THE ORIGINS OF AFRICAN CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS: ETHNIC ARMIES AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF COUP TRAPS

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Abstract

Military coups have posed a persistent threat to political stability in Africa—undermining democratization efforts, initiating lasting cycles of intra-military violence, and even descending into civil war. Since decolonization, over 200 coup attempts have been made across the continent. This dissertation seeks to understand what causes African militaries to intervene so frequently in the domestic politics of their societies? How did certain countries (but not others) get functionally stuck in coup traps?

At the time of independence, military institutions were in a state of deep transformation and new African leaders faced an important choice over how they would tie soldiers to the state. This critical juncture set countries on different paths of institutional development—some stable and reinforced through self-perpetuating mechanisms and others unstable, prone to extreme backlash processes of instability. Where leaders chose to build military loyalty on ethnic foundations—where they conditioned recruitment, promotion, and access to patronage on shared identity—they tended to set their countries on dangerous paths of violence. To choose broadly inclusive military recruitment (civic-nationalism), on the other hand, led to greater stability on average, but was still dangerous in highly ethnically politicized contexts.

These theoretical claims are evaluated with both cross-national statistical analysis and case study evidence. Both duration and count models find that countries predicted to travel stable paths survive longer coup free following independence (9.4-12.4 years longer) and experience less coup attempts overall (2.7-3.5 fewer in the 20 years following decolonization). Paired comparisons—Sierra Leone and Cameroon for ethnic loyalty and Ghana and Senegal for civic-national loyalty—were then employed to further test the key theoretical differences between paths as well as to trace the causal mechanisms of each.
Finally, the dissertation examines how these historical legacies have impacted democratization efforts in contemporary Africa. Where former leaders built ethnic armies, elections threaten to bring to executive office new leaders from different ethnic groups. When this occurs, the ethnically stacked officer corps has good reason to fear the loss of their privilege through military restructuring—and often reacts by seizing power.
Acknowledgements

“C’est impossible,” said the head archivist at the Senegalese national archives after I described my project to him. The military files, he explained, had never been organized or catalogued. There was no holdings guide, just a large room with many dossiers full of mildewy paper that needed the attention of a proper conservationist. But he would help me, despite the difficulty, to track down possible duplicates in the civilian administration files. To say the least, the data necessary for this project was challenging to obtain. Beyond the normal decay of information over time, which all students of history lament, the decisions described in these pages, and the events they led to, were often controversial or clandestine. Both protagonists and observers thus had ample incentives to hide or distort information. There were many, including at times myself, who doubted that I could ever collect enough reliable data to write a compelling piece of social science. These acknowledgements are thus dedicated, first and foremost, to those who believed—or, barring belief, helped me anyway.

I owe much to Jennifer Widner: My chair, my advisor, my mentor, and the one who lured me into African politics to begin with. Had I taken my graduate field seminar in comparative politics from anyone else, this dissertation would never have been written. Beyond the superb feedback, excellent contacts, and sound professional advice that she has always given me, what I have valued most about Jennifer is her unrelenting faith in me—that I belong in this community of intellectuals and that my research will contribute in important ways to how we understand our world. Her faith, and willingness to fight on my behalf, has carried me through the times when my own faith faltered.

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pushed my work to levels of excellence I doubt would have been achieved in his absence. When my project took a strong turn towards analyzing the dynamics of ethnic politics, Evan Lieberman did me a great service by agreeing to come on board. He has pushed me to think more deeply about the complexity of identity. He has also helped me learn how to better frame my arguments, present source material, and discuss my methodology.

This project would not have been possible without the support and encouragement of the greater Princeton intellectual community, both within and outside of my beloved Politics Department. Many colleagues read pieces of this project and provided me with valuable feedback. Amaney Jamal and Mark Beissinger always read my work carefully prior to seminar presentations and offered valuable insights. I would particularly like to thank the members of my dissertation writing group: Mike Woldemariam, Jing Chen, Alden Young, and Mike McKoy. Our regular meetings over the course of two years forced me to write when I would have rather done anything else; and our discussions were a priceless source of intellectual growth. I also benefited greatly from regularly exchanging chapters with Sarah Bush and from sharing my work with Sarah Hummel, Stephen Chaudoin, Mike Miller, and David Hsu. I thank Dan Kliman, Oriana Mastro, Ricky Martin and Chris Laumann not only for the help they provided in bouncing around ideas, thinking about writing style and organization, and navigating the frustrating intricacies of typesetting and statistical software, but also for being invaluable pillars of support during the rough times. Writing this dissertation, and my graduate school experience in general, would have been immeasurably worse without the camaraderie of my dear friends in the security program: Rex Douglass, Mike Hunzeker, Alex Lanoszka, and Tom Scherer. May we always find time for grand adventures, good humor, and editing each others’ drafts in the middle of the night.

