Ethnic Violence in Africa: Destructive Legacies of Pre-Colonial States

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Abstract What explains differential rates of ethnic violence in postcolonial Africa? I argue that ethnic groups organized as a precolonial state (PCS) exacerbated interethnic tensions in their postcolonial country. Insecure leaders in these countries traded off between inclusive coalitions that risked insider coups and excluding other ethnic groups at the possible expense of outsider rebellions. My main hypotheses posit that PCS groups should associate with coups because their historically rooted advantages often enabled accessing power at the center, whereas other ethnic groups in their countries—given strategic incentives for ethnopolitical exclusion—should fight civil wars more frequently than ethnic groups in countries without a PCS group. Analyzing originally compiled data on precolonial African states provides statistical evidence for these implications about civil wars and coups between independence and 2013 across various model specifications. Strikingly, through 1989, thirty of thirty-two ethnic group-level major civil war onsets occurred in countries with a PCS group.

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Violent political events such as civil wars and coups d'état have plagued Sub-Saharan Africa (henceforth, "Africa") since independence, causing millions of battle deaths and undermining economic development. Prior to 1990, fifty-three African rulers lost power via violent overthrow whereas only one stepped down after losing an election.[1] Violent perpetrators have often organized support around ethnic identity and have frequently espoused ethnic aims.[2] Most major civil wars since 1946 have involved distinct ethnic claims and recruitment.[3] However, African ethnic groups also exhibit considerable variance. Between 1946 and 2013, 79 percent of politically relevant ethnic groups did not participate in any ethnic civil wars, and 76 percent did not participate in any successful coup attempts.[4]

Although extensive research advances our understanding of how ethnicity affects violence, most existing theories do not convincingly explain variation within Africa.[5] By focusing primarily on postcolonial causes, much of this research overlooks

1. Reno 2003, 324.
2. Decalo 1990; Horowitz 1985.
3. The present data set, described later, counts thirty-one of the thirty-seven country-level conflicts through 2013 as ethnic civil wars.
4. See Table C.5.
5. Roessler and Ohls 2018 provide a recent exception discussed later, although I analyze a different explanatory factor.

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longer-term factors that have affected variance in key underlying factors, such as the political salience of ethnic differences. Cederman and co-authors consider African countries among a broader global sample and show that ethnic groups excluded from power in the central government initiate civil wars more frequently than groups with access to power.[6] They argue that the spread of nationalist ideology to the colonized world explains the prevalence of ethnic exclusion in the postcolonial world.[7] Roessler argues that weak institutions across Africa have fostered an internal security dilemma whereby leaders fearful of a coup d'état exclude rivals from power along ethnic lines.[8] Francois, Rainer, and Trebbi examine a similar tradeoff and highlight the striking pattern—in contrast to earlier characterizations of "big man" rule in Africa—that to prevent both coups and revolutions, African rulers have consistently allocated cabinet posts in proportion to ethnic group size.[9] Older studies present numerous case studies in which political factions emerged along ethnic lines in Africa and contributed to violence.[10]

However, exposure to international ideologies and weak institutions were largely constant across the region. Why have several major ethnic civil wars occurred in Uganda, but not Kenya? Why did Benin experience a spiral of successful coup attempts after independence but not Côte d'Ivoire? Elusive answers to key questions such as these have engendered prominent critiques alleging that ethnic differences offer little explanatory power for political violence.[11]

This article provides new insights by taking a longer-term historical perspective of ethnicity and conflict in Africa. It examines postcolonial legacies of ethnic groups organized as states prior to colonization and provides three main contributions. It (1) extends theories of the strategic coup/civil war tradeoff by showing how precolonial statehood exacerbated the internal security dilemma that African rulers faced after independence, (2) compiles a novel data set on precolonial states in Africa, and (3) presents empirical evidence that this factor can explain considerable variance in postcolonial ethnic civil wars and coups between independence and 2013—in fact, almost every major civil war in the region during the Cold War era occurred in a country with a precolonial state (PCS) group.

First, the theory links precolonial statehood to postcolonial ethnic violence. PCS groups were, on average, distinguished from non-PCS groups through diverse historical channels: precolonial warfare and slaving, privileges in colonial governance (indirect rule), and incentives to create regionally rather than nationally oriented policies during the post-World War II decolonization era. These mechanisms contributed to divisive interethnic relationships and also increased PCS groups' likelihood of

6. Cederman, Gleditsch, and Buhaug 2013; Cederman, Wimmer, and Min 2010.
7. Cederman, Gleditsch, and Buhaug 2013, 30–54.
8. Roessler 2011; 2016.
9. Francois, Rainer, and Trebbi 2015.
10. Decalo 1990; Horowitz 1985.
11. Fearon and Laitin 2003; Fearon, Kasara, and Laitin 2007.

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accessing power in the central government.[12] The theory combines these historical considerations with a general power-sharing tradeoff discussed by Roessler and others:[13] including a rival group at the center—for example, by offering cabinet positions—may pacify the group. However, given weak institutions and an inability to commit to deals, sharing power might instead facilitate a coup by the rival. Rulers face a coup/civil war tradeoff because excluding the rival from power reduces coup risk from that group, but raises the likelihood of outsider rebellion. By exacerbating interethnic tensions in their country, PCS groups worsened the central government's ability to commit to any promises to share power and spoils, which created broad strategic incentives for ethnopolitical exclusion—therefore enhancing conflict risk among *all* ethnic groups within their country (i.e., within-country spillover effects). The main hypotheses posit that members of PCS groups should frequently participate in coups (an "insider" fighting technology) because their historically rooted advantages often enabled central power access.[14] Furthermore, members of other ethnic groups in their countries—given strategic incentives for ethnopolitical exclusion—should often fight civil wars (an "outsider" fighting technology). The hypotheses compare ethnic groups in countries with a PCS group to groups in countries without one, which tended to face lower incentives to violently control the political arena.

Second, the article introduces a newly compiled data set on precolonial states in Africa integrated with the Ethnic Power Relations (EPR) data set,[15] which codes politically relevant ethnic groups and their access to power in the central government. I consulted continent-wide historical maps and numerous additional secondary sources (over 100 in total) to code a binary PCS variable for each EPR ethnic group, based on the following operational definition for precolonial statehood: co-ethnics governed a substantial percentage of members of the EPR ethnic group through a single or small number of political organizations that exhibited some degree of centralized rule on the eve of colonization. This data set improves upon the widely used Murdock data set[16] by (1) coding precolonial statehood for a list of politically relevant ethnic groups with available data on participation in violence, (2) reducing measurement error from Murdock's original measurement and from data sets merging Murdock with EPR, and (3) providing more detailed and easily replicable information for each ethnic group.

Third, statistical findings from a panel of ethnic groups between independence and 2013 show the importance of precolonial statehood for facilitating political violence in Africa—contrasting with the predominant focus in the civil war literature on more contemporary correlates. Regression models estimate that PCS groups participated in

12. Throughout, statements such as these refer to individuals who belong to broader identity groups, rather than suggesting that ethnic groups act monolithically.

13. Roessler 2011.

14. Although the theory focuses mainly on interethnic tensions, it also discusses how low commitment ability and broader political instability should create favorable conditions for *intra*ethnic coups.

15. Cederman, Wimmer, and Min 2010.

16. Murdock 1967.

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successful coup attempts more than twice as frequently as groups in countries without a PCS group, and stateless groups participated in a major ethnic civil war more than four times as frequently if a PCS group resided in their country. Strikingly, through 1989, thirty of thirty-two ethnic group-level major civil war onsets occurred in countries with a PCS group, despite countries without PCS groups accounting for 39 percent of observations in the data set.[17] The findings are similar when controlling for predictors of statehood in precolonial Africa and for standard conflict covariates. The estimated substantive magnitude of the effects is consistently large, and the results are similar under numerous additional robustness checks. Supplementary findings support hypotheses that explain ethnic party formation and that either predict or condition on ethnopolitical inclusion. Finally, surveying individual cases demonstrates that members of PCS groups were central to postcolonial civil wars and coups in fourteen of eighteen countries with a PCS group, and qualitative evidence from Uganda supports key mechanisms.

In addition to ethnic conflict research, the new perspective on ethnic violence contributes to research on historical roots of African institutional weakness[18] and historical causes of modern civil war.[19] It also offers a new perspective on the widely discussed legacies of precolonial statehood.[20] Many link precolonial statehood to stronger economic performance in Africa[21] and elsewhere.[22] However, higher economic development should depress civil war propensity, yielding the theoretical prior that precolonial statehood should reduce political violence—contrary to the present analysis. The emphasis here also differs from classic works that downplay the importance of diversity in precolonial African political units. Herbst focuses primarily on generic challenges that rulers across time have faced in a region that, on average, has exhibited low population density.[23] Mamdani and Ranger each argue that European colonial administrators responded to a general lack of extant political organizations by "inventing" chiefly traditions to facilitate centralized tax collection in previously acephalous communities, and by granting widespread despotic powers to appointed leaders.[24]

The analysis also differs from two related studies on precolonial statehood and postcolonial civil war. Wig and Depetris-Chauvin each reach the opposite conclusion that ethnic groups organized as a precolonial state *decrease* postindependence civil war prospects.[25] My theory posits that PCS groups create within-country spillover effects that raise conflict propensity for *all* groups in their country. This implies that the conflict propensity of stateless groups differs systematically depending

17. Table C.2 provides summary statistics for the panel, and Table C.5 for a cross-section.
18. Akyeampong et al. 2014.
19. Besley and Reynal-Querol 2014; Michalopoulos and Papaioannou 2016.
20. Osafo-Kwaako and Robinson 2013.
21. Gennaioli and Rainer 2007; Michalopoulos and Papaioannou 2013.
22. Bockstette, Chanda, and Putterman 2002.
23. Herbst 2000.
24. Mamdani 1996; Ranger 2012.
25. Depetris-Chauvin 2015; Wig 2016.

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upon whether or not a PCS group resides in their country. The statistical results in Wig and in Depetris-Chauvin compare within countries by including country fixed effects in their regression models.[26] In other words, using the language of this article, they compare the conflict propensity of PCS groups to stateless groups within their country. However, this approach will yield uninformative conclusions about violent legacies of precolonial statehood if PCS groups caused within-country spillover effects—in fact, the present theory associates PCS groups primarily with coups rather than with civil wars. Additionally, compared to these two contributions, the current theory and empirical results offer insight into a wider range of outcomes, such as coups, ethnopolitical inclusion, and ethnic party formation.

