uganda (2011b). Excluded non-state elites could also politicize ethnicity: Allen (1995) observes a “clientalist crisis” whereby those excluded from

pre-independence transition governments “tried to avoid permanent exclusion by exploiting communal divisions” (p. 304).

Rethinking ELF

Many studies of the effects of ethnic diversity utilize the ELF index, based on the *Atlas Narodov Mira* (1964). Calculated using a Herfindahl concentration index, it is “the probability that two randomly drawn individuals in a country are from different ethnolinguistic groups” (Fearon & Laitin, 2003, p. 78). Though often criticized, ELF continues to be widely used; the typical justification for its continued use is its popularity.

Some critique how to operationalize groups—language, race, religion—including whether to apply cross-nationally static criteria or inductive nationally variant criteria (Alesina, Devleeschauwer, Easterly, Kurlat, & Wacziarg, 2003; Fearon, 2003; Scarritt & Mozaffar, 1999; Vanhanen, 1999). Fearon (2003) acknowledges, coding ethnic groups is subject to “all manner of borderline-arbitrary decisions” (p. 197). Scholars have proposed numerous modifications, utilizing the fractionalization calculation but only accounting for “politically relevant ethnic groups” (Posner, 2004) or the cultural distance between groups using the structural distance between languages as a proxy (Fearon, 2003).

ELF is also sensitive to how *many* groups are present, invoking what Posner (2004) characterizes as a “grouping problem” whereby ethnicities are collapsed into larger “umbrella categories.” This is problematic when groups would be locally categorized as distinct, especially due to rivalry, including the Hutu and Tutsi of Rwanda and Burundi who were grouped together by conventional ELF measurements.

Crucially, fractionalization indices obscure vastly different variations in relative group sizes under similar scores (Bangura, 2006; Posner, 2004). For example, Ghana and Kenya have ELF scores of .868 and .883, respectively (Roeder, 2001). However, Kenya has many small groups—the largest only 22% of the population—whereas in Ghana, the Akans are 47% and the second-largest only 16.6% (*CIA World Factbook 2013-14*, 2013). Posner (2004) acknowledges, “the dynamics of the inter-group competition in each country would almost certainly be different” and if theory depends “on the nature of the political competition among ethnic communities, as most do, then adopting a formula that codes these countries as equivalent is problematic” (p. 851).

ELF is further criticized because the concentration formula implies an individual rather than group mechanism, better suited to explain the spontaneous emergence of ethnic riots than many of the social-level outcomes

to which it is applied (Cederman & Girardin, 2007; Esteban & Ray, 1994; Østby, 2008). ELF approximates neither the lived experiences of elites nor citizens: Given homophily and residential segregation, who people meet on the street is not a random countrywide representative sample. Some have found locale-specific ELF a predictor of *locally* provided public goods, dependent on small group social interaction in French housing complexes (Algan, Hémet, & Laitin, 2011) or Kenyan villages (Miguel, 2004). However, ELF may be less relevant to *national-level* public goods provision, which does not depend on interpersonal social sanctioning or voluntary contributions.

Group Size Approaches

In contrast to individualist fractionalization indices, some argue attention to absolute or relative group sizes better suits collective outcomes. Group-size measures often have stronger predictive values, even on classic ELF outcomes (Easterly & Levine, 1997). Within sociology, attention to group sizes traces roots to Simmel (1955/2010) and Coser (1956), with a long tradition in conflict or competition theory in social-psychology. Relative or absolute population measures gained popularity among political scientists and sociologists, particularly for analysis of ethnic civil war or conflict (Cederman, Girardin, & Gleditsch, 2009; Hegre, 2001; Østby, 2008; Strand & Urdal, 2014; Toft, 2007; Vanhanen, 1999). Many emphasize whether groups are similarly sized (Ellingsen, 2000; Horowitz, 1985; Jenkins & Kposowa, 1992). Game theorists argue relative size explains why some group structures exacerbate or mitigate ethnic conflict (Esteban & Ray, 1994; Rohner, 2011). Polarization indices incorporate relative group sizes: The popular Reynal-Querol (RQ) index measures how far ethnic group distribution is from perfect bipolarity of two groups with 50% population shares (Montalvo & Reynal-Querol, 2005).

However, fractionalization and polarization indices have flaws where state power matters, because both assume symmetric relations, yielding the same scores regardless of which groups are in power or excluded (Cederman & Girardin, 2007). Advances in measuring diversity attempt to account for the size of empowered and excluded groups. Cederman and Girardin (2007) take a state-centric relational approach to ethnic groups in power—operationalized through positions in senior government. Wimmer et al. (2009) attend to the size of minorities excluded from state power. Both measures advance the inclusion of state power in analyses but do not reveal the underlying logics of why cross-ethnic politically inclusive coalitions emerge in some states but not others.

Situating Elites in Ethno-Demographic Opportunity Structures

Census taking renders group sizes legible (in a way that ELF is not), affecting elites' political calculus of risk and reward. Understanding how diversity structures elites' incentives is crucial in the African post-independence period, wherein heads-of-state imposed public goods programs, believing these policies would transform their agrarian backwaters from poverty into modernity (Meredith, 2005). Therefore—and coherent with contemporary Africanist scholarship asserting the importance of elite action—situating elites within attention to relative group sizes is more theoretically appropriate. Scholars recognize ethnicity as socially constructed and malleable over time, yet much like glass whose scientific status as a colloidal liquid is only evident over time, lay users reasonably treat it as solid and fixed for the short term. Census taking compresses information about the social landscape into numerical representations that inform shared understanding, temporarily freezing fluidity to constitute social facts to which elites orient strategies.

Relative group sizes are strategic social facts that orient elite political action not merely through mobilization but also the latent potential (or threat) of changing the dynamics of relative group size through agglomeration of small subgroups. Methodologically, quantitative indices must operationalize consistent rules to compress social reality. An index must confront Posner's umbrella problem, categorizing Akans as one large or multiple smaller ethnic groups. However, people on the ground confront the messy lived reality of multiple potential categorizations. Sometimes, those multiple viable categorizations are politically significant in their fluidity, their latent potential. Though all identifications are fluid, in practice, groups vary in the extent to which subgroups have perceived commonalities upon which they might forge shared identity (Horowitz, 1985). Therefore, the presence of a credible but unconsolidated umbrella group may provide demographic incentives for other groups to forge cross-ethnic coalitions, as we shall see in Ghana.

Ethno-Demographic Structures

Efforts to modify ELF by examining *politically relevant* ethnicity (Posner, 2004; Wimmer et al., 2009) raise the question of why ethnolinguistic divisions become politicized in some diverse states but not others. I argue some leaders occupied ethno-demographic structures that made ethnicized goods provision politically attractive, sharpening the political salience of ethnicity. Others occupied ethno-demographic structures that made cross-ethnic, national, public goods provision politically attractive.