This dissertation is dedicated to my family. I would not have been able to complete it without the love and support of my parents. Indeed, I owe them (and Alex,
Rex, and Tom) a special debt of gratitude for helping me through the final editorial push. They were graciously willing to read and copy-edit chapters on short notice. I would never have been able to finish without their assistance, encouragement, and much needed humor.

Finally, I would like to thank the countless others who assisted this project in myriad ways, both small and large. I presented selections of this dissertation at the Princeton Comparative Politics Research Seminar; the University of Pennsylvania’s Program on Democracy, Citizenship, and Constitutionalism graduate student workshop; the American Political Science Association’s annual meetings; and the Midwest Political Science Association’s annual meetings. Many discussants, fellow panelists, and audience members thought deeply about my work and shared their insights. I received funding from both the Bobst Center for Peace and Justice and the Princeton Institute for International and Regional studies to conduct fieldwork abroad. Nicki List and Paul Ocobock provided crucial help with logistics and navigating the archives in, respectively, Senegal and Kenya. Lastly, but perhaps most importantly, I would like to thank the many dedicated and underpaid archivists and their assistants in Dakar, Nairobi, London, Paris, Aix-en-Provence, and Washington, D.C. They provide an invaluable service, not just to researchers like myself, but to humanity. The preserve our record of the past.
To my family.

For all the sacrifices over all the generations that made my dream possible.
Contents

Abstract ................................................................. iii
Acknowledgements ......................................................... v
List of Tables ........................................................... xi
List of Figures ........................................................... xii

1 Introduction ............................................................. 1
  1.1 The Argument ....................................................... 6
  1.2 Definitions and Scope ............................................. 10
  1.3 Data and Tests ..................................................... 14
  1.4 Overview of Chapters ........................................... 20

2 Literature Review ...................................................... 23

3 Decolonization and the Development of Coup Traps ............ 37
  3.1 Path Dependency as a Historical-Causal Framework of Analysis . . 38
  3.2 The Historical Argument ........................................ 46

4 Loyalty Choices, Structural Constraints, and Cross-National Empirical Patterns of Military Intervention .......... 76
  4.1 Data and Coding .................................................. 78
  4.2 Descriptive Statistics ............................................ 91
  4.3 Regression Analysis ............................................ 99
  4.4 Conclusion ...................................................... 119
5 Ethnic Loyalty: Sierra Leone and Cameroon

5.1 Sierra Leone and the “Ethnic Coup Trap”................................. 123
  5.1.1 Path Initiation ..................................................... 125
  5.1.2 Path Maintenance .................................................. 129
5.2 Cameroon and “Ethnically-Based Stability” .............................. 134
  5.2.1 Path Initiation ..................................................... 135
  5.2.2 Path Maintenance .................................................. 142
5.3 Conclusion ........................................................................ 146

6 Civic-National Loyalty: Ghana and Senegal ............................... 148

6.1 Ghana: A Coup Trap of Competing Visions ............................... 150
  6.1.1 Path Initiation ..................................................... 151
  6.1.2 Path Maintenance .................................................. 158
6.2 Senegal: Stability in Diversity .................................................. 179
  6.2.1 Path Initiation ..................................................... 180
  6.2.2 Path Maintenance .................................................. 196
6.3 Conclusion ........................................................................ 200

7 Conclusion ........................................................................... 202

7.1 Democratization and Democratic Consolidation ....................... 210
7.2 Ethnic Conflict and Peace-Building ......................................... 216
7.3 The Case For Merit-Based Military Institutions ........................ 220

Appendix I: Data on Military Loyalty Choices and Constraints ....... 226

Appendix II: Data on Constitutional Changes in Leadership .......... 228

Bibliography ............................................................................. 231
List of Tables