Existing Theories of Ethnic Violence

Origins of Politicized Ethnic Differences

A large literature analyzes why ethnic differences sometimes create an important political cleavage, a precursor to understanding how ethnic differences can trigger violence.[27] Recent research devotes considerable attention to horizontal political inequalities, meaning that some ethnic groups access power in the central government whereas others do not. This research primarily concentrates on three historical factors to explain inequalities in political power among ethnic groups: (1) historical warfare, (2) modernization and the spread of nationalism to the Third World, and (3) strategies of European colonial rule.[28] First, the precolonial era in Africa predated the emergence of nationalist sentiments in the region. Historically, before nationalist ideas spread outside Europe, warfare was an important cause of group-level inequality and domination.[29] Second, later in the precolonial era and into the colonial era, emergent nationalism hardened ethnic identities, facilitated interethnic inequalities, and made groups cognizant of grievances toward other groups. Whereas many premodern societies lacked the ability to translate macro-cleavages into political action, modernization and nationalism created politically relevant differences among ethnic groups.[30] Most postcolonial countries in Africa combine many nations—specifically, *ethnic* nations—into a single political unit. These nascent distinctions engendered differential political power among groups. Third, colonizer identity as well as distance between the colonial center and an ethnic group's territorial settlement also influenced central power access.[31] Britain often granted political authority to indigenous political units whereas France sought more centralized colonial rule. Indirect British ruling strategies enabled groups located farther from the coast to access power at independence.

26. Depetris-Chauvin 2015; Wig 2016.
27. Fearon 2008.
28. Cederman, Gleditsch, and Buhaug 2013; Wucherpfennig, Hunziker, and Cederman 2016.
29. Cederman, Gleditsch, and Buhaug 2013, 33.
30. Ibid., 34; Gellner 1983.
31. Wucherpfennig, Hunziker, and Cederman 2016.

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Strategic Causes of Coups and Ethnic Civil War

Building upon their historical discussion, Cederman, Gleditsch, and Buhaug emphasize that the postcolonial state does not provide a neutral arena for competing group interests, and ethnic groups instead view the state as a prize.[32] Only by entering and exerting influence in the political arena can ethnic groups articulate their social, cultural, and economic interests. This institutional logic generates their key hypothesis: if the incumbent regime blocks access for challenging groups, then the excluded groups face incentives to violently rebel.

Roessler builds on this theory by addressing a key question: why would a ruler exclude ethnic groups if this strategy raises the likelihood of a violent rebellion?[33] Focusing on postcolonial Africa, he argues that weak political institutions undermined rulers' ability to commit to sharing power at the center with rivals, for example, inability to commit to letting a challenger retain lucrative cabinet positions. This commitment problem created incentives for rivals to use violence, which generated a tradeoff for governments between preventing coups and preventing civil wars. Given the more imminent threat posed by potentially treasonous insiders, many rulers responded by prioritizing co-ethnics in central government positions and by excluding members of other ethnic groups, triggering the incentives for outsiders to launch civil wars that Cederman, Gleditsch, and Buhaug discuss.[34] Roessler posits that these leadership security fears often provoked conflict specifically along ethnic lines because ethnic identity provides an easy information shortcut in countries where actors believe ethnicity is politically salient. This logic yields his core hypothesis that ethnopolitical exclusion substitutes civil war risk for coup risk.[35]

However, this *strategic* rationale for ethnopolitical exclusion is not the only possible motivation for exclusion. Even when facing low coup risk, rulers may still exclude groups for a distinct *opportunistic* rationale.[36] If a ruler believes that an ethnic group is unlikely to rebel if excluded, then regardless of its coup threat, the ruler may exclude to maximize control of rents and political power—implying that not all excluded groups pose a rebellion threat.

Summary of Logic for Coup/Civil War Tradeoff

Table 1 summarizes key aspects of this logic by considering a stylized interaction between a ruler and a rival that can be either coercively weak or coercively strong.

32. Cederman, Gleditsch, and Buhaug 2013, chapter 4.
33. Roessler 2011; 2016.
34. Cederman, Gleditsch, and Buhaug 2013.
35. Roessler 2011; 2016. Two implicit assumptions in this framework and in much ethnic conflict research are (1) ethnicity is a useful framework for understanding motives for civil wars and for coups, even though these events are rarely couched purely in ethnic terms, and (2) civil wars and coups are alternative coercion technologies for achieving concessions from governments if bargaining fails, despite also exhibiting important differences. The present theoretical framework adopts these premises, which appendix section B.1 defends at greater length.
36. Fearon 2010, 17–20; Roessler 2016, 60–81; Wucherpfennig, Hunziker, and Cederman 2016.

It is most natural to conceive of these actors as members of different ethnic groups, although parts of the logic apply to intraethnic rivalries as well. If the ruler shares power, then the rival may be able to launch a coup. By contrast, if the ruler excludes, then the rival may be able to initiate a civil war.[37] The government's ability to commit to any promises to share power and spoils affects the rival's motives to fight (rows in the table) and the rival's coercive strength affects its opportunity to fight (columns). The left column highlights that a coercively weak rival is unlikely to fight (either a coup or civil war) regardless of its ethnopolitical inclusion status or government commitment ability. Consequently, the ruler prefers to exclude weak rivals for opportunistic reasons—why would the government share rents with a rival that will not punish exclusion by rebelling?

TABLE 1. *Coups, civil wars, and inclusion/exclusion*

	Weak rival	*Strong rival*
Low government commitment ability	If rival included: low coup risk If rival excluded: low civil war risk ⇒ Ruler prefers (opportunistic) exclusion ⇒ Low fighting risk	If rival included: high coup risk If rival excluded: high civil war risk ⇒ Ruler prefers (strategic) exclusion ⇒ High civil war risk if ruler can exclude ⇒ High coup risk if ruler cannot exclude
High government commitment ability	Same as low commitment ability case	If rival included: low coup risk If rival excluded: high civil war risk ⇒ Ruler prefers inclusion ⇒ Low fighting risk

If instead the rival is strong (right column of Table 1), then government commitment ability determines the outcomes. High commitment ability—perhaps in the form of credible democratic power sharing or an institutionalized interethnic party—implies that the ruler can commit to deals such as lucrative cabinet positions for the rival (bottom row). The credibility of deals lowers the rival's coup incentives if included in power, but high coercive strength implies the rival would pose a rebellion threat if excluded. Constrained by this threat, the ruler prefers to share power.

But if the rival is strong and government commitment ability is low (top-right box in Table 1), then the government faces a coup/civil war tradeoff. Because the rival is strong, the ruler's inability to commit to deals implies high coup risk under power sharing, but ethnopolitical exclusion yields high civil war risk. Connecting low commitment ability to conflict is a foundational result in formal conflict bargaining

37. Although it is sometimes possible for included groups to fight civil wars and for excluded groups to stage a coup, I follow Roessler's 2011 distinction between fighting technologies, which closely tracks empirical patterns.

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models,[38] and following Roessler's logic,[39] the more imminent threat of a coup implies that the ruler prefers to exclude the rival for strategic reasons. This logic also follows from a large literature on the tradeoff that rulers face between loyalty and efficiency. Rulers often choose to coup-proof their militaries by promoting unqualified generals—perhaps consisting of co-ethnics and family members—and by hindering communication among the officer corps, even if these strategies diminish battlefield efficiency in war.[40]

Why Do Coups Occur?

Given the strategic logic summarized in Table 1, it is somewhat puzzling that coups would ever occur—given rulers' preference to exclude threatening groups. However, even without appealing to factors such as incomplete information or misperceptions, this behavior is less puzzling when considering constraints that rulers face to excluding rivals, highlighted by the "can exclude" and "cannot exclude" language in the top right box of the table. Two types of constraints are particularly relevant for the present substantive context. The first are historically rooted. Some African rulers inherited "split domination" regimes at independence in which one ethnic group dominated civilian political positions and a different group dominated the officer corps.[41] In these and related situations, the process of trying to exclude the rival may itself trigger a coup attempt.[42]

Second, the broader coup literature implies that general circumstances of political instability create permissive conditions for both interethnic and *intra*ethnic coup attempts by constraining the ruler to rely on potentially disloyal—and therefore rival—generals. Strong rebellion threats by outsiders create a "guardianship dilemma" for rulers: the ruler needs to empower the military to defeat the threat, but greater dependence on the military raises its capacity to stage a coup.[43] Ongoing war may improve opportunities for a coup by "expand[ing] the influence of the military,"[44] and increase motives for intervention by creating severe costs for members of the military and by increasing uncertainty about who will control the state in the future.[45] Even without an ongoing war, a general perception of instability raises the stakes of the political game and can trigger coups by generals who perceive a greater threat from outgroups than does the incumbent ruler.

38. Powell 2004.
39. Roessler 2011.
40. Powell 2014; Quinlivan 1999; Talmadge 2015.
41. Horowitz 1985.
42. Harkness 2018; Sudduth 2017.
43. For example, Svolik 2012, chapter 5.
44. Finer 2002, 72.
45. Bell and Sudduth 2017. Empirically, Bell and Sudduth 2017 and Gassebner, Gutmann, and Voigt 2016 document the high relative frequency of coups during civil wars.

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Amid such political instability, ethnic identity may no longer serve as a reliable marker for loyalty or disloyalty because even the rulers' *co-ethnics* face heightened coup incentives. Because no dictator can govern alone, rulers cannot purge all potential rivals, which can result in "reshuffling coups" by co-ethnics as distinct from "regime change" coups by members of other ethnic groups.[46]

Theory: Pre-Colonial Statehood and Ethnic Violence

Despite producing valuable insights, existing theories devote little attention to two crucial questions. First, why do ethnic differences carry extreme political importance in some countries—to the point of creating incentives for violence—but not others? Relating this consideration to rulers' internal security dilemma, why is peaceful power sharing possible in some countries whereas rulers face particularly high coup risk in others? Second, in circumstances of low commitment ability and high incentives to exclude, what types of groups should be best positioned to control power at the center, and which groups face exclusion? Addressing this question should also help explain the type of violence in which a group partakes: coups or civil war. Deeper historical factors provide insight into both questions.

The historical background addresses these two motivating questions by grounding two key assumptions about precolonial state (PCS) groups and their within-country spillover effects, which raised conflict propensity for all groups in their country. First, PCS groups' negative influence on constructing interethnic political institutions exacerbated rulers' commitment problems. Second, within countries containing a PCS group, historical factors privileged PCS groups over stateless groups to gain political inclusion in the central government. Combining these considerations with the coup/civil war framework proposed by Roessler and others yields the hypotheses to be tested.[47]

Pre-Colonial Statehood Acronyms

The remainder of the article uses the following acronyms to distinguish ethnic groups. Countries that contain at least one PCS group are "PCS countries" and those that do not are "non-PCS countries." PCS countries contain precolonial state ethnic groups ("PCS groups") and stateless groups ("SLPCS groups"). All ethnic groups in non-PCS countries are stateless ("SL groups"). Figure 1 illustrates the abbreviations.

46. Aksoy, Carter, and Wright 2015.

47. Roessler 2011. Roessler and Ohls 2018 propose a different rationale for stable power sharing: rulers will share power with numerically large groups located close to the capital because of their strong *civil war* risk if excluded, despite high coup risk if included. I instead concentrate on the other side of the coup/civil war tradeoff by explaining how institutions such as interethnic parties lower *coup* risk and why this facilitates power sharing.