Table 1. Ethno-Demographic Categories.

| Category | Dominant majority | Modest plurality | Slim plurality | Micropluralities |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| Category coding: Largest ethnicity population share | ≥80% | 30%-55% | 30%-55% | ≤27% |
| Category coding: Difference in population shares, largest second | ≥68% (Mean 75%) | 20%-41% (Mean 28%) | ≤15% (Mean 10%) | ≤15% (Mean 8%) |
| N ^a | 8 | 11 | 10 | 9 |
| Cases | Botswana Burundi Equatorial Guinea Lesotho Rwanda Somalia Swaziland Zimbabwe | Benin Burkina Faso Congo Cote d'Ivoire Gambia Ghana Mali Namibia Niger Senegal Togo | Angola Cameroon Central African Republic Ethiopia ^b Gabon Guinea Guinea-Bissau Malawi Nigeria Sierra Leone | Chad DR Congo Kenya Liberia Mozambique South Africa Tanzania Uganda Zambia |
| ELF 1961 average ^c | .344 | .750 | .789 | .855 |
| ELF 1961 minimum ^c | .077 | .618 | .620 | .655 |
| ELF 1961 maximum ^c | .544 | .898 | .894 | .909 |

Included case studies in bold. DR Congo = Democratic Republic of the Congo; ELF = ethnolinguistic fractionalization.

a. Note on cases: Mainland sub-Saharan states, excluding islands because many were uninhabited prior to colonial contact and have vastly different ethnic politics. Sudan is excluded because of a lack of reliable pre-partition sources of ethnic/tribal affiliations and widely varying opinions among case experts on how tribal groups should be categorized that would be consequential for coding it into an ethno-demographic category. b. Based on pre-partition demographics. c. Roeder (2001).

Drawing on the insight that pluralities of different sizes confront different risks, and informed by attention to relative group sizes, I develop a typology of African states according to the size and relative difference of the first- and second-largest ethnicities (Table 1). Inductive categorization of clusters in ethnic demographics yields four categories: micropluralities, dominant majorities, slim pluralities, and modest pluralities. Unlike Collier and Hoeffler's (2004) operationalization, I differentiate states with true "majorities" (greater than 80% population share) from those with pluralities (less than 55%).¹ Building on insights about the effects of closely sized groups, I further differentiate between mid-range states in which the ethnic plurality is matched by proximately sized minority groups ("slim pluralities"), and those wherein the plurality is considerably larger than others ("modest pluralities").

Predictably, the average ELF scores are highest for micropluralities and lowest for dominant majority states. But substantial overlap exists across the three non-dominant categories on which this analysis will focus (Table 1).

In mid-range cases, elites evaluate the costs and benefits of activating (or mitigating) ethnicity as a source of mobilization. Absolute and relative group sizes are important considerations. State and non-state actors are theoretically more likely to mobilize ethnicity politically where the difference in size between the largest and second-largest ethnic group is slight, because both fear the other will do so, and winning a contest of power is demographically credible. Conversely, combining insights from group size and state-centric approaches, I argue state actors have the greatest incentives to depoliticize ethnicity where the largest ethnic group is modestly sized but significantly larger than the second-largest group, particularly where key political elites are from demographically minor ethnicities. Where the state actors are incentivized to minimize ethnicity, they may pursue broad public goods provision, contingent on their resources.

Post-colonial independence created a power vacuum at a time when advanced education was exceedingly rare. This, together with colonials as a unifying enemy, enabled elites even from small minorities to come to power without necessitating bargaining for support based on pre-existing social networks of affiliation. Political power structures were unusually open at the time of independence, and the rules of the game had yet to be established—the political culture was “unsettled” (Swidler, 1986)—so the influence of ethno-demographics was both heightened and easier to parse.

I do not argue that ethno-demographics alone are sufficient to explain contemporary trajectories or all subsequent political changes; there are certainly other important international, national, and subnational mechanisms that contribute to the complex and fluid relationship of ethnic diversity and state capacity, including public goods.² Rather, I argue scholarship has failed to appreciate how elite positions within ethno-demographic structures at independence afforded a set of opportunities or challenges that partly shaped public expectations and how elites approached political coalitions, which created some path-dependent-style feedback loops for future political action. Attention to ethno-demographic structures may be fruitfully combined with existing partial explanations of outcomes to forge an understanding with greater explanatory power. For example, it may be reasonable to explore the extent to which elites read ethno-demographic opportunities through the lens of available institutions, ideologies, or leadership vision that made certain kinds of political ideas more available or attractive, and conversely, others less attractive or politically palatable.

Enduring Legacies?

Independence-era decisions about public vs. ethnicized goods affected public expectations and coalition partners and thereby strongly influenced - though did not singly determine - whether ethnicity would be politicized. Ethno-demographic opportunity structures during “unsettled” periods like independence prefigure particular kinds of political settlements, including active political management of ethnic difference and inclusive coalition-building. Coalitions arguments are vulnerable to being “just so” explanations, only possible in retrospect. Attention to ethno-demographic structures helps specify the conditions under which cross-ethnic coalitions may form. Whether a contemporary leader considers it prudent to share power inclusively among military officer corps depends on past understanding of whether and how the military constituted a threat to their power, which might also depend on historically informed sense of whether particular identity groups were a threat. Even without particular memories of threatening past events, elites’ understanding of population shares potentially mobilized by ethnic affiliation *structured the plausibility* of establishing a more or less-inclusive coalition.

Once established, public expectations around appropriate treatment of state largesse along ethnic lines are a form of institution—a “rule of the game” of politics—which can influence political coalitions and constrain the speed and directionality of future changes, though not foreclose possibility of change. Inclusionary politics often prove “sticky,” being adopted by subsequent parties even after regime change, although changes are possible (Poteete, 2009). Conversely, exclusionary politics have an enduring institutional legacy as well:

Regimes based on an exclusionary elite bargain lack an “encompassing interest” in society and therefore resemble Mancur Olson’s “roving bandit,” who prefers predation and consumption over public goods provision and productive investment—a constellation that is prone to economic decline. (Lindemann, 2011a, p. 1846)

Even where past political conditions enhance the availability of particular political ideas and actions, future change is possible (Poteete, 2009). Connecting ethno-demographics to coalition formation provides a dynamism for explaining change over time; as the policy outcomes that first forged coalitions come to fruition, they may occasion structural changes that align new interest groups or drive a wedge between former coalition members (Poteete, 2009).