1.1 Path Dependency Predictions ........................................... 10
1.2 Comparison of Ethnic Loyalty Cases ................................. 18
1.3 Comparison of Civic-National Loyalty Cases ....................... 19
3.1 Pre-independence Ethnic Violence and Loyalty Choice .......... 55
3.2 Path Dependency Predictions (Same as Table 1.1) .............. 60
4.1 Path Dependency Predictions (Same as Table 1.1) .............. 78
4.2 Ethnic Loyalty Predictions and Cross-Tabulations .............. 92
4.3 Civic-National Loyalty Predictions and Cross-Tabulations ..... 94
4.4 Reasons for Constitutional Changes of Leadership, 1950-2005 .. 95
4.5 Periodization of Constitutional Changes of Leadership .......... 97
4.6 Periodization of Electoral Transitions Only ....................... 97
4.8 Control Variables and Robustness Checks ......................... 103
4.9 Survival (Weibull) Model ........................................... 109
4.10 Count (Negative Binomial) Model .................................. 113
4.11 Determinants of Military Coups after Constitutional Changes in Leadership .............................. 118
List of Figures

1.1 Distribution of African Coup Attempts by Country (Independence to 2008) ... 6

4.1 Time Elapsed between Power Transfer and Coup Attempt ... 96
4.2 Graph of First Differences: Stable to Unstable Path ... 110
4.3 Graph of First Differences by Path Type ... 111
4.4 Count Model: Predicted Differences ... 114
4.5 Predicted Probabilities of Significant Variables ... 119

5.1 How Ethnic Military Loyalty Results in Stability or Instability ... 122

6.1 How Civic-National Military Loyalty Results in Stability or Instability ... 149
6.2 Colonial Military Recruitment in Senegal ... 194
Chapter 1

Introduction

Military coups pose a serious and persistent threat to political stability in Africa. Indeed, the extent of the threat is profound: Since independence, over 200 coup attempts have been made across all but nine of Africa’s 53 countries (see Figure 1.1). Nearly half of these have been successful, displacing civilian governments, undermining democratization efforts, and leading to years of devastating military governance. Nor is this a problem largely relegated to the annals of history: Since 2008, coups have been attempted against the governments of Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger.

Destabilizing and worrisome in their own right, military coups are not isolated phenomena disconnected from other forms of political violence. Compelling evidence exists that coups often ignite insurgencies, sometimes escalating into full scale civil war. Sambanis finds that political instability, measured by the Polity IV project as regime duration, is positively and significantly correlated with civil conflict onset across six different data sets (each employing varying criteria for inclusion, most importantly low to high death thresholds), including his own. Similarly, Singh argues that failed military coups weaken the government, and particularly the security sector, opening up opportunities for rebellion against the state. He finds a positive and statistically significant correlation between such failed coup attempts and conflict onset. In his study on civil war duration, Fearon highlights an empirical pattern of

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1 Sambanis 2004, 843.
coups being related to “short” wars: of the 128 conflicts between 1945-1999—which reached the 1000 death threshold with at least 100 killed on each side—he identifies 19 as originating in military coups (14.8%). Like Singh, Fearon argues that the most likely explanation for this observation is the weakening effect that a coup attempt would have on the strength of the government. While certainly not the most common path to civil war, coups seem to account for enough of the variance to be of substantive importance in understanding this analytically distinct form of political violence.

Beyond weakening the central government, coups that engender significant military infighting can themselves spiral into broader conflict as the sides compete for domestic allies and external support—leading to insurgency, violence between ethnic groups, or civil war. Two examples may help illustrate this point. In 1992, President Denis Sassou-Nguesso (of the M’Boshi people) lost the first democratic elections in Congo-Brazzaville to Pascal Lissouba (of the Nzabi people). Instead of a peaceful transition, the M’Boshi dominated armed forces attempted to seize executive power and return it to Sassou-Nguesso. The army then split into three factions along identity lines—the “cobras,” “coyotes,” and “ninjas” representing, respectively, the M’Boshi, Bakongo, and Laari. By the end of 1993, their fighting had spilled into society at large and caused the deaths of roughly 2000 people.