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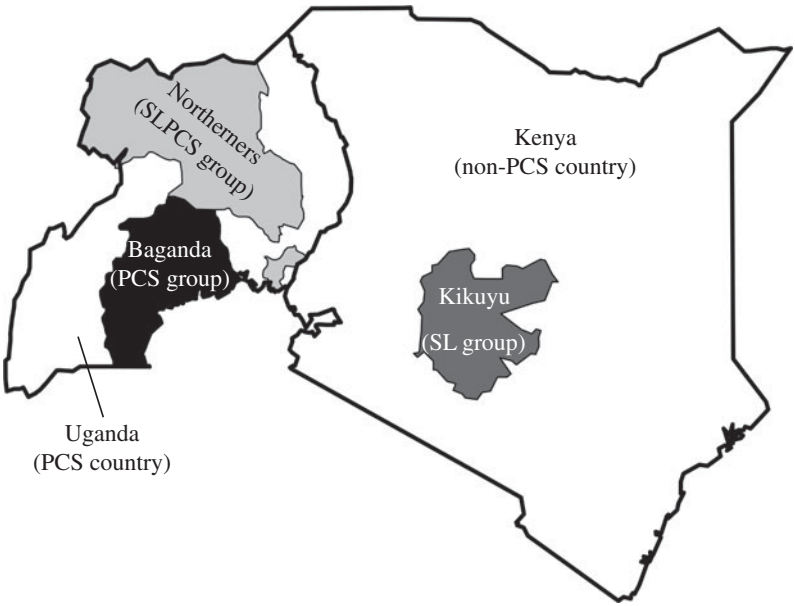

FIGURE 1. *Acronym examples*

The Baganda in Uganda were organized under the Buganda kingdom before colonization and are a PCS group (black). Therefore, any stateless ethnic groups in Uganda, such as northern groups, are SLPCS (light gray), and Uganda is a PCS country. By contrast, there are no PCS groups in Kenya, and therefore all its groups—such as the Kikuyu—are SL (dark gray), and Kenya is a non-PCS country.

Historical Background on Precolonial States

Precolonial Period (Before ~1884). Precolonial Africa featured diverse forms of political organization, ranging from stateless societies such as the Maasai in Kenya to hierarchically organized polities with standing armies such as the Dahomey in Benin.[48] Centralized states often participated in violent activities posited to promote intergroup inequality.[49] Reid argues that Africa experienced a military revolution during the nineteenth century that enlarged the scale and vision of political violence in many parts of the continent.[50] Ethnic groups organized as centralized states

48. Appendix section B.2 provides additional citations for individual cases referenced here. For clarity, I use modern country names even when discussing pre-independence political units.
49. Cederman, Gleditsch, and Buhaug 2013, 33.
50. Reid 2012, 109.

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were well positioned to create the war economies needed to profit from European guns and slave trading. The Dahomey in Benin and Baganda in Uganda gained political dominance by defeating rival states. Earlier, between 1400 and 1700, territories that contained members of a PCS group were more than twice as likely to experience at least one war, 29 percent versus 14 percent.[51] Many PCS groups also participated in the continent's widespread slave trade,[52] as in Chad, Madagascar, Mali, Sudan, and Uganda, which created inequalities between the raiders and the raided. These interactions often created durable and divisive identities, as in Sudan between elite riverine Arabs and previously enslaved Africans. Salient identities among members of PCS groups contrasted with the many non-PCS groups that "recognized no common name and had no feeling that they belonged to a common polity," such as the Tonga in Zambia.[53]

High Colonial Period (~1900–1945). By elevating PCS groups in the colonial governance hierarchy, European colonial rule perpetuated—and perhaps enhanced—interethnic inequalities in political power engendered by divergent political histories. This governance strategy was most closely associated with British rule that favored "indirect" governance.[54] PCS groups provided natural allies because ruling through extant local political hierarchies minimized colonial administrative costs. Examples include the Asante in Ghana, Buganda in Uganda, Hausa and Fulani in Nigeria, and Lozi in Zambia. Famed British administrator Frederick Lugard originally developed the Native Authorities system—commonly referred to as indirect rule—in northern Nigeria because the remains of the Sokoto caliphate provided a suitable bureaucratic infrastructure for governing the territory with few British officials on the ground. Indirect rule also served as a pacification strategy because favoring groups associated with precolonial states undermined their incentives to rebel against the colonizer, as with riverine Arabs in Sudan. Gerring and co-authors provide statistical evidence from a sample of British colonies that longer history as a precolonial state covaries with less direct colonial rule.[55]

Indirect colonial rule often enabled PCS elites to control valuable resources such as land tenure allocation and funds from Native treasuries.[56] Native self-governance also helped to prevent cultural influences that could have undermined traditional elites, for example, influencing Britain's policy of not allowing Christian missionaries to operate in northern Nigeria or in northern Sudan, although other factors such as missionaries' desire to operate in animist-populated regions also

51. My calculations using data described later.
52. Nunn and Wantchekon 2011.
53. Colson 1969, 29.
54. Collier 1982, 83–87 summarizes earlier debates in the literature by claiming that although some had exaggerated the difference between British indirect rule and French direct rule, there were still important distinctions—including how frequently the colonizer ruled through traditional authorities, and chiefs' role and prestige. Wucherpfennig, Hunziker, and Cederman 2016 have recently discussed this debate.
55. Gerring et al. 2011.
56. Herbst 2000, 173–198; Posner 2005, 26–41.

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played a role. Although Britain often attempted to also indirectly rule stateless groups, invented colonial authorities tended to have low legitimacy and mobilization ability. For example, in Nigeria, "when the British seized power in the north, they merely modernized an already accepted political institution. In the south, however, taxation was introduced to support a new order, which the people were prone to regard as tyrannical and antithetical to revered traditions,"[57] consistent with existing discussions of problems with attempting to "invent" political traditions in areas without a state.[58]

Although other colonizers practiced indirect rule less explicitly, the practicality of delegating governance tasks to PCS groups contributed to political inequalities among ethnic groups outside the British empire. Within the German and then Belgian empires, Tutsi kingdoms in both Rwanda and Burundi were de facto autonomous colonies. Even France—typically associated with "direct" governance and forcibly uprooting extant political hierarchies—sometimes ruled indirectly through PCS groups, as with the Fon in southern Benin, Muslim Sahelian groups in northern Chad, and Wolof in Senegal, as Appendix section B.2 describes. Therefore, although British indirect colonial rule should have most effectively perpetuated PCS groups' historical privileges, the historical basis for the argument extends beyond British colonies.

Decolonization Period (post-1945). Different patterns of political party formation that emerged during post-World War II decolonization reinforced the political salience of differences between PCS and stateless groups, engendering the fractured political arena—in some cases because of ethnopolitical exclusion, in others because of tenuous power-sharing coalitions—that postcolonial rulers inherited in most PCS countries. After 1945, Britain and France (and later Belgium) introduced or broadened elections in their African colonies. Although some political parties organized around nationalist ideals, others mirrored ethnic splits. Factions formed during the decolonization era were consequential for postindependence coalitions because political parties that won seats in the final colonial elections usually gained inclusion in the postindependence government.

Uganda exemplifies PCS groups' privileges and the difficulty of forming broad nationalist parties during the decolonization era in colonies with a PCS group, which the qualitative evidence following the regression analysis shows. In Nigeria, an aspiring sultan of Sokoto (precolonial state) led the Northern People's Congress. The party's platform emphasized "the integrity of the north [and] its traditions" whereas "support for broad Nigerian concerns occupied a clear second place."[59] Benin's three hegemonic regional parties split among the former Dahomey kingdom—whose leader descended from the former royal house—the

57. Sklar and Whitaker 1966, 21.
58. Mamdani 1996; Ranger 2012.
59. Lovejoy 1992, 43.

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Porto Novo kingdom, and the north. A divide between PCS and SLPCS groups also occurred in the form of north/south splits in Chad and in Sudan, and a coastal/highlanders split in Madagascar. Beyond electoral competition, ruling monarchies in Ethiopia, Rwanda, and Burundi also generated salient political cleavages, as did rebel group splits in Angola and Zimbabwe between PCS and non-PCS groups. These cases contrast with non-PCS colonies like Côte d'Ivoire where a single nationalist party dominated the political landscape at independence. Later, Tables 4 and 5 present more systematic comparisons using data on ethnic parties during decolonization.

However, party formation is not the only channel through which PCS groups could have influenced ethnic violence. Another possibility is that PCS groups could have made "split domination" regimes—where different ethnic groups dominate civilian and military positions[60]—more likely because PCS groups tended to dominate the bureaucracy whereas colonizers more frequently favored non-PCS groups in the military. Appendix section B.6 provides evidence against this alternative mechanism.

Two Foundational Assumptions

The historical background motivates the empirical applicability of two foundational assumptions about precolonial states used to derive the hypotheses.

Assumption 1. The first assumption is that governments in PCS countries face a stronger commitment problem, for example, inability to commit to let rival ethnic groups retain key cabinet posts. This corresponds with the low commitment row of Table 1, in which the ruler may face a coup/civil war tradeoff.[61] By applying to the country level, this assumption posits that PCS groups' disruptive influence created country-wide spillover effects, therefore raising the conflict propensity of all ethnic groups in PCS countries.[62]

Assumption 1 offers an important consideration for weakly institutionalized environments. Even in settings where the rule of law and constitutions are not well established, alternative institutions can enable political leaders to commit to bargains. In many non-PCS countries, such as Côte d'Ivoire and Kenya, rulers created nationalist parties that facilitated interethnic cooperation after

60. Horowitz 1985.

61. The analysis here implicitly assumes that the distribution of strong/weak types is identical in PCS and non-PCS countries. Appendix section B.5 shows that imposing the alternative assumption that PCS groups are more likely to be the strong type reinforces the main logic.

62. The more typical assumption in ethnic civil war research is that the "treatment status" of an ethnic group is independent of treatments received by other ethnic groups in the country. For example, see Cederman, Gleditsch, and Buhaug 2013; Depetris-Chauvin 2015; Wig 2016. As an exception, Lacina 2015 posits a different within-country spillover mechanism. She argues that ethnic groups are most likely to fight separatist civil wars when they have less representation in the central government than other groups residing in their territory.

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independence. This relates to broader contentions from the authoritarian politics literature about how party institutions can alleviate commitment problems.[63] By contrast, PCS groups inhibited interethnic political institutions during the decolonization era. This decreased any ruler's ability in a PCS country to commit to bargains, regardless of whether or not members of a PCS group controlled the executive branch. Uganda (discussed in detail later) exemplifies this point: the Baganda's ethnically oriented KY party contributed to a noncohesive political arena held together at independence by a tenuous power-sharing agreement among rival ethnic parties. In many countries, SLPCS groups responded strategically to PCS groups' organizations by creating their own ethnic-specific organizations, such as northern groups and the UPC party in Uganda.