Ghanaian Case

By conventional explanations, Ghana's independence-era conditions should make a perfect storm for politicized ethnicity and conflict: Its predominant ethnic group, Akans, were nearly half of the population (43.0%). However, they dwarfed the next-largest groups, the Ewe (12.5%), Mole-Dagbani (8.0%), Ga-Adangme (6.6%; Gold Coast, 1948). This asymmetrical distribution of ethnic group sizes—together with the position of key post-independence political actors—provided motivation for expansive public goods provision during the independence era, cultivating a legacy of depoliticized ethnicity and an orientation to the state as a source of valued public goods provision.

Background

In 1957, through non-violent mobilization, Ghana became the first formerly colonized, sub-Saharan African independent state. European slaving and trading from the 1400s culminated in British colonial administration of coastal areas in 1867. Britain finally consolidated control over the majority of territory comprising modern Ghana in 1901, claiming the Ashanti region and Northern Territories. British Togoland became a protectorate in 1922 and then part of the colony on the eve of independence in 1956 (Bourret, 1952).

Few would claim colonialism in Africa was developmental. However, British colonialism in Ghana was relatively less harmful than other African colonialisms. Colonial infrastructure pragmatically favored the coast, which was ethnically diverse; therefore, no particular ethnicity was singularly advantaged. Ghana entered self-governance without the population predisposed to believing the machinery of the state would (or should) be used to advantage particular groups. Second, Ghana's early 20th-century colonialism—especially Guggisberg's governorship (1919-1927)—may have been the most developmentally advantageous in Africa (Agbodeka, 1972; Bourret, 1952). Guggisberg created the first modern integrated development plan in the world—arguably the most ambitious development plan ever tried in colonial Africa—completing goals ahead of schedule and under budget. Guggisberg oversaw substantial public goods development, constructing Korle Bu Hospital (then the finest in Africa), opening the first college, expanding public schools, regulating private school quality, while expanding roads, rail, and harbors. During the Guggisberg era, colonial development expenditure averaged 46.5% of adjusted current expenditures; the year before Guggisberg's appointment, it was only 15.3% (Sederberg, 1971).

Demographic Opportunity Structures

State actors. Through both intent and fortuitous accident, the independence movement bequeathed to Ghana an inheritance of relative cooperation across ethnic groups. Based on ideas and bonds fomented while students abroad, the “Big Six” founding fathers of modern Ghana led the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC) to agitate for self-governance. Most (Ako-Adjei, Ofori Atta, Akufo-Addo, Danquah) were from Akyem (3.2% population share), an Akan subgroup; Obetsebi-Lampitey was a Ga of the Ga-Adangmes, 3.6% and 6.6%, respectively (Gold Coast, 1948). Almost by accident, Nkrumah, a member of the tiny Nzema (1.7%) Akan subgroup, joined the Big Six. An anonymous source present in Britain when the Big Six began planning recounted to [Author] that the group had provisionally selected another as leader, but realized Nkrumah’s charisma could be indispensable, appealing to the masses in what had been an elite movement. This instinct proved correct: Nkrumah galvanized the population, elected Ghana’s first Prime Minister.

In 1949, Nkrumah separately formed the Convention People’s Party (CPP). Political schisms between the UGCC and CPP formed primarily on class lines, with Nkrumah’s CPP, the populist party, representing labor and rural interests, while UGCC was associated with business, professional, and educated elites. Political contestation became tangled in “cross-cutting cleavages” (Dunning & Harrison, 2010) of urban/rural, business/labor, elite/populist. Such “crisscrossing within such societies of conflicts, which serve to ‘sew the social system together’ by canceling each other out, thus prevent disintegration along the primary line of cleavage” (Coser, 1956, p. 80). Neither party’s leadership was demographically nor ideologically inclined to invoke ethnic mobilization. It was not in their political self-interest to mobilize political support along ethnic lines because none could marshal a significant proportion of the population based on appeals to ethnic solidarity. Moreover Nkrumah—an outspoken advocate for pan-Africanism—was ideologically inclined to mute ethnic distinctions in favor of national and pan-African identification, cultivating crosscutting class-based constituencies.

Before the first vote for internal self-government, Nkrumah curried favor among varied groups, traveling the countryside organizing youth, appealing to women and non-landholders with the idea of universal suffrage, and banding together farmers and laborers. In public, Nkrumah conspicuously embodied “one Ghana,” appearing in traditional dress from various regions. Nkrumah’s broad support enabled his party to weather a failed federalist attempt to undermine centralized state power in the name of Asante nationalism (Allman, 1993), further underscoring for him the importance of forging cross-ethnic coalitions for political stability.

Ghanaian non-state actors. One might wonder why Akans allowed leaders to pursue an inclusive nation-building project, rather than leverage their plurality position for preferential ethnic-based distribution. Before independence, Akan non-state actors attempted to mobilize ethnicity through the party system. Commitment to party competition rather than violent conflict occurred partly because Ghana's non-violent path to independence from Britain had not militarized ethnic groups. Actors attempting to mobilize ethnicity were thwarted by Nkrumah's pan-ethnic popularity, divides within Akan-speaking groups, and fears of Asante domination.

When Nkrumah's party won the vote to form the first self-government, Asante youth called for an Asante state, independent from Ghana but within the British Commonwealth, which failed for several reasons. First, economic interests cut across Akan ethnicities, and historical animosities among Akans undermined the capacity for cohesive action. Although enumerated as a single linguistic group, Akans are comprised of 19 subgroups with geographic distributions, historical animosities, and linguistic distinctions that hindered collective action, especially between the two largest subgroups, the Asantes and Fantes.³ The pre-colonial, expansionist, Akan Asante empire subjugated most of the surrounding groups before European contact. Coastal Fante Akans colluded with the British, attempting to exchange Asante political vassalage for an advantaged position mediating trade between the interior and White merchants (Gyimah-Boadi & Asante, 2006). Fantes resented Asante dominion, and Asantes resented Fante political and trade interference. Asantes comprise only 15% of the population, insufficient to coerce without institutional capture of the military (e.g., Tutsi in Burundi).

Second, the Asante movement was divided between radical youth and conservative moderates. These movement wings worked in uncomfortable accommodation while moving toward Ghanaian independence, when aspirations had not yet faced compromise. As successive failures in nationwide balloting limited conservatives' aspirations, youth radicalized toward Asante secession (Allman, 1993). In November 1956, the Northern People's Party (NPP) and National Liberation Movement (NLM), Akan-affiliated parties, petitioned the colonial secretary of state for a "separate independence for Ashanti and the Northern Territories," accompanied by earnest preparation for separate Asante independence. Britain replied definitively: They would not grant separate Asante independence. Conservative Asantes were unwilling to face opposition from Nkrumah's Ghana *and* the British. Established Asante leadership—including the paramount chief—retreated from secessionist rhetoric, seeking smaller compromises from Nkrumah to pacify the rank and file (Allman, 1993).