The Nigerian Civil War similarly originated from a pair of military coups whose dynamics fractured the armed forces and then the state. The first coup took place on January 15th, 1966 and failed—although the plotters did manage to assassinate enough national and regional leaders to cause a crisis of governance, forcing the remaining civil authorities to hand power over to a non-involved officer (Major-General J.T.U. Aguiyi-Ironsi). Whether or not this first coup had been an “ethnic

\(^{3}\)Fearon 2004, 280.
\(^{4}\)Ibid, 291.
\(^{5}\)Indeed coups have been difficult enough to disentangle from processes of insurgency and civil war that many are included in data sets such as ACDP/PRI’s Armed Conflict Database (Cunningham 2006, 885).
\(^{6}\)Minority Rights Group 2010.
plot” to seize the state, the vast majority of the coup plotters shared an Ibo identity (as did Ironsi). The coup was thus perceived as ethnic in character, precipitating a successful northern counter-coup by predominantly Hausa-Fulani officers. Upon taking power, they decided to break the army apart and send soldiers “back” to their regions of origin, according to their ascriptive identities. This, combined with general fears of a northern dominated government, greatly contributed to both the motivation and \textit{ability} of the Ibo region to secede—resulting in the devastating Biafra War.\footnote{Mamdani 2001, 215; Stedman 1997, 22.} Military coups can thus fracture both the army and the state, leading directly to broader civil strife (rather than merely creating opportunities for others to rebel).

Coups can also create destabilizing ripple effects beyond the borders of their own countries. In addition to possible contagion and demonstration effects—that hopeful coup plotters in neighboring countries will draw inspiration from successful attempts\footnote{See Luckham 1971, Chapters 2-3.}\footnote{See, for example, Li and Thompson 1975.}—military coups can ignite hostilities across borders, particularly when ethnic minorities that span those borders are involved. For example, the successful October 1993 military coup in Burundi, by Tutsi extremist officers against the first ever elected Hutu president, Melchior Ndadaye, stoked extremist fears in neighboring Rwanda. At the time, Hutu moderates in Rwanda had just negotiated a peace deal with the Tutsi rebel army—which called for power-sharing and the integration of Tutsi soldiers into the national military. Viewing events in Burundi as a glimpse into their own future, Hutu extremists in the Rwandan executive branch and army balked at the thought of military integration and began to openly advocate for a “final solution” to the Tutsi problem.\footnote{Mamdani 2001, 215; Stedman 1997, 22.} Here then, the military coup in Burundi contributed directly to derailing the Rwandan peace process by showing extremist Hutu soldiers what might happen if they allowed Tutsis into the officer corps.
Beyond their links to other forms of conflict, military coups have also undermined democratization efforts throughout Africa. In the 1990s, as the end of the Cold War brought liberal democracy to many formerly autocratic countries, Africa experienced 30 peaceful, constitutional transfers of executive power. Of these, fully 37% were overthrown by the military. When we expand the analysis to consider all electoral transfers of power in Africa (since independence), the results are similarly discouraging: 40% of such transitions in executive authority were followed closely by coup attempts (see Chapter 4).

The experience of Niger—one of Africa’s poorest countries, still subject to occasional famines and dependent on foreign economic, military, and humanitarian aid—may highlight the long-term negative effects of such military intervention in the early stages of democratic consolidation. In 1993, having been subject to autocratic rule since independence, Niger elected its first democratic government, led by President Mahamane Ousmane. A mere three years later, the fledgling system underwent its first major crisis between President and Parliament, causing Ousmane to be ousted in an army coup led by Colonel Ibrahim Barre Mainassara. Mainassara immediately suspended the constitution and banned political parties—to the outcry of western donors who suspended millions of dollars in aid—but vowed to quickly return the country to democracy.\footnote{10} And while the return to elections was indeed quick, with a new constitution (with extended executive powers) approved by referendum in May, and presidential elections held in July, the trappings of democracy were merely used to confirm the Colonel as the new President. Three years later, in April of 1999, Mainassara too met his fate in another military coup (in which he was assassinated).\footnote{11} While the leader of this coup, Major Daouda Wanke, did turn power over to a civilian government via elections, led by President Mamadou Tandja, these fledgling democratic efforts were once again short-lived. Over time,
Tandja expanded his powers and—after suspending both the National Assembly and the nation’s high court as well as extending his tenure in office and removing term limits—he too was overthrown, like his predecessors, in another military coup in February of 2010.\textsuperscript{12} Within a year, the coup leaders had turned power over to a transitional government and, in March of 2011, Mahamadou Issoufou won the Presidential elections, completing the transfer of power back to a civilian regime. Yet, the military seems unlikely to stay out of politics: Issoufou claimed to have foiled a coup plot in July of 2011, leading to the arrest of at least 10 soldiers.\textsuperscript{13} Military intervention in Niger, whether “for” or “against” democracy, has thus far accomplished little in the way of its real consolidation. Elections may be regularly held, but institutions that can, at seemingly any time, be interrupted, suspended, or overthrown by the army are unlikely to take root.