Most directly, these considerations imply that PCS groups' disruptive influence should exacerbate interethnic commitment problems. However, the internal security dilemma should persist even when one group emerged from interethnic struggles controlling the most important government positions—in which case *intra*ethnic coup attempts would constitute the main internal threat. Burundi in 1966 exemplifies the "guardianship dilemma" logic, summarized earlier. Officers from a PCS group, Tutsi, overthrew the Tutsi monarch in part because of disagreements regarding how to deal with the Hutu masses, which also resulted in purging Hutus from power.[64] Ongoing civil wars—often triggered in PCS countries by excluding certain ethnic groups from power—further raise coup incentives. For example, in Sudan, a PCS group—riverine Arabs—has dominated power at the center since independence, but successful military coups rotated power between civilian and military regimes. Successful intraethnic coup attempts in 1958, 1969, 1985, and 1989 all stemmed from failures by the incumbent government to eliminate southern rebels and from disagreements over how to best combat the rebellions.[65] In both Burundi and Sudan, the general environment that created incentives for intraethnic coups was endogenous to the interethnic strife triggered by PCS groups.

Assumption 2. The second assumption is that PCS groups' historically rooted advantages should privilege them over stateless groups in their country to achieve power at the center. Using the setup from Table 1, members of a historically privileged group are likely either to rule the country, or to compose a rival group that the ruler faces considerable constraints to excluding from power. In some cases, such as Sudan, PCS groups used their advantages under colonial rule to monopolize state power at independence. In other cases, such as Uganda, SLPCS groups gained ascendancy during the decolonization era, but the PCS group commanded government positions at independence by leveraging their privileged position in the colonial hierarchy and related organizational advantages,

63. Magaloni 2008; Svolik 2012.
64. Lemarchand 1977, 117–21.
65. Bechtold 1990, 582, 592; Tartter 1992, 234–37.

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exemplifying a difficult-to-exclude group. Comparing PCS countries and non-PCS countries, PCS groups' dominance in the colonial hierarchy often came at the expense of stateless groups in their country, implying that SLPCS groups should face greater impediments to accessing power at the center than SL groups.

Hypotheses: Combining the Strategic Logic and Historical Facts

Combining the historically based assumptions with the logic of the coup/civil war trade-off proposed in Roessler and related research yields the hypotheses,[66] and Appendix section B.4 presents a simple game that formalizes the logic. Assumption 1 implies that any ethnic group in a PCS *country* should engage in political violence—either civil wars or coups—more frequently than a group in a non-PCS country because governments in PCS countries should have low commitment ability (top row in Table 1). Assumption 2 explains the form that violence should take within PCS countries, differentiating PCS and SLPCS groups. PCS groups' historical privileges imply that, when they engage in violence, they should frequently use the insider technology of coups d'état (and, related, they should also enjoy a favorable position to succeed at coups). By contrast, SLPCS groups' lack of such privileges should make their members easier to dislodge from power—given strategic incentives for exclusion in PCS countries—which should associate SLPCS groups with civil wars.

Crucially, the posited within-country spillover effects of PCS groups—raising conflict propensity for *all* groups within their country—implies that the relevant comparison for PCS groups and for SLPCS groups is to SL groups. Therefore, theoretical considerations require disaggregating stateless groups by whether or not any PCS groups reside in their country. If the theory is correct, then comparing PCS groups to SLPCS groups will yield the incorrect implication that precolonial statehood exerts *pacifying* effects with regard to civil wars by ignoring within-country spillover effects. This logic yields the two main hypotheses:

H1: SLPCS groups should participate in civil wars more frequently than SL groups.

H2: PCS groups should participate in coups (attempted and successful) more frequently than SL groups.

The theoretical building blocks for the two main hypotheses yield secondary hypotheses. SLPCS groups should face two disadvantages for accessing power at the center relative to SL groups. First, low government commitment ability in PCS countries creates strategic exclusion incentives (assumption 1). Second, SLPCS groups tended to be disadvantaged in the colonial hierarchy, which restricted their access to power (assumption 2).

66. Roessler 2011; 2016.

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H3: SLPCS groups should gain inclusion in power at the center less frequently than SL groups.

Comparing PCS groups to SL groups does not not yield a corollary to H3. Combining the strategic exclusion incentives in PCS countries (assumption 1) with PCS groups' historical advantages (assumption 2) yields ambiguous expectations for whether PCS or SL groups should more frequently access power at the center.

Appendix section B.3 presents additional hypotheses that predict coups and civil wars conditional on ethnopolitical representation status, explaining why both PCS groups and SLPCS groups should more frequently initiate civil wars than SL groups conditional on exclusion (H4 and H5), and why PCS groups should more frequently launch coups than SL groups conditional on inclusion (H6).

Data and Empirical Setup

Sample

The unit of analysis in the main regression specifications is ethnic group-years. The sample includes ethnic groups from most countries in Sub-Saharan Africa between independence and 2013. I draw ethnic groups from the Ethnic Power Relations database (EPR),[67] which provides panel data on politically relevant ethnic groups and their access to power in the central government.[68] Appendix section C.1 lists African countries missing EPR data, most of which are small countries that do not meet key scope conditions of the theory by not having an indigenous population or by lacking multiple ethnic groups that can compete for power.

Robustness checks analyze two theoretically relevant subsamples: ex-British colonies, and the Cold War era. The posited colonial mechanisms are most relevant for ex-British colonies because Britain was more likely to rule indirectly through PCS groups' established political hierarchies. Furthermore, the focus on events leading up to independence suggests that the mechanisms should most likely operate earlier in the postcolonial era. Other appendix tables stratify on ethnopolitical inclusion status.

Precolonial States

Defining states has posed difficulties for social scientists, including anthropologists who have long debated how to classify states in precolonial Africa.[69] Even precolonial African polities that exhibited hierarchical organization pose classification

67. Vogt et al. 2015.

68. Cederman, Wimmer, and Min "classify an ethnic group as politically relevant if at least one political organization claims to represent it in national politics or if its members are subjected to state-led political discrimination" (2010, 99).

69. McIntosh 2005; Southall 1974.

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challenges when considering "stateness" traits used by social scientists to explain historical state formation in other regions. African rulers and the African state system as a whole placed lower emphasis on territorial sovereignty than did early modern Western Europe.[70] Even highly centralized states by African standards usually possessed rudimentary political institutions compared to contemporary Asian agrarian empires.[71]

Coding PCS Groups. Acknowledging these difficulties, I coded an EPR ethnic group as having a precolonial state if co-ethnics governed a substantial percentage of members of the EPR ethnic group through a single or small number of political organizations that exhibited some degree of centralized rule on the eve of colonization. Although the operational definition of a state is minimal, the paucity of reliable historical information for most precolonial African political organizations makes it difficult or perhaps impossible to operationalize a conceptual definition that requires more nuanced information about the degree or origins of centralization for each group. I restrict attention to states that existed at the eve of colonization because the theory posits that precolonial states' influence on colonial policies is a key persistence mechanism.[72]

Constructing the data set proceeded in three main steps that Appendix A details along with country-by-country coding justifications. First, I consulted eleven continent-wide maps of historical states and other sources to generate a list of candidate states. Second, I used additional secondary sources to match candidate states with EPR ethnic groups to generate a list of candidate PCS groups. Third, I examined four conditions that correspond with the operational definition of precolonial states to determine which candidate groups to code as PCS: (1) co-ethnic governance requires the state was independent rather than tributary; (2) some evidence of central authority such as acknowledged hierarchy of authority in regions outside the capital and centralized tax collection, as opposed to nomadic confederations or trading centers; (3) one (or a small number of) states governed a substantial percentage of members of the EPR ethnic group, as opposed to groups such as Yoruba in Nigeria or Bamileke in Cameroon that were fractured into dozens or hundreds of mini-states; and (4) these conditions held on the eve of colonization. In total, I consulted over one hundred secondary sources to code the PCS variable, which Figure 2 depicts. It uses the same color scheme as Figure 1: PCS groups in black, SLPCS groups in light gray, and SL groups in dark gray. Table A.2 lists every PCS group and PCS country.

70. Warner 2001.

71. Kohli 2004, 297.

72. This coding decision also reflects practical considerations. Information about precolonial states in Africa becomes even sparser in periods predating the eve of colonization. Additionally, suppose groups with a state that collapsed before the eve of colonization—therefore coded as stateless—exhibited similar tendencies as PCS groups. Then this coding procedure should underestimate PCS effects.

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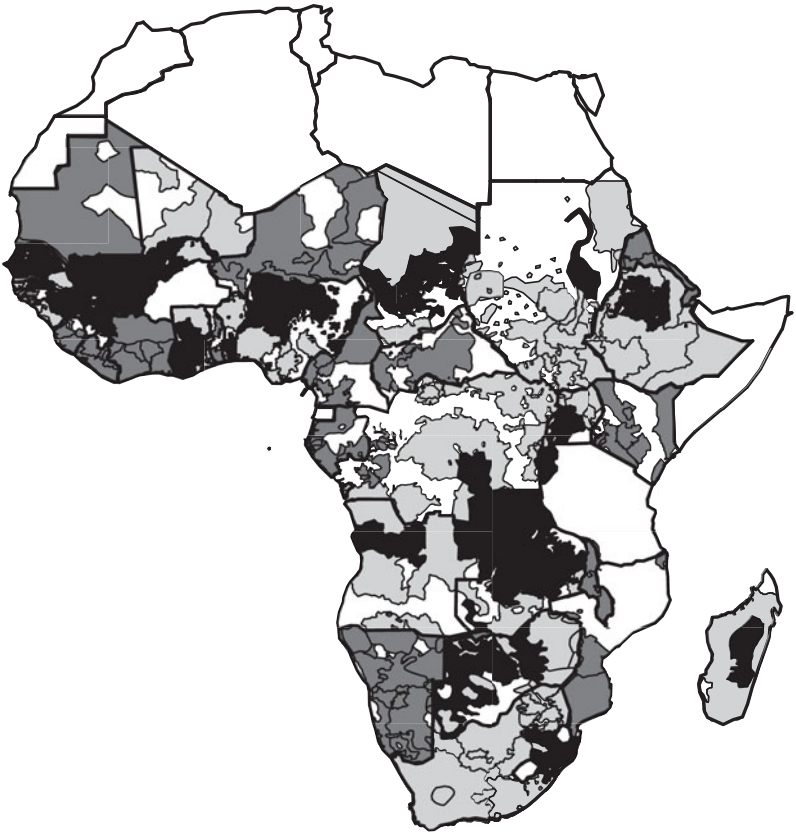

Notes: The sample does not include entirely white countries, as Appendix section C.1 discusses. Other white spots correspond with territory lacking any politically relevant EPR groups. Ethnic groups in Eritrea are SLPCS prior to 1993 because they belonged to Ethiopia.