Therefore, though the *average* pre-colonial state centralization in Ghana is near the African average (Gennaioli & Rainer, 2007), the relatively high Asante pre-colonial centralization may have been *indirectly* responsible for the relatively centralized state authority in Ghana, but not as the direct foundation for Ghana's state. Rather, centralization of traditional authority allowed the Asante paramount chief, together with the movement's conservative wing, to curb the radical youth. The federalist movement in Ghana was tied to the Asante nationalist movement under the NLM platform, reducing the popularity of the federalism proposal among non-Asantes. The result was a more centralized state than, for example, Nigeria. Power consolidated in the central state made it possible for affiliative responses to public goods provision to accrue to the nation-state, transcending ethnic divisions, rather than at a regional level coterminous with ethnic boundaries.

Ghana's Conciliatory State: Public Goods

Nkrumah's public goods plans were ambitious, though understandably so given Guggisberg's recent successes and the unparalleled general independence-era optimism. Though hindsight might condemn some choices, there is no evidence that Nkrumah knew in advance his plans would fail or be harmful. Statements and archives indicate that as head-of-state, Nkrumah sincerely attempted to broaden public goods and construct a unified equitable Ghana. Nkrumah's development plans espoused a pan-ethnic orientation, committing to a "state which accepts full responsibility for promoting the well-being of the masses" (Nkrumah, 1964). His public goods approach sought to offset prior disparities, strategically framed as geographic (not ethnic) differences:

The development of Ghana has hitherto not been sufficiently balanced between different parts of the country. It is the deliberate policy of this Plan to correct this imbalance . . . a special effort has to be made in order to ensure that the rate of progress in the less favoured parts of the country is even greater than the rate of progress in those sections which have hitherto been more favoured. It is only by this means that we can achieve a more harmonious national development. (Nkrumah, 1964)

Nkrumah oversaw vast and varied publicly visible public goods developments, down payments on his promise to bring modernity to Ghana; of these health, industry, roads, electricity, and education deserve particular attention. When most post-independence countries were rapidly losing their scant medical expertise, Ghana was both among the best in Africa in doctors per capita and among the most improved between 1960 and 1965 (World Bank, 2013a),

thanks mostly to government training and retention programs. Though state-owned-enterprises are not often thought of as public goods, “modern” jobs were a social good post-independence citizens desired, and almost exclusively available through public sector employment—central to the politics of patronage in many African countries. As of 1965, there were 31 state-owned enterprises in Ghana manufacturing furniture, tires, textiles, bricks, and value-added agricultural products. Nkrumah established sugar processing factories at Komenda (Central Region) and Asutuare (Greater Accra). Fifty years later, the Komenda factory remained only a hulking industrial shell. Old men mending nets in this now-impoverished fishing village recall halcyon days of formal employment and hope of participating as an industrial force in global markets. Bringing factories with all the trappings of modernity to far-flung poor villages was a visible sign of providing the public with valued opportunities.

Nkrumah’s Ghana had impressive improvement in road density and high absolute road density (relative to available African data). Roads are a foundational infrastructural good enabling delivery of other public goods, such as medical supplies. By 1963, only three African states had higher density, and only Zimbabwe had greater absolute improvement in density between 1950 and 1963, approximating Nkrumah’s regime (Herbst, 2000). By the end of Nkrumah’s rule, most areas in every region were served by one or more of the highest quality paved road.

Arguably Nkrumah’s greatest enduring public goods legacy is the Akosombo hydroelectric dam. Ghana’s power was entirely hydroelectric until the late 1990s, and Akosombo still accounts for more than a third of Ghana’s power (Volta River Authority, 2014). Construction began in 1961. Shortly after completion, transmission lines electrified manufacturing areas and main urban residential centers (Volta River Authority, 1969). The plant provided 91.4 megawatt (MW)/million people in 1969; only three other African countries then produced more electricity for consumer use. Recent average electrical capacity in Africa is only 70 MW/million (Yepes, Pierce, & Foster, 2009).

From 1951, Nkrumah rapidly expanded the educational system until 1966, when education expenditure was nearly a third of adjusted current expenditure (Sederberg, 1971). The 1951 Accelerated Development Plan for Education abolished primary school fees, provided rapid infrastructure expansion, and teacher training. By 1961, primary and middle-school education were fee-free and compulsory. Rising cocoa prices enabled the Cocoa Marketing Board (CMB) to endow a Ghana Educational Trust (GET), which committed to paying 95% to 100% of primary teachers’ salaries (McWilliam & Kwamena-Poh, 1975).

The number of primary schools increased nearly eightfold. By 1966, there were 8,144 primary schools serving over a million children. Secondary school expansion was even greater: from only 13 secondary schools in 1951 (Akyeampong, 2010) to 105 accommodating 42,000 pupils by 1966, including many funded by the Cocoa Marketing Board's GET (McWilliam & Kwamena-Poh 1975). Nkrumah opened 61 teacher-training programs with enrollment above 15,000, a new university, and raised total university enrollment from 208 in 1951 to 4,291 by 1966 (Akyeampong, 2010). Education also included aggressive expansion of library services described as "second to none in the whole of the continent," including branches and traveling book-vans to reach remote areas, with an annual circulation of 700,000 books (McWilliam & Kwamena-Poh, 1975, p. 88).

Post-independence Ghana provided education as a public good throughout the country. Because the South had higher inherited colonial and missionary schooling infrastructure, Nkrumah committed a disproportionate amount of new building projects and waived textbook and secondary-education fees in the North to reduce inequalities (McWilliam & Kwamena-Poh, 1975).

Moreover, *how* Ghana provided education had enduring consequences for inter-ethnic cooperation by encouraging marriage across ethnic lines, blurring ethnic boundaries and solidarities. Nkrumah advocated posting teachers and boarding secondary school students outside of their home region, which, together with national universities, put young people into diverse groupings precisely at the time of dating and mate selection. The Education Act of 1961 obligated schools to serve diverse student bodies, forbidding exclusion from any school on the basis of religion or "race or language of himself or of either of his parents" (McWilliam & Kwamena-Poh, 1975, p. 100). Ghanaian inter-marriage rates are relatively high, accounting for nearly one in five marriages (Horowitz, 1985). Comparatively, even in urban Uganda, cross-ethnic marriages were only 8.2% (Horowitz, 1985).

From 1955 to 1966, school was conducted entirely in English (Owu-Ewie, 2006). English remains the only official state language. Twi—the dialect spoken by Asantes—might be a logical choice: As a lingua franca, it is spoken by many as a second language. However, such proposals typically meet with concerns that this would give the plurality Akans disproportionate influence. There is an enduring concern about elevating particular languages above others. The Minister of Education noted, "Only five [indigenous languages] have material developed on them. Certainly, we cannot impose these five languages on the entire nation and people of other ethnic origins" (Owu-Ewie, 2006). Maintaining English buttresses national unity, reminding Ghanaians of their shared position vis-à-vis colonialism and circumventing the precarious risk of elevating one ethnic language.

Funding the Conciliatory State

Circa independence, cocoa was Ghana's chief export and primary source of revenue. Independence-era diamonds and hardwoods accounted for US\$54 million in exports, dwarfed by cocoa at US\$187 million (UN Comtrade, 1962). Ghana inherited a Cocoa Marketing Board (CMB) for purchasing cocoa from dispersed, unorganized peasant farmers, providing the fledgling Ghanaian state significant tax revenues (Bates, 1981).

Cocoa taxation has long been a lucrative but politically divisive issue. Ostensibly to protect farmers from world market price fluctuations, the CMB instead became a vehicle for quasi-taxation of cocoa by appropriating the difference between world market rates and lower farmer prices (Bates, 1981). In 1949, cocoa producers received 89% of the world market price; by 1983, they received only 3% (Easterly & Levine, 1997). Though CMB's pricing eventually proved economically disastrous for the cocoa sector, in the short term, it was indisputably lucrative and politically advantageous for the state.

Easterly and Levine characterize Ghana as "an illustrative example" of economic stagnation and adverse policies due to "interethnic struggle over rents" between coastal Akans and Asantes—whom they neglect to mention are also linguistically Akan (Easterly & Levine, 1997). By conventional ethnolinguistic definitions, Ghanaian cocoa rents were an *intra*-ethnic dispute. The language is frequently called Fanti-Twi outside of Ghana, and as a speaker of both, I can report that aurally, Fante and Asante dialects are mutually intelligible, sounding like different accented inflections with a few distinct words—similar to American southern English. Akans have significant externally ascribed similarities coupled with internal division. For cocoa rents, the precarious status of the Akan modest plurality—which included Nkrumah's tiny Nzema group—became politically generative for the nation-building project, enabling an interpretation that Nkrumah would take resources from "his" Akan group to fund public goods of broad national appeal and distribution.

Conceding negative economic consequences, I disagree Nkrumah's policies arose out of inter-ethnic animus and argue Nkrumah's expansive public goods spending had unappreciated long-term advantageous political and social consequences. It legitimated the state as a once-and-potential actor for providing valued public goods, persuading an ethnolinguistically diverse population of the project of stateness, and mitigating the political salience of linguistic difference. This afforded the Ghanaian state great resiliency, enabling the statehood project to weather coups, economic crises, and more without fracturing into ethnically based dissent to which its underlying ethno-demographics might have made it vulnerable.

After Nkrumah

Though Nkrumah convinced the populace that the state could provide valued goods in a public non-ethnicized manner, he was eventually deposed in a military coup. Nkrumah promised an enticing vision of Ghana as independent and modern, with desired public goods like infrastructure, jobs, health, and education to rival any country in the world. In every policy domain Nkrumah bet big. Eventually, failures on multiple fronts left him politically isolated amid mounting economic crisis and vulnerable to a military coup.

Nkrumah fell victim to his own grandiose vision: “His greatest problem was satisfying their demands for an increased manifestation of development, for larger expenditures on less productive industries, and for more publicly financed jobs” ultimately “under intense pressure to deliver more results of development than were necessary or feasible” (Frimpong-Ansah, 1991, p. 75). He financed developmental ambitions from cocoa revenues while neglecting cocoa development, resulting in stagnating agricultural output (Apter, 1968; Frimpong-Ansah, 1991). Cocoa farmers received diminishing fractions of world market prices, which became untenable when world cocoa prices collapsed. The promise of sustainable economic bounty and modern jobs from state industries never materialized, as they instead became bastions of patronage and rallying points for those decrying corruption. Absent concomitant enterprise growth, Nkrumah’s investments in education created a disaffected class of newly educated, aspirational underemployed youth (Callaway, 1963).

A series of assassination attempts left Nkrumah isolated, surrounded by “yes-men” who kept Nkrumah unaware of deteriorating conditions, where economic mismanagement and the collapse of cocoa prices had culminated in mass shortages of basic food, commodities, and medicines. In 1965, informed Ghana’s reserves were nearly exhausted, Nkrumah sat in shocked silence and then wept; “He realized he had no answer to the appalling problems his own policies had created . . . no answer to the failure of all his cherished schemes” (Rooney, 2007, p. 339). Increasingly paranoid, Nkrumah distrusted, undermined, and underfunded the military, creating a separate personal guard to ensure his safety. Military leaders resented austerity and comparable favoritism of the president’s personal guard, eventually culminating in a near-bloodless military coup (Feit, 1968; Price, 1971).

Ultimately, the independence-era state conspicuously celebrated the varied cultural traditions of different ethnic groups, remaining cautiously pan-ethnic in public image and policy administration, minimizing ethnicity as a foundation for making claims on the state. The state’s footprint was visible throughout the territory, leaving the populace with uncommonly high dedication to and aspirations for the Ghanaian state.

Independence-era political parties cultivated crosscutting class-based constituencies that endure in contemporary politics: Core voters for Ghana's main parties still divide on the basis of education, rural-urban residence, income, and labor skills, rather than ethnicity (Fridy, 2007; Lindberg & Morrison, 2005).⁴ Contemporary research on Ghana finds that while goods provision may be politicized, it is not ethnicized (Oduro, Awal, & Ashon, 2014). Public sector appointments skew toward party supporters but are not reserved for coethnics (Hirvi & Whitfield, 2015). Contrary to expectations that parties provide public goods as patronage for stalwart supporters, Banful (2011) finds support for the ruling party is significantly and *negatively* related to disbursements. Rather, Ghanaian parties distribute more public goods to persuade swing districts, though the effect is small (André & Mesplé-Somps, 2011; Banful, 2011). Almost all disbursement variations were due to changes to the publicly published formula for calculating disbursements, rather than sub rosa deviations (Banful, 2011), an encouraging distinction because such transparency is essential to impartiality as a cross-cultural standard for good governance (Rothstein & Teorell, 2008).

Contemporary Ghana is not an equitable paradise. The North lags in many developmental indicators including infrastructure and public goods. However, this is true across the ethnically varied Northern regions, likely over-determined by vast infrastructural inequalities that population differentials in the sparse North make difficult to efficiently rectify. Even in the North, access to public goods is politicized not ethnicized: Briggs (2012) finds constituencies' voting margin—rather than ethnic differences—predicted differences in government-led electrification among Northern towns.