FIGURE 2. *PCS groups in Sub-Saharan Africa*

Robustness checks evaluate alternative PCS measures that narrow the statehood definition. First, the main measure codes groups like the Tswana in Botswana that exhibited characteristics of centralized rule but were not organized into a single state as PCS if a small number of states governed members of the modern ethnic group, especially if one state was clearly ascendant. The first alternative PCS measure codes groups like the Tswana as non-PCS by changing the third operational criterion. Table A.2 denotes these groups with an asterisk. Second, the eve-of-colonization criterion is ambiguous for territories that experienced early major colonial interference (pre-1870), such as Egypt's takeover of central Sudan, Portuguese penetration of the Kasanje and Matamba states in Angola, and France's incursion into Senegambia. Table A.2 denotes states that experienced early interference with a

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dagger, which the second alternative PCS measure codes as non-PCS by changing the fourth coding criterion (also see the detailed coding rules in Appendix A).

Two reasons motivate coding a binary variable rather than an ordinal or continuous PCS measure. First, conditional on a PCS group containing enough members to potentially disrupt creating nationally oriented political organizations,[73] the theory does not address PCS groups' size. Perhaps larger PCS groups monotonically imply less ability to cooperate, or perhaps there is a nonmonotonic effect in which very large PCS groups achieve sufficient support to mitigate the posited sources of bargaining failure. The mostly peaceful PCS countries Botswana, Guinea, Senegal, and Zambia (see the qualitative evidence section) each feature a PCS group composing at least 40 percent of its country's total population. Although intriguing to consider in future research, I prefer a simpler measure that directly assesses the present hypotheses. Second, at the country level, having at least one PCS group or not is the key theoretical distinction. Conditional on having at least one, the number of PCS groups should be unimportant because even one PCS group should create conditions for ethnic violence. The theory does not suggest that multiple PCS groups would necessarily cause more violence.

Improvements Over Existing Measures. Despite numerous important research questions to which existing measures of historical political centralization contribute,[74] properly assessing the present hypotheses requires a new measure. Bockstette, Chanda, and Putterman code a territory's history of state-like institutions dating back over two millennia to the year 0 CE. Their data set uses modern country boundaries as the unit of analysis, which precludes assessing ethnic group behavior.[75]

Murdock's *Ethnographic Atlas* codes an ordinal political "jurisdictional hierarchy" variable at the ethnic group level on the eve of colonization,[76] used widely in the literature. A score of 3 or 4 indicates a large state, the analog to the present conceptualization of precolonial states, and this was one of the sources I used to create the list of candidate states described earlier. However, Murdock's variable exhibits three main drawbacks, which Appendix section A.3 discusses in more depth.

First, verifying Murdock's data using additional secondary sources—as the present coding exercise does—reveals many questionably coded cases. Among the thirty-five Murdock ethnic groups coded as large states (located in countries in the present sample), only 40 percent correspond with a group coded as PCS in my data set. Although an additional four groups had centralized institutions but no corresponding

73. Only in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is the largest PCS group less than 10 percent of the country's population (Luba-Kasai, 7%), and the median size of the largest PCS group in PCS countries is 27 percent.

74. For example, Bockstette, Chanda, and Putterman 2002; Murdock 1967.

75. Bockstette, Chanda, and Putterman 2002.

76. Murdock 1967.

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EPR group, nearly half of the Murdock state groups either exhibit no evidence of centralized institutions (29%) or governed states that had declined considerably by the nineteenth century (20%), which Table A.5 shows. Conversely, among the twenty-eight EPR ethnic groups that I coded as a PCS group, only 50 percent correspond with a Murdock state group (Table A.3). Although the present measure is not perfect, the extent of disagreement with Murdock is striking. A related concern is that Murdock contains a terse reference list and coding justifications, in contrast to the lengthy country-by-country scorings that I present in Appendix A that allow researchers to easily examine every coding decision for the PCS variable.[77]

Second, researchers cannot directly use Murdock ethnic group units for conflict analysis because no data set codes civil wars and coups to correspond with his data set. Depetris-Chauvin matches ACLED's highly disaggregated civil war data with African ethnic groups,[78] but these conflict data are available only since 1997 and therefore cannot convincingly assess a historical factor posited—at least in the present theory—to most strongly affect outcomes closer to independence. Additionally, existing research on ethnic conflict demonstrates the importance of focusing on *politically relevant* ethnic groups,[79] and many of Murdock's groups lack political relevance.

Third, although it is possible to systematically match Murdock ethnic groups with EPR ethnic groups, merging the two is quite difficult and compounds measurement problems with Murdock's original variable. For the entire African continent, Murdock's map of ethnic group location contains 843 tribal areas,[80] of which 441 have a corresponding ethnic group in *Ethnographic Atlas*,[81] compared to 254 politically relevant EPR ethnic groups in Africa with location polygons. In some cases, Murdock and EPR groups match one-to-one and in other cases an EPR group aggregates multiple Murdock groups, but many EPR groups lack a corresponding Murdock group (even when accounting for multiple names and English translations). In other cases, a Murdock group matches the EPR group, but international borders partition a group that ruled a precolonial state in one modern country, but not others. For example, Murdock codes "Ruanda" as a large state—accurate for Rwandan Tutsi, but not for Tutsi in DRC or Banyarwanda in Uganda.

The appendix further evaluates problems with matching Murdock and EPR by comparing Wig's data,[82] who advanced the literature by systematically combining the two, with mine. Based primarily on group names and location, he assigns at least one Murdock group—and, therefore, a jurisdictional hierarchy score—to

77. Ibid.
78. Depetris-Chauvin 2015; Raleigh et al. 2010.
79. Cederman, Gleditsch, and Buhaug 2013; Posner 2004.
80. Murdock 1959.
81. Murdock 1967. Michalopoulos and Papaioannou 2013 merge the groups from Murdock's map and his *Ethnographic Atlas*.
82. Wig 2016.

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almost every EPR group in Africa. However, among EPR groups in the present sample—using a binary Murdock precolonial state variable that equals 1 if the group's matched jurisdictional hierarchy is 3 or 4, and 0 otherwise—the correlation between PCS and Murdock/Wig is only 0.33. Among PCS groups, only 43 percent are states on the binary Murdock/Wig measure (Table A.3), and the converse percentage is only 38 percent (Table A.4). Overall, despite conceptual similarities, the present measure differs from and improves considerably upon Murdock.

Dependent Variables

Most regression tables examine two civil war measures. I coded ethnic group-level civil war onset by assigning Fearon and Laitin's major civil wars (at least 1,000 battle deaths during the conflict) to EPR ethnic groups primarily using ACD2EPR, which codes ethnic wars as involving ethnic-specific recruitment and war aims.[83] Appendix section C.2 elaborates upon the coding procedure. I additionally examine Roessler's and Roessler and Ohls's civil war onset variable,[84] which also measures group-level major conflicts but does not require ethnic-specific rebellion aims (hence, "ethnic participation"). Robustness checks examine ACD2EPR's measure, which uses a lower death threshold.[85]

The regression tables also analyze successful and attempted coups d'etat.[86] A robustness check examines participation in irregular interethnic regime changes. Successful coups are appropriate to analyze because the theory anticipates that PCS groups' greater access to power at the center should enable *succeeding* at coups in addition to launching them. Successful coups can also be measured with less error than failed coups, which Appendix section C.3 discusses.

Origins of Precolonial Statehood Covariates

No process randomly assigned precolonial states. Although no silver-bullet research design can completely solve this fundamental causal inference concern, the statistical models control for posited causes of state formation in precolonial Africa and for alternative explanations of civil wars and coups, in addition to numerous robustness checks. Appendix section C.4 details every covariate.

A growing social scientific literature examines causes of state formation in precolonial Africa. Much of this research applies factors proposed in research on European state formation—population density, trade, and warfare—and analyzes their applicability to Africa.[87] Studies using ethnic group-level data have shown that precolonial states were more likely to emerge in territories exhibiting greater ecological diversity,

83. Fearon and Laitin 2003; Vogt et al. 2015.
84. Roessler 2011; Roessler and Ohls 2018.
85. Vogt et al. 2015.
86. Roessler 2011 and Roessler and Ohls 2018 measure these variables at the ethnic group level.
87. Osafo-Kwaako and Robinson 2013, 7–8.

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which promoted trade,[88] and with lower tsetse fly prevalence, which facilitated higher population density.[89] At the country level, Nunn demonstrates a negative correlation between slave exports and political centralization.[90] Others examine long-term effects of historical warfare in Africa, albeit without directly analyzing effects on precolonial state formation.[91] In a broader sample, Putterman shows a strong relationship between timing of a territory's neolithic revolution and historical state development.[92] Each regression table accounts for these possible determinants of precolonial statehood by including specifications with and without the five precolonial covariates: ecological diversity, tsetse fly, slave exports, historical warfare, and neolithic timing.

Standard Conflict Covariates

Each table also evaluates specifications that include the following seven covariates, which are commonly examined in studies of civil war and coups: at the country level, income per capita, population, democracy level, and geographic constraints to broadcasting power; and at the ethnic group level, share of the national population, distance from the capital city, and presence of a giant oil field. Although some state formation and standard conflict covariates raise posttreatment bias issues, each table includes specifications with and without different combinations of covariates to show the results do not hinge on a single set of covariates.

Statistical Models

The main regression tables estimate logistic regressions:

$$\ln\left(\frac{Y_{it}}{1-Y_{it}}\right) = \beta_0 + \beta_P \cdot P_i + \beta_S \cdot S_i + \boldsymbol{X}_{it}^{'}\beta_X + \boldsymbol{T}_{it}^{'}\beta_T + \varepsilon_{it}, \qquad (1)$$

where Y_{it} is an indicator variable for ethnic civil war onset (with years of ongoing civil war dropped) or successful coup attempt, P_i indicates PCS groups, S_i indicates SLPCS groups, β_P and β_S are the main parameters of interest, and $\boldsymbol{X}_{it}$ is a vector of covariates that differs by column. The vector $\boldsymbol{T}_{it}$ contains standard event history controls for civil wars or coups—years since the last with civil war incidence or years since last coup, and cubic splines—plus lagged country-level civil war incidence in the civil war regressions. I cluster the standard errors at the ethnic group level.

88. Fenske 2014.
89. Alsan 2015.
90. Nunn 2008.
91. Besley and Reynal-Querol 2014; Dincecco, Fenske, and Onorato 2016.
92. Putterman 2008. However, Osafo-Kwaako and Robinson's 2013 evidence qualifies our knowledge about causes of precolonial African state formation. Testing many anthropologists' contentions that Eurocentric state formation models are inapplicable to Africa, they show null correlations between precolonial centralization and factors related to each of population density, trade, and warfare in a sample of African ethnic groups.

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Importantly, the main specifications do not include country fixed effects. A key premise of the theory is that PCS groups caused within-country spillover effects that should raise violence propensity for all groups in PCS countries, which necessitates comparing groups in PCS countries to stateless groups in *non*-PCS countries (SL groups), as the hypotheses state. The main civil war hypothesis (H1), for example, concerns *stateless* groups in PCS countries because PCS groups tended to exclude SLPCS groups from power. Therefore, within-country comparisons generated by modeling country fixed effects would not provide a valid test of the main hypotheses. This distinguishes the present analysis from existing statistical studies on precolonial statehood and civil war that use a subnational unit of analysis and include country fixed effects in every regression model.[93]

Precolonial Statehood and Ethnic Violence

Main Results

Tables 2 and 3 support the main hypotheses. Every column contains PCS and SLPCS indicators—leaving SL groups as the omitted basis category—and event history controls. Table 2 assesses H1 by examining ethnic civil war onset in columns 1 through 4 and onset of ethnic group participation in civil war (the Roessler measure) in columns 5 through 8.[94] Table 3 assesses H2 by examining successful coup attempts in columns 1 through 4 and all coup attempts in columns 5 through 8. The first column for each dependent variable (1 and 5) does not add additional covariates.

The estimates from column 1 of Table 2 show that SLPCS groups participated in civil wars 4.9 times more frequently than SL groups, in 0.70 percent of ethnic group years compared to 0.14 percent. PCS groups participated in civil wars 2.3 times more frequently than SL groups, in 0.32 percent of ethnic group years. Analyzing raw trends in the data demonstrates that, quite simply, SL groups have rarely initiated civil wars. The first major ethnic civil war in a non-PCS country occurred in 1989 in Liberia. In total, only six major ethnic group-level onsets occurred in non-PCS countries between independence and 2013. This compares to forty-nine group-level onsets in PCS countries, including thirty through 1989. The relative onset frequencies are similar for the Roessler civil war variable in Column 5: 1.16 percent for SLPCS groups, 0.86 percent for PCS groups, and 0.34 percent for SL groups.

The estimates from column 1 of Table 3 show that PCS groups participated in successful coups 2.2 times more frequently than SL groups, in 1.56 percent of ethnic group years compared to 0.70 percent. Column 5 shows respective frequencies of 2.41 percent and 1.28 percent for coup attempts. By contrast, SLPCS groups participated in both successful and all coup attempts less frequently than SL groups, which

93. Depetris-Chauvin 2015; Wig 2016.
94. Roessler 2011.

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TABLE 2. *Main civil war results*

	DV: Major ethnic civil war onset				*DV: Major civil war onset (ethnic participation)*			
	(1)	*(2)*	*(3)*	*(4)*	*(5)*	*(6)*	*(7)*	*(8)*
PCS GROUP	0.814	0.865	0.782	0.942	0.930**	0.902*	1.089**	0.994**
	(0.575)	(0.592)	(0.606)	(0.667)	(0.442)	(0.474)	(0.445)	(0.489)
SLPCS GROUP	1.588***	1.621***	1.508***	1.652***	1.231***	1.205***	1.300***	1.241***
	(0.449)	(0.432)	(0.439)	(0.511)	(0.347)	(0.343)	(0.377)	(0.384)
TSETSE FLY		-0.561		-0.612		-0.870		-1.501
		(1.180)		(1.248)		(1.129)		(1.003)
NEOLITHIC TRANSITION		0.512***		0.521***		0.309**		0.281*
		(0.154)		(0.142)		(0.148)		(0.159)
ECOLOGICAL DIVERSITY		0.236		-0.0390		0.608		0.685
		(0.727)		(0.767)		(0.692)		(0.713)
SLAVE EXPORTS		-0.0784		-0.182***		-0.00641		-0.0321
		(0.0613)		(0.0662)		(0.0642)		(0.0608)
HISTORICAL WARFARE		-0.00101		0.213		-0.367		0.133
		(0.443)		(0.436)		(0.430)		(0.452)
GROUP % OF POP.			0.230	-0.398			-0.158	-0.584
			(1.005)	(0.791)			(1.190)	(1.030)
DISTANCE FROM CAPITAL			0.0593	0.0377			0.110**	0.126***
			(0.0537)	(0.0578)			(0.0436)	(0.0452)
DIFFICULT GEOGRAPHY			0.158	0.284			-0.00617	-0.108
			(0.202)	(0.213)			(0.169)	(0.175)
GIANT OIL FIELD			0.774	1.726***			0.326	0.863
			(0.625)	(0.634)			(0.574)	(0.571)
DEMOCRACY			-0.0661**	-0.0601**			-0.0416*	-0.0341
			(0.0300)	(0.0273)			(0.0249)	(0.0262)
GDP P.C.			-0.474*	-0.651**			-0.555***	-0.599**
			(0.275)	(0.310)			(0.198)	(0.206)
POPULATION			-0.179	-0.361			-0.264	-0.311*
			(0.246)	(0.307)			(0.169)	(0.171)
Group-years	8,102	8,102	8,102	8,102	8,108	8,108	8,108	8,108
Event history controls?	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES

Notes: Logistic regression estimates with ethnic group-clustered standard errors in parentheses. $^{*}p < .1$; $^{**}p < .05$; $^{***}p < .01$.

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TABLE 3. *Main coup results*

	DV: Successful coup				*DV: Coup attempt*			
	(1)	*(2)*	*(3)*	*(4)*	*(5)*	*(6)*	*(7)*	*(8)*
PCS GROUP	0.805***	0.847**	0.719**	1.029**	0.645**	0.633*	0.527*	0.775**
	(0.310)	(0.396)	(0.303)	(0.407)	(0.280)	(0.331)	(0.290)	(0.343)
SLPCS GROUP	-0.482	-0.504	-0.272	-0.0417	-0.389	-0.482	-0.242	-0.0905
	(0.368)	(0.430)	(0.403)	(0.469)	(0.265)	(0.310)	(0.287)	(0.321)
TSETSE FLY		1.181		2.420*		0.969		1.545
		(1.127)		(1.469)		(0.851)		(1.029)
NEOLITHIC TRANSITION		0.424***		0.542***		0.407***		0.504***
		(0.118)		(0.167)		(0.109)		(0.134)
ECOLOGICAL DIVERSITY		-0.600		-0.640		0.0813		0.112
		(0.680)		(0.755)		(0.559)		(0.587)
SLAVE EXPORTS		0.0536		0.0476		0.0490		0.0567
		(0.0710)		(0.0634)		(0.0558)		(0.0503)
HISTORICAL WARFARE		0.282		-0.0489		0.0658		-0.297
		(0.276)		(0.284)		(0.244)		(0.254)
GROUP % OF POP.			1.082**	1.685***			1.114**	1.708***
			(0.504)	(0.543)			(0.464)	(0.472)
DISTANCE FROM CAPITAL			-0.0776	-0.103			-0.0587	-0.0705
			(0.0658)	(0.0831)			(0.0571)	(0.0599)
DIFFICULT GEOGRAPHY			-0.0618	-0.0507			-0.0577	-0.126
			(0.154)	(0.165)			(0.157)	(0.141)
GIANT OIL FIELD			-0.646	-0.527			-0.731	-0.667
			(0.936)	(0.948)			(0.649)	(0.593)
DEMOCRACY			-0.0335*	-0.0187			-0.0386**	-0.0232
			(0.0174)	(0.0166)			(0.0162)	(0.0159)
GDP P.C.			-0.448**	-0.470**			-0.240*	-0.157
			(0.182)	(0.212)			(0.142)	(0.168)
POPULATION			0.0158	-0.0338			0.0821	0.0825
			(0.181)	(0.194)			(0.121)	(0.140)
Group-years	8,567	8,567	8,567	8,567	8,567	8,567	8,567	8,567
Event history controls?	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES

Notes: Logistic regression estimates with ethnic group-clustered standard errors in parentheses. $^{*}p < .1$; $^{**}p < .05$; $^{***}p < .01$.

corresponds with SLPCS groups' infrequent access to political power (see Table 6, presented later). Although PCS groups and SL groups participated in roughly the same *number* of successful coups between independence and 2013—thirty-one versus twenty-nine, respectively—the percentage difference arises because PCS groups infrequently appear in the sample relative to SL groups (see Table C.2).

Adding different sets of control variables does not change the main findings in Tables 2 and 3. Columns 2 and 6 add to the baseline specification the five predictors of African state formation discussed earlier, columns 3 and 7 add to the baseline specification the seven standard conflict covariates, and columns 4 and 8 include all controls. The relationships between SLPCS groups and civil wars, and between PCS groups and coups, are statistically significant at 5 percent in most specifications, although the p-value for PCS groups rises above 0.05 in two coup attempt regressions.

Intriguingly, although the coefficient estimate for PCS groups is positive in every civil war specification, it is statistically significant only when analyzing ethnic participation in war (columns 5 through 8) rather than rebellions with ethnic aims (columns 1 through 4). Although only a small number of war onsets differentiate the two measures, cases such as Baganda in Uganda (two war onsets in the 1980s, but neither proclaimed ethnic-specific aims) suggest that after being forced from power, PCS groups might become willing to forge broader coalitions to regain power. Overall, however, the theoretical expectations for PCS groups and civil wars are ambiguous. Although PCS groups should rebel frequently when excluded (see Appendix section B.3 for H4), their historical advantages for gaining access to power (assumption 2) should diminish reliance on outsider rebellions, which is why the theory does not produce an analog of H1 for PCS groups.

Regarding other covariates, democracy and GDP per capita enter negatively, and statistically significantly in many specifications, consistent with existing arguments. Group percentage of the population positively covaries with coups, which is sensible because group size and political inclusion positively correlate (see Table 6). Finally, a longer period since a country transitioned to agricultural production positively covaries with civil wars and coups, which may be intriguing to analyze in future research because the typical assumption in related research is that neolithic transition timing influenced modern outcomes by affecting precolonial statehood.[95]

Additional Robustness Checks

Appendix section D.1 conducts numerous robustness checks including jackknife sample sensitivity analysis, estimating the bias of selection on unobservables from selection on observables, changing the dependent variables and PCS measures, and changing the statistical models. Appendix section D.2 addresses debates about border formation and "dismembered" ethnic groups in Africa by showing similar results even when limiting the sample to ethnic groups partitioned across

95. Putterman 2008.

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international boundaries and modeling transnational ethnic group fixed effects.[96] Appendix section D.3 disaggregates two theoretically relevant subsamples, showing the main results are particularly strong among ex-British colonies and during the Cold War era.