Competitive democracy may have made clientelism worse, but there are already signs that the non-ethnicized clientelism holds seeds of positive change. Ghana's distribution of social goods is similar to the "pork barrel politics" often found in Western nations where ethnic diversity is not a considerable political issue, like Australia (Worthington & Dollery, 1998) and Sweden (Dahlberg & Johansson, 2002). Oduro et al. (2014) argue that in contrast to the "virulently ethnicized" politics in Kenya, in Ghana "although still a form of patronage, this [pork-barrel] is a less regressive force and holds the prospect of moving politics forward to a more programmatic basis in the future" (p. 24). There is some evidence of programmatic transformations even within contemporary clientelism. Because ethnicity does not assure allegiance, and Lindberg (2010) finds votes cannot be bought quid pro quo for individual benefits rendered (nor are parties' machines capable of enforcement), MPs have increasingly turned to providing "club goods" to citizens. However, what Lindberg calls club goods are not distributed based on ethnic membership, but rather

Table 2. Case Comparison of ELF and Related Measures.

| | Ghana | Togo | Guinea | Kenya |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|---|------------------|
| 1961 ELF ^a | 0.868 | 0.742 | 0.769 | 0.883 |
| 1960 PREG ^b | 0.44 | 0.49 | 0.48 | 0.43 |
| 1990 PREG ^b | 0.44 | 0.49 | 0.59 | 0.57 |
| Ethno-demographic structure | Modest plurality | Modest plurality | Slim plurality | Microplurality |
| Independence head-of-state position | minority | plurality | second-largest | plurality |
| Outcome | Public goods | Ethnicized goods | Military > social goods, ethnicized goods | Ethnicized goods |

ELF = ethnolinguistic fractionalization; PREG = Politically Relevant Ethnic Groups.

a. Roeder (2001). b. Posner (2004).

produced at the request and for the benefit of communities within the constituency. MPs face “enormous pressures” to use their resources for community projects, and these “club goods” include “school buildings, toilets, roofing sheets, scholarships and boreholes, depending on the needs in the area” (Lindberg, 2010, p. 128). Though reasonable to critique pork-barrel politics, it is important to recognize this as evidence Ghanaian citizens remain convinced of the statehood project: The state is expected to provide their communities with valued collective goods.

Comparison Cases

I have argued that modest plurality ethno-demographics create incentives toward national public goods provision. Ghana had a modest plurality ethno-demographic structure and a post-independence leader from a tiny minority. Combined, these factors encourage using state resources for broad national—rather than ethnicized—goods provision. Such post-independence national public goods provision created an enduring legacy of depoliticized ethnicity in one of the world’s most diverse states. This section expands the argument to comparison cases and concludes by examining broad trends across ethno-demographic categories over time. Comparisons support the argument that situating independence-era elites in ethno-demographic opportunity structures helps explain the extent to which public goods were delivered broadly to forge cross-ethnic support (Ghana), relatively neglected (Guinea), or ethnicized (Kenya, Togo; see Table 2).

Togo: Overtly Favoring the Plurality

Like Ghana, Togo has modest plurality ethno-demographics. Economically, Togo's 1963 GDP per capita is on par with Kenya's and only slightly behind Ghana's. I argued above that modest plurality ethno-demographics afforded incentives for pan- and trans-ethnic coalition-building; those incentives were particularly legible and intense for leaders from minority groups. But I also caution that ethno-demographics do not affect politics in a simple mechanistic way, but rather depend on the way leaders read and interpret demographic opportunities within such structures. Togo illustrates how outcomes diverge within modest pluralities, when the post-independence leader pursues a political agenda that explicitly favors the plurality and disparages minority groups. This case raises the interesting interpretation that modest plurality structures demographically constrained opportunities for minority leaders to a greater extent than leaders from the plurality, such that within modest pluralities, ideology or leadership vision may play a relatively larger role in determining policy and coalition choices pursued by plurality leaders than minority leaders.

Unlike Ghana, Togo's first president, Sylvanus Olympio, was supported by the plurality Ewe (44%), a coastal ethnicity favored by colonialists, and pursued policies perceived as pro-Ewe. Early in his political career, he asserted Ewe ethnic nationalism, prominently going to petition the UN Trusteeship Council for independence not as a representative of all peoples of Togo but rather as an official representative of the All Ewe Conference, an ethnonationalist organization seeking independence for "his people" (Lawrance, 2007). Whereas Nkrumah embraced Northern culture and addressed inequalities, Olympio openly disdained the economic backwardness and illiteracy of the Northern Kabrai (23%), the next-most populous group (Horowitz, 1985). In a move no other modest plurality has made in the 50 years since independence, Olympio elevated a local African language—Ewe—as a national language, creating ethnic tensions (Laitin, 1992). He pursued reunification with former German Togoland territory—populated primarily by Ewes—transferred to the Gold Coast after WW1 (Bourret, 1952). This was interpreted predominantly as an Ewe cause, which would threaten ethnic balance by further increasing Ewe demographic dominance (Horowitz, 1985). By overtly representing the plurality's interests, rather than conspicuously delivering public goods as Ghana had, Olympio established a pattern of ethnic favoritism that diminished trust in the state. In 1963, the marginalized Northern Kabrai assassinated Olympio in Africa's first coup d'état, citing ethnic favoritism as a major grievance. When the Kabrai came to power, they continued the established pattern of ethnicizing state benefits.

Guinea: Slim Plurality Politics of Military Expenditure Over Public Goods

Guinea was Ghana's francophone political parallel at independence: In 1958, Guinea became the first Francophone African colony to declare independence, under Sekou Toure, after non-violent mobilization. Guinea's bauxite exports were worth more than twice Ghana's cocoa, and top exports' per capita value was four times greater (UN Comtrade, 1963). Per ELF, 1960s Guinea was *less* ethnolinguistically diverse than Ghana, which conventional fractionalization approaches would think beneficial (see Table 2). However, Guinea's ELF hides slim plurality ethno-demographics with Peuls/Fulbe (39%), closely followed by Malinkes (27%), Susus (12%), and others (Adloff, 1964). Within a slim plurality, Toure's position as second-largest Malinke made ethnicized goods-for-support a credible strategy, while increasing his fear of the Peuls. Sekou Toure rewarded coethnics and targeted plurality Peuls for increasingly harsh crackdowns (Arieff & McGovern, 2013).

Such ethnic tensions are characteristic in slim pluralities (see Table 3). Anticipating inter-ethnic rivalry, Guinea achieved peace through heavy military investments at the expense of public goods that might have cemented a fiscal contract with the populace. Echoing colonialist extraction-oriented infrastructural priorities, public works expenditures built transportation infrastructure to enable the minerals export industry (enriching state coffers), rather than public goods (Kaba, 1977).

Social goods provision was scant and rife with ethnic favoritism. Over the 1960s, infant mortality decreased by only 7%, though it began among the highest in Africa; the average reduction among African states with comparable baselines was 16.5% (World Development Indicators [WDI]). Telephones per capita were half of what was found in Ghana years earlier (WDI). Malinke claimed three times as many positions of power as the Peul (Groelsema, 1998). The practice of coethnic advantage established under Toure was perpetuated by his successor when Lansana Conte, a Susu, came to power in 1984 (Groelsema, 1998). Despite initial promise, today Guinea is among Africa's worst-governed states (Worldwide Governance Indicators [WGI]).

Kenya: Ethnic Favoritism Within Micropluralities

Like Ghana, Kenya was a former British colony, economically dependent on export agriculture. Kenya's similar independence-era ELF obscures important differences in group sizes that I argue account for the divergent paths taken by their first heads-of-state. Kenya's Jomo Kenyatta was from the largest group within a microplurality, the Kikuyus (19.6%), followed closely by

Table 3. Select Outcomes (Averages by Ethno-Demographic Category).

| | Dominant majority | Modest plurality | Slim plurality | Micropluralities |
|--|-------------------|------------------|----------------|------------------|
| Government-related violent events (1990-2012) ^a | | | | |
| Pro-government | 14.6 | 4.6 | 10.7 | 12.4 |
| Anti-government | 12.6 | 7.8 | 22 | 17.8 |
| Extra- or intra-government | 63.7 | 15.5 | 44.9 | 92.9 |
| Ethnically motivated violent events (1990-2012) ^a | | | | |
| Any motive | 19.3 | 6.1 | 15.6 | 55.7 |
| Primary motive | 17.1 | 4.6 | 10.8 | 47.7 |
| Total years of ethnic war (1960-2010) ^b | 10.9 | 3.6 | 10.3 | 15.7 |
| Average Worldwide Governance Indicators Score (2013) ^c | -7.93 | -5.22 | -9.38 | -6.44 |
| Road density, km road/sq. km land (Avg. 2000-2013) ^d | 22.5 | 12.8 | 9.9 | 12.6 |
| Spending on primary education (% GDP, Avg. 2000-2012) ^d | 12.8% | 15.1% | 9.2% | 11.2% |
| Child mortality ^d | | | | |
| 1960 | 197.6 | 312.6 | 316.0 | 241.3 |
| 2013 | 86.2 | 81.9 | 109.2 | 82.7 |
| Female survivorship ^d | | | | |
| 1960 | 38.1 | 31.2 | 29.7 | 35.5 |
| 2012 | 45.7 | 58.0 | 51.5 | 53.6 |
| Male survivorship ^d | | | | |
| 1960 | 32.0 | 27.0 | 25.1 | 29.1 |
| 2012 | 42.0 | 52.9 | 47.0 | 48.0 |

SCAD = Social conflict in Africa database.

a. SCAD. b. Fearon and Laitin coding 1960-1999, EPR3 coding 1999-2010 (Source: EPR3). c. World Bank. d. World Bank Worldwide Development Indicators. For current figures, I use the latest year for which data are available on each indicator. The 1960 child mortality has some missing data, which have been dropped (not imputed) for calculations of category averages. Please see data supplement for information on missing cases and alternative calculations using the first-available data for each of the missing cases, which does not substantially alter the relative figures.

Luo (13.7%), Luhya (13.0%), Kamba (11.2%), and others (Gertzell, Goldschmidt, & Rothchild, 1969).

Kenyatta's administration favored Kikuyu coethnics symbolically and economically, inculcating the view of Kenyan ethnicities as not merely diverse but also in a zero-sum struggle for state benefits. In contrast to Nkrumah's cultivated pan-ethnic public image, Kenyatta made national addresses in Kikuyu though few understood it (Weber, 2009). Upon independence, Kenyatta acquired land from fleeing Whites. The land was distributed under the Million Acre Settlement Scheme, ostensibly to provide the landless smallholder farms, but most went to Kenyatta and Kikuyu elites (Branch, 2009). The Kikuyu-dominated central province received advantages in school enrollment, number of schools and trained teachers (Alwy & Schech, 2004), and road construction (Burgess, Jedwab, Miguel, & Morjaria, 2010). The government-owned Development Corporation gave Kikuyus two thirds of industrial loans and nearly half the commercial loans (Rothchild, 1969).

Kenya illustrates how micropluralities reify ethnicity as a dividing line in politics, and thereafter, ethnic favoritism structures "rules of the game" for subsequent regimes. Kenya is the prototype of highly politicized ethnicity (Bratton & Kimenyi, 2008). It is now axiomatic that state resources will be distributed ethnically (Oucho, 2002), with ethnicities contesting when it is their "turn to eat" (Wrong, 2009).

Though reversal is theoretically possible, politicized ethnicity tends to persist once established. Daniel arap Moi, Kenya's second head-of-state, is from the demographically miniscule Tugen group (1.5%), yet ethnicity was politicized throughout Moi's presidency, resulting in the uneven distribution of public goods. Indeed, the rise of Moi's Kalenjin provides an example in which ethnicity is endogenous to the state's capacity for (and pattern of) providing resources. In response to Kikuyu political dominance, Tugen, Nandi, Kipsigis, Elgeyo, Marakwet, and Pokot elites strategically highlighted latent cultural and linguistic similarities to forge a larger umbrella ethnicity "Kalenjin"—a term that did not exist in 1940 but by 1960 had symbolic and organizational force (Lynch, 2011). Kikuyu child mortality improved dramatically under Kenyatta; when Moi assumed the Presidency upon Kenyatta's death, improvements for Kikuyu leveled out while Kalenjin enjoyed disproportionate health gains (Brockerhoff & Hewett, 2000). Umbrella ethnicities like "Kalenjin," "Mijikenda," or "Luyia" emerged in response to increasing Kikuyu dominance of state benefits, forming agglomerated ethnicities for securing resources that, divided, they could not access (Branch, 2009; MacArthur, 2013). Although the Tugen-only population share approximates that of Nkrumah or Tanzania's Nyerere, Moi's understanding of his position within the Kenyan ethno-demographic structure must be interpreted through the recognized

“rules of the game” of Kenyan politics, which already established state resources would accrue disproportionately to the president’s coethnics.

General Trends

Ghana’s approach to nation-building through de-ethnicized public goods is not unique: Heads-of-state in similar ethno-demographic structures made similar choices and saw similar outcomes. Senegal was similarly an agriculturally based modest plurality in which Leopold Senghor, a Serer (14.7% population share), faced a modest Wolof plurality (43.3%) and constructed cross-ethnic political support via broad public goods provision. Mali, another modest plurality, also fits a similar pattern. Though hampered by a crippling lack of economic revenue, Mali made visible strides in public goods provision post-independence, particularly health. It had one of the largest reductions in child mortality in Africa (World Bank, 2013a), with broadly distributed benefits such that ethnic groups do not have significantly different child mortality rates (Brockerhoff & Hewett, 2000). As expected, ethnicity is depoliticized in Mali, with crosscutting cleavages and trans-ethnic “cousinage” relationships quite important (Dunning & Harrison, 2010).