Evidence for Intervening Implications

Ethnic Parties at Independence

A key posited historical legacy is that PCS groups promoted ethnic parties at the expense of interethnic and nationalist-oriented political parties, which motivates assumption 1. Tables 4 and 5 statistically support this argument. In Table 4, the unit of analysis is country and the dependent variable is ethnic parties' vote share in the final decolonization election.[97] Harkness codes this variable using Chandra's coding

TABLE 4. *Ethnic parties during decolonization: country-level evidence*

	DV: Ethnic party vote %	
	(1)	*(2)*
PCS COUNTRY	35.76***	35.33**
	(11.60)	(14.94)
NEOLITHIC TRANSITION		3.682
		(7.309)
SLAVE EXPORTS		0.645
		(2.558)
DIFFICULT GEOGRAPHY		1.712
		(6.600)
POPULATION		−0.737
		(7.027)
GDP P.C.		14.20
		(11.18)
BRITISH COLONY		16.88
		(13.94)
Countries	33	33
R-squared	0.213	0.299

Notes: OLS regressions with robust standard errors in parentheses, using a cross-section of countries with available ethnic vote share data. $*p < .1$; $**p < .05$; $***p < .01$.

96. Englebert, Tarango, and Carter 2002; Michalopoulos and Papaioannou 2016.

97. The sample excludes never-colonized Ethiopia and Liberia, and Djibouti and Eritrea. It includes cases such as former Portuguese colonies that did not have elections, but for which it is possible to code the dependent variable given Harkness's 2018 ethnic coding of the rebel groups. However, the (unreported) results are very similar when excluding every major violent liberation war case (which also includes Zimbabwe, South Africa, and Namibia).

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rules for ethnic parties.[98] The main explanatory variable is an indicator for PCS countries. Column 1 runs a bivariate regression, and column 2 adds every country-level covariate from Tables 2 and 3 plus an indicator for British colonialism. In both columns, the coefficient estimate for PCS country is positive and statistically significant. The coefficient estimates are also large in magnitude: ethnic parties received 52 percent of the total vote share in the final pre-independence elections in PCS countries, compared to 16 percent in non-PCS countries. The PCS country indicator also nearly perfectly predicts countries in which an ethnic party governed at independence: the only counterexample is non-PCS Sierra Leone, compared to eight PCS countries (Angola, Benin, Chad, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sudan, Uganda, and Zimbabwe).

TABLE 5. *Ethnic parties during decolonization: ethnic group-level evidence*

	DV: Ethnic party indicator			
	(1)	*(2)*	*(3)*	*(4)*
		Panel A. All groups		
PCS GROUP	1.984***	1.790***	2.070***	2.058***
	(0.542)	(0.613)	(0.611)	(0.733)
SLPCS GROUP	0.637	0.498	0.816	0.778
	(0.486)	(0.526)	(0.612)	(0.713)
Ethnic groups	153	153	153	153
PCS origins covariates?	NO	YES	NO	YES
Standard conflict covariates?	NO	NO	YES	YES
		Panel B. Groups >10% of pop.		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
PCS GROUP	1.918***	1.966***	2.281***	2.728***
	(0.604)	(0.727)	(0.695)	(0.883)
SLPCS GROUP	1.471**	1.395**	1.628**	1.784*
	(0.581)	(0.657)	(0.747)	(0.922)
Ethnic groups	87	87	87	87
PCS origins covariates?	NO	YES	NO	YES
Standard conflict covariates?	NO	NO	YES	YES

Notes: Logistic regression estimates with robust standard errors in parentheses, using a cross-section of ethnic groups with available ethnic party data. The covariates in different columns correspond with Tables 2 and 3. The sample in panel B includes only ethnic groups that compose at least 10 percent of their country's population. $^{*}p < .1$; $^{**}p < .05$; $^{***}p < .01$.

Table 5 changes the unit of analysis to ethnic groups. For each group, the dependent variable indicates representation by an ethnic party. Operationally, this requires an ethnic party that represents the group to have received a positive percentage of votes in the final pre-independence election.[99] Panel A includes all politically relevant ethnic groups in each country's first year of independence (see Tables D.6 and D.7), except groups from the four countries that Table 4 excludes, and panel B includes only groups that compose at least 10 percent of the country's population.

98. Chandra 2011; Harkness 2018.
99. Coded by the author using Harkness's 2018 appendix.

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PCS groups' distinctiveness is stark: in column 1 of panel A, the predicted probability of an ethnic party is 52 percent for PCS groups, 22 percent for SLPCS groups, and 13 percent for SL groups. Stateless groups are somewhat more heterogenous than PCS groups in terms of their size and political clout, which perhaps explains the null coefficient estimate for SLPCS groups in panel A. However, when stratifying on larger ethnic groups that could more reasonably have sought to exert considerable influence in the political arena (panel B), SLPCS groups exhibit statistically distinguishable behavior from SL groups—consistent with the argument that actions by PCS groups to undermine nationalist-oriented parties triggered responses by other groups within their country. In column 1 of panel B, the predicted probability of an ethnic party is 59 percent for PCS groups, 48 percent for SLPCS groups, and 18 percent for SL groups. Related, in ten of thirteen PCS countries in which a PCS group formed an ethnic party (out of eighteen PCS countries in the sample), at least one SLPCS group also formed an ethnic party.

Predicting or Conditioning on Ethnopolitical Inclusion

Statistical evidence supports the secondary hypotheses 3 through 6, which either predict or condition on ethnopolitical inclusion. These results relate to three findings from the literature. First, few studies endogenize ethnopolitical representation status. Wucherpfennig, Hunziker, and Cederman examine distance from the coast and colonizer identity,[100] and my findings contribute to this small but important research agenda. Second, whereas Roessler shows that ethnopolitical exclusion covaries positively with civil war onset and negatively with successful coups,[101] my findings show that precolonial statehood explains variance in ethnic violence even when stratifying on access to central power. Third, the results yield an opposing finding from Wig by showing that, conditional on exclusion, PCS groups rebel more often than SL groups.[102] Earlier I discuss that these differences arise because (1) I do not compare PCS groups to stateless groups in their own country and (2) the present PCS variable exhibits less measurement error than combining Murdock's jurisdictional hierarchy variable with EPR data.[103]

Table 6 analyzes ethnopolitical inclusion (H3) using EPR data.[104] A group-year is coded as 1 on the ethnopolitical inclusion variable if it scores "monopoly," "dominant," "senior partner," or "junior partner" on EPR's political status variable—indicating that the group commands either the presidency or at least some cabinet positions in the administration—and 0 otherwise.[105] Using the same covariate groupings as in Tables 2 and 3, the four columns in Table 6 support H3 by demonstrating the rarity of

100. Wucherpfennig, Hunziker, and Cederman 2016.
101. Roessler 2011.
102. Wig 2016.
103. Murdock 1967.
104. Vogt et al. 2015.
105. Cederman, Wimmer, and Min 2010, 99–101.

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ethnopolitical inclusion for SLPCS groups relative to SL groups. In column 1, the predicted probability for inclusion is 41 percent for a SLPCS group and 70 percent for a SL group (and 76% for PCS groups). The difference between SLPCS and SL groups is statistically significant in all specifications.

TABLE 6. *Ethnopolitical inclusion*

	DV: Ethnopolitical inclusion			
	(1)	*(2)*	*(3)*	*(4)*
PCS GROUP	0.279	0.203	0.273	0.390
	(0.388)	(0.418)	(0.399)	(0.448)
SLPCS GROUP	-1.241***	-1.376***	-0.958***	-0.994***
	(0.268)	(0.293)	(0.354)	(0.342)
TSETSE FLY		-1.882**		-1.286
		(0.892)		(0.979)
NEOLITHIC TRANSITION		-0.516***		-0.378**
		(0.166)		(0.175)
ECOLOGICAL DIVERSITY		-1.440**		-1.326*
		(0.617)		(0.678)
SLAVE EXPORTS		0.105*		0.182***
		(0.0536)		(0.0593)
HISTORICAL WARFARE		0.601		0.0821
		(0.421)		(0.391)
GROUP % OF POP.			2.170**	2.329***
			(1.054)	(0.887)
DISTANCE FROM CAPITAL			-0.138**	-0.103**
			(0.0613)	(0.0509)
DIFFICULT GEOGRAPHY			-0.159	-0.194
			(0.145)	(0.149)
GIANT OIL FIELD			-0.852**	-1.206**
			(0.373)	(0.484)
DEMOCRACY			0.0486***	0.0550***
			(0.0163)	(0.0193)
GDP P.C.			0.385***	0.441***
			(0.132)	(0.152)
POPULATION			0.222*	0.177
			(0.126)	(0.139)
Group-years	8,567	8,567	8,567	8,567

Notes: Logistic regression estimates with ethnic group-clustered standard errors in parentheses. No specifications contain event history controls because the logit models do not converge, although unreported linear models with years since last change from inclusion to exclusion or vice versa (akin to civil war onset and coup onset) and cubic splines yields qualitatively identical results. $^{*}p < .1$; $^{**}p < .05$; $^{***}p < .01$.

In appendix section D.4, I assess the three conditional civil war and coup hypotheses derived in section B.3. I provide evidence that both PCS and SLPCS groups rebel more frequently than SL groups conditional on exclusion, and PCS groups are more likely than SL groups to participate in coups conditional on inclusion. Although the primary purpose of these regressions is to assess the conditional hypotheses, they also rule out a particular confounding concern for Tables 2 and 3. Even if unmodeled factors affected PCS groups' coup behavior by raising their propensity for ethnopolitical inclusion (independent of affecting PCS status), and affected SLPCS groups' civil war behavior by lowering their propensity for inclusion (independent

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of affecting SLPCS status), these results show similar patterns even when conditioning on ethnopolitical access.[106]

Qualitative Evidence

Examining countries individually demonstrates that in fourteen of eighteen PCS countries, either of two types of events occurred that support the theoretical mechanisms: (1) PCS groups dominated the government at or shortly after independence and coups or civil wars occurred, and (2) members of a PCS group participated in at least one civil war or successful coup between independence and the end of the Cold War era. Uganda demonstrates additional support for the posited theoretical mechanisms. Appendix E provides additional references for individual cases.

Modal Violence Paths in PCS Countries

All but one PCS country fits into one of four modal paths based on ethnopolitical inclusion patterns and ethnic violence. The present analysis focuses only on events up to 1989 under the premise, discussed in Appendix section D.3, that changes following the Cold War opened new political cleavages in Africa.

TABLE 7. *Summary of cases*

Path	*Cases*
1. PCS dominance and SLPCS civil war	Angola, Burundi, Ethiopia, Mali, Nigeria, Sudan
2. SLPCS dominance and PCS civil war	Chad, Rwanda, Uganda, Zimbabwe
3. Power sharing and rotating coups	Benin, Ghana, Madagascar
4. Relative peace	Botswana, Guinea, Senegal, Zambia
Other	Democratic Republic of Congo

Note: Author's calculations.