Tanzania has a different ethno-demographic structure, but like Ghana, Tanzania’s Julius Nyerere was from a micro-minority comprising approximately 1% of the population (Molony, 2014), which made coethnic appeals less politically viable. Instead, Nyerere pursued an ambitious nation-building program, featuring village resettlement enabling efficient public goods provision. Adult literacy and primary education expanded, complete with nationalist curriculum content (Darden & Mylonas, in press). Nyerere expanded health care provision and access, replacing use fees with funding from taxes and donor organizations (McIntyre et al., 2008). Tanzania is arguably Africa’s greatest success story of managing diversity. At independence, Tanzania recorded over 130 tribes and the highest ELF score in Africa. Today, Tanzania has one of the lowest levels of ethnic political salience in Africa (Green, 2011).

As a group, modest pluralities have excelled at public goods provision in the years since independence. On every contemporary governance and public goods indicator displayed in Table 3, modest plurality states are significantly different from slim pluralities,⁵ suggesting that ethno-demographic structures capture an important difference among the states otherwise obscured by their substantial ELF overlap. Contemporary average governance scores are better in modest pluralities than any other group, even dominant majorities (see Table 3).

Modest pluralities have excelled at providing security—a foundational public good. Ethnically motivated war is considerably lower in modest pluralities, which average 3.6 years of war in the past 50 years, compared with

more than 10 for all other categories. The government-embroiled tensions seen in Guinea also appear generally: More than a third of all government-involved violence happened in slim pluralities (Social conflict in Africa database [SCAD]). Modest pluralities had 64% fewer government-involved violent events than slim pluralities. Ethnically motivated violent events approximate the random-encounter violence implicit in ELF calculations, and indeed micropluralities are highest. However, modest pluralities are much lower than slim pluralities despite very similar ELF scores, lower even than dominant majorities.

Modest pluralities have also made notable strides in providing other public goods (see Table 3). Road density in modest pluralities is significantly better than in slim pluralities, even though it lags behind dominant majorities (many of which, like Lesotho, are geographically tiny). Modest pluralities today spend a larger percentage of GDP on education than any other category. In health, both of the mid-range categories began the independence era with much higher rates of child mortality than either micropluralities or dominant majorities. But today, modest pluralities have the lowest child mortality, while slim pluralities remain the highest. Similarly, circa independence, modest and slim pluralities had the lowest survivorship for both genders, but modest pluralities improved more than any other and today have the highest survivorship rates. In the 50 years since independence, modest pluralities have performed better than other groups across a surprising range of public goods outcomes. In particular, modest pluralities demonstrate outcomes that are consistently different from their slim plurality counterparts despite the overlap in ELF that would lead conventional analyses to lump the two groups together.

Conclusion

The presence of a modest plurality converts diversity into discipline through tenuous compromise: The largest group is not large enough to exert repressive control. None of the smaller ethnicities are large enough to openly challenge the plurality by mobilizing ethnicity in overt conflict (which might galvanize even querulous linguistic subgroups like the Akan). But the largest group is large enough to raise the specter of fear over ethnic domination, encouraging trans-ethnic coalition-building as myriad smaller ethnicities collaborate, and the plurality reaches out to assuage concerns, lest their position be overwhelmed by a trans-ethnic coalition. These conditions encouraged emergence of conciliatory states, whose leaders expended resources on broad public goods intended to mollify diverse groups and mitigate the political salience of ethnicity.

Scholars recognize leaders often opt for politically advantageous policies over economically optimal ones. However, scholarship has failed to make two related distinctions among the class of politically advantageous yet economically detrimental choices. First, even if both are economically harmful, there is considerable difference in the legacy of Mugabe's coercive ethnic nepotism and Nkrumah's ill-fated over-investment in state-owned enterprises and too-rapid expansion of education. Second, some of the political benefits of overly ambitious public goods programs affected state legitimation and collective sentiment for longer than previously acknowledged, through the mechanisms of mitigating ethnicity, forging cross-ethnic and class-based coalitions, and inculcating a belief in the potential (if not always actual) efficacy of the state.

Despite considerable research differentiating colonialism from post-colonial regimes, this analysis suggests colonial and independence governments both represented—and informed subsequent understanding of—formal statecraft to the public. As such, either colonial or independence governments could convince the populace that formal organizational machinery—aka “the state”—could provide well-being goods. Such assurances were rarely accomplished by the colonial regimes, yet Guggisberg may have laid just such a foundation in Ghana, directly through the Development Plan and indirectly by goading Nkrumah to surpass colonial accomplishments. Conversely, either colonial or independence regimes could establish the precedent that state benefits would accrue as ethnicized club goods, rather than public goods. The absence of such an ethnic-club-goods legacy appears necessary, but not sufficient, to enable broad public goods programming that galvanized diverse populations in some African states.

Several intriguing directions for future research emerge, particularly around the question of why some leaders from demographically advantaged positions pursued broad public goods provision and inclusive nation-building. Expansions of the present argument could consider how leader's ideologies and the landscape of available policy ideas inform the way different leaders interpreted opportunities (or threats) of ethno-demographic structures, producing more fine-grained historical analysis. Furthermore, for the constructionist approach to ethnicity, attention to relative group sizes could contribute to analysis of the conditions under which culture work to construct ethnicities is more active or resonant.

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Notes

1. I use a 55% cutoff because of a naturally occurring break in the data between 55% and 80% largest population share, though this is in line with Ellingsen's (2000) 80% threshold. This operationalization differs from Bangura (2006) because my typology is based inductively on naturally occurring demographic clusters among African cases and, unlike Reynal-Querol (RQ; Montalvo & Reynal-Querol, 2005), does not privilege distance from bipolarity.
2. For example, MacLean's (2004) excellent work on subnational associational life encouraging out-group tolerance, or Mosley (2012) on how colonial dependency on smallholder agricultural exports constituted them as a political category and led to more equitable pro-poor long-term growth.
3. Total population shares of 14.1% and 11.3%; 32.8% and 26.3% of Akans, respectively (Gold Coast, 1948).
4. Marginal ethnic voting patterns may exist for two ethnicities—Asantes and Ewes, who have been politically empowered, not excluded (Fridy, 2007).
5. Statistically significant two-tailed *t* test. Contemporary health outcomes significant at $p < .10$, a reasonable threshold given the low number of cases in each category. All other outcomes are significant at $p < .001$.

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