Among cases in the first path, a PCS group dominated the government at or shortly after independence. Specifically, a PCS group had achieved either "dominant" or "monopoly" status at the center within five years of independence (according to EPR) in Angola, Burundi, Ethiopia, Mali, Nigeria, and Sudan. The PCS group also either dominated or was heavily overrepresented in the officer corps of each country except Nigeria (see Table B.5). In five of the six countries, at least one excluded SLPCS group initiated a civil war by 1975, and the same occurred in the

106. However, for the purposes of assessing the main hypotheses, the conditional regressions contain an important source of posttreatment bias by conditioning on a factor—ethnopolitical access—that the theory posits as endogenous to precolonial statehood.

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sixth, Mali, in 1989. Additionally, in every case except Angola, the dominant PCS group staged a successful coup. Sometimes, coups struck against rival ethnic groups, as in Nigeria in 1966. In other cases, such as Sudan, the coups rotated power among members of the PCS group. The theory section discussed how riverine Arabs in Sudan launched numerous coups in reaction to the incumbent's perceived poor handling of ongoing civil wars with non-PCS groups in the south.

For example, in Nigeria, a PCS group controlled power at the center, retained power via a military coup, and an excluded SLPCS group launched a civil war. Nigeria's federal formula—a legacy of Frederick Lugard's invention of the Native Authority System for the Sokoto Caliphate (precolonial state) in the north—dictated that each of the country's three regions would be apportioned seats in the national legislature based on population share. As a result, the constitutionally mandated dicennial census in 1962 carried huge consequences for the distribution of power, especially considering the distinct ethnic parties that represented each region. "The Northern Region's political strength, marshaled by the NPC, had arisen in large measure from the results of the 1952–53 census, which had identified 54 percent of the country's population in that area."[107]

Despite conducting the census twice, experts estimated the total count for northerners was wildly inflated and Igbo (SLPCS group) leaders publicly charged the northern (PCS) government with fraud. Igbo officers led a successful coup attempt in 1966. Despite stating that they aimed to create a unitary government without ethnic bias, northern leaders perceived the coup "not so much as an effort to impose a unitary government as a plot by the Igbo to dominate Nigeria" because of deep-seated regional cleavages.[108] This led to a northern-dominated countercoup in 1966, followed by ethnopolitical exclusion of Igbo and an Igbo secession attempt in 1967.

In the second path, an SLPCS group dominated the government at or shortly after independence. In all four cases, an excluded PCS group participated in a civil war either shortly after independence (Chad, Rwanda, Zimbabwe) or after further ethnic narrowing at the center (Uganda). The theory correctly anticipates political violence—specifically, PCS groups often rebel against the government when excluded—although these cases deviate from the trend of PCS groups controlling the government.

The third path features ethnopolitical inclusion and infighting at the center. The theory correctly anticipates the coups that occurred in these PCS countries (Benin, Ghana, Madagascar), although without amendment cannot explain why their leaders usually did not resort to ethnopolitical exclusion to prevent future coups.[109] PCS groups either participated in or were central to the violence that occurred. In

107. Lovejoy 1992, 52.

108. Ibid., 56.

109. Roessler and Ohls 2018 offer a plausible explanation for Benin and Ghana: in each country, the existence of multiple relatively large ethnic groups located close to the capital created incentives to share power—despite high coup risk—because of the devastating expected consequences of ethnopolitical

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Benin, two of the three groups that rotated into and out of power via a series of coups in the 1960s were PCS: Fon, and Yoruba/Nagot and Goun. In Ghana, the leader of the country's first coup in 1966 explicitly denounced president Kwame Nkrumah's attempts to undermine traditional Asante (PCS) organizations—a rivalry that began during the colonial era after Nkrumah attempted to undermine Asante planter-chiefs. EPR codes the PCS group in Madagascar, Highlanders, as excluded. However, they retained a strong presence in the military, which EPR does not reflect by primarily using information on executive and cabinet positions to code political status. Highlanders launched a successful coup in 1972.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo is an idiosyncratic case that does not fit neatly into any of these three modal patterns of ethnic violence, although broadly supports the theory because two PCS groups initiated civil wars. The country, in essence, had no central government during its first five years of independence. Correspondingly, EPR codes all politically relevant ethnic groups in DRC as enjoying regional autonomy between 1960 and 1965. Within the first year of independence, PCS groups Luba Kasai and Lunda-Yeke initiated civil wars to secede, the latter led by their king.

Of the eighteen PCS countries, only four are theoretical anomalies by exhibiting relative peace. Botswana, Guinea, Senegal, and Zambia provide a fourth modal path by experiencing long periods of stable civilian rule in ethnically inclusionary regimes, although in the 1980s a successful coup occurred in Guinea and a civil war began in Senegal. PCS groups such as the Barotse in Zambia and Peul in Guinea created regional parties during the decolonization era to contest nationalists, but ultimately failed to prevent a dominant nationalist party from taking power at independence.

Evidence from Uganda

Uganda exemplifies PCS groups' privileges and the difficulty of forming broad nationalist parties during the decolonization era in colonies with a PCS group, and consequences for political violence after independence. When Britain colonized Uganda, it bestowed the powerful state of Buganda—which frequently warred with and raided slaves from neighboring groups also incorporated into modern Uganda[110]—with significant self-governance privileges. "The special status of Buganda in Uganda was the most important legacy of the colonial era" and their founding treaty with Britain in 1900 "appeared to the Baganda as in some sense at least an agreement between equals."[111] Therefore, Buganda's later "integration within the rest of Uganda posed serious problems first to colonial officials and subsequently to nationally oriented African politicians [because] Buganda could not be

exclusion and civil war. Madagascar also exhibited these conditions, although Cotiers excluded Highlanders from important political positions until 1972.

110. Reid 2012, 115–16.

111. Rothchild and Rogin 1966, 341.

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dethroned from its dominant position without seriously compromising the viability of Uganda as a whole."[112] In response to Britain's attempt to unify colonial administration after World War II, Buganda attempted to secede from the rest of Uganda to "safeguard the traditions, Kabakaship, and the customs of Buganda in an independent Uganda."[113] The king—known as the *kabaka*—cited Buganda's distinct status in the Uganda Agreement of 1900 to promote his claim.

Consequently, "the power of traditional groups … precluded the success of a centralized, ideological mass party" among all Ugandans.[114] Supporters of the *kabaka* instead created the Kabaka Yekka party—meaning "king only"—after the *kabaka* led a highly successful boycott of the 1961 Legislative Council elections in which less than 2 percent of eligible Baganda voted. Kabaka Yekka provided "a practical avenue through which Buganda could enter national politics and yet preserve its own autonomy and unity."[115] The ethnically oriented party received 26 percent of parliamentary seats in the final pre-independence elections in 1962.[116] In response to political deadlock created by the sizable vote share of Buganda's ethnically oriented party, an interethnic ruling coalition formed at independence that composed an "alliance of complete opposites"[117] between Kabaka Yekka and a major party led by a member of an SLPCS group, Milton Obote's UPC party. Consistent with the theoretical expectation that such circumstances facilitate an internal security dilemma, "it is hard to determine at what stage Prime Minister Obote made up his mind to confront the Kabaka and the State of Buganda … but it is tempting, from the small amount of evidence available and his careful preparing of the ground, to think that he had intended it all along."[118]

A key event occurred in 1964 that foreshadowed future violence. To provide background, Buganda's initial treaty with Britain awarded territory, subsequently called the "Lost Counties," to Buganda that a British-Baganda alliance had recently captured from rival precolonial state Bunyoro (also incorporated into Uganda). In 1964, Obote attempted to undermine Buganda by allowing a referendum to occur over control of the Lost Counties. After the counties' residents voted to join Bunyoro, a political crisis occurred. "As *President*, the Kabaka should have ratified the transfer; as *Kabaka*, such an act was an impossibility" [emphasis in original] because the transfer would erode the king's support from his main constituency.[119] The Lost Counties referendum soon "shifted the balance of power back from Buganda to the central government."[120] Capitalizing on his improved bargaining position, Obote arrested key Baganda ministers before they could appeal for British

112. Doornbos 1977, 241.
113. Rothchild and Rogin 1966, 348.
114. Ibid., 389.
115. Ibid., 358
116. Schmidt 1999, 934.
117. Decalo 1990, 152.
118. Dinwiddy 1981, 514.
119. Ibid., 514.
120. Decalo 1990, 155.

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military assistance. The crisis culminated in 1966 when Obote militarily suppressed a Baganda secession attempt, staged a coup to become the undisputed head of state, and unilaterally terminated the Baganda monarchy.[121] After continued turmoil at the center including Idi Amin's kleptocratic reign in the 1970s, the then-politically powerless Baganda participated in civil wars that removed Amin and, subsequently, Obote after he became president for a second time.

Conclusion

I presented a theory and corroborating empirical evidence that precolonial statehood has contributed to political violence in Africa. Two important questions remain. First, is Sub-Saharan Africa unique? If so, why? One distinctive regional attribute is that most countries lack a majority ethnic group. Therefore, despite African PCS groups' historical advantages, many of these groups held power tenuously because they lacked numerical preponderance. In some cases, like Uganda, non-PCS groups dislodged PCS groups from power. By contrast, in many East and Southeast Asian countries, an ethnic group with a historical state dominated the government in the twentieth century and composed a large majority of the country's population. How might this difference alter prospects for violence? On the one hand, larger groups may prevent violence by deterring other groups from attempting to control the government. On the other hand, large majority groups may feel emboldened to pursue ethnically exclusionary policies that spark civil wars. Future work that assesses how well the present theory exports to other regions will contribute to understanding African uniqueness and to emerging knowledge of how historical factors affect prospects for modern political violence.

Second, common policy recommendations for ending civil wars may lack effectiveness without understanding the long-term effects of factors such as precolonial statehood. For example, promoting inclusive power-sharing agreements likely will not stem violence in PCS countries because the internal security dilemma should destabilize such arrangements. Although the correlation between precolonial statehood and civil war onset has weakened since the Cold War ended (see Table D.15), the changed relationship has arisen mainly because non-PCS countries have experienced more civil wars as new cleavages emerged after the Soviet Union fell, rather than because conflict onset has declined sharply in PCS countries.[122] Even countries such as Uganda that have enjoyed decades of stable governance and economic growth, with Baganda peacefully participating as a junior partner in the governing coalition since 1986, still suffer from civil wars that can be traced in part to

121. Tripp 2009, 45.

122. Using the sample from Table 2, comparing the Cold War period to afterward, the prevalence of civil war onset has increased by 80 percent among SL groups compared to a decline of 28 percent among groups in PCS countries.

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earlier failed power-sharing arrangements. Deepening democratic institutions to increase the credibility of power-sharing agreements—for example, in Benin and Ghana, and to a lesser extent in Uganda and Madagascar—and the hope that cross-cutting cleavages over time may mitigate the legacies of distinct statehood provides a possible but uncertain path out of the coup/civil war trap for many PCS countries.

Supplementary Material

Supplementary material for this article is available at <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818319000134>.

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Key Words

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