Moreover, when soldiers seize power, they often refuse to let go—leading to military governance and the types of common repression which sustain it. Historically, military regimes in Africa have been some of the worst violators of human rights. Names such as Idi Amin of Uganda, Jean-Bédel Bokassa of the Central African Republic, and Mobutu Sese Seko of the Congo stand out as particularly vicious repressors who routinely detained, tortured, and killed those suspected of disloyalty. While these men may be the exception rather than the rule, the standard operating procedures of a military junta—suspending the constitution, detaining opposition leaders, imprisoning dissidents, banning political parties and associations, purging the officer corps, and shutting down the media—still significantly undermine civil liberties and threaten the freedoms of individuals.

Given the impact that military coups have on political stability, civil war onset, and democratization, it is important and policy relevant to ask: What causes African militaries to intervene so frequently in the domestic politics of their societies? How

\textsuperscript{12}See Africa News 2010 (February 19); The Globe and Mail 2010 (February 19); This Day (Lagos) 2010 (February 20).

\textsuperscript{13}See BBC 2011 (August 2).
did certain countries (but not others) get stuck in pervasive “coup traps”? And what mechanisms maintain such destructive patterns of instability? Conversely, how did other countries avoid military intervention in the first place and what mechanisms have reinforced their civil-military stability?

Figure 1.1: Distribution of African Coup Attempts by Country (Independence to 2008)

![Distribution of African Coup Attempts by Country](image)

1.1 The Argument

It is my contention that, historically, military coups in Africa flowed directly from civilian politics and the struggle for the state waged by ethnic groups. Coups were, as Clauswitz would say, politics by other means. To understand how this struggle emerged, and how it descended into violence, we must begin with an analysis
of decolonization—and particularly of the transformation of colonial militaries into national armies.

Decolonization entailed three simultaneous processes of change for African colonial militaries, opening opportunities for marked change. First, their structures of command and organization had to be devolved to smaller territorial units as most colonial forces had been organized on a regional basis (for example, the King’s African Rifles encompassed units from Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania, and Uganda). Second, despite the fact that African soldiers had long constituted the entirety of the rank-and-file of colonial militaries, the scale of colonial recruitment was inadequate to support new national armies. Independence meant rapid expansion. Finally, at the close of World War II, African colonial militaries were still predominantly officered by Europeans. “Africanization” of the officer corps was thus necessary.

These transformations over the territorial scope of command, the extent of society inducted into service, and the basis of identity for officer corps membership, put security institutions in a state of deep flux and confronted new leaders with a set of critical decisions. Most importantly for our purposes, they had to decide who could be trusted to defend the state. New leaders could and did construct new rationales for military service and new principles of inclusion and exclusion for the officer corps. While several models of military loyalty were possible, leaders tended to choose between only two such options; to construct loyalty on the basis of narrow ethnic attachments or to follow a broader, more inclusive vision of civic-nationalism.

Choosing ethnic loyalty was, arguably, the more dangerous for later stability. No matter what the level of pre-independence ethnic tensions in the country, attempting to place a monopoly on the legitimate means of violence in the hands of a sole identity group inherently threatened other groups and increased their incentives to seize state power. Restricting access to an important state institution on the basis of an ethnic category would also generally increase the salience of ethnicity across society and contribute to existing tensions—exacerbating the risks
of multiple types of violence. Nonetheless, each of these loyalty choices entailed some risk for instability, which I discuss in detail below.

**Ethnic Loyalty**

If the civilian leadership chose to build an ethnically loyal military, then it necessarily follows that they would have had to recruit co-ethnics into the officer corps (and dismiss out-groups from it). Where an ethnically diverse or otherwise “unmatched” officer corps was inherited, then this ethnic restructuring would gravely threaten at least some existing military officers—who would have strong incentives to protect themselves from dismissal by deposing the civilian regime (perhaps even prior to any concrete actions taken against them). Without the protection of a foreign military power, who was able and willing to shield the domestic government from its own military, this situation would likely lead to rapid destabilization and the creation of an ethnically-driven coup trap (wherein ethnic military factions repeatedly attempt to seize power from one another).

If, however, upon decolonization the leader had inherited an officer corps that was already “ethnically matched,” no conflict between civil and military authorities would result from the continued “stacking” of the military along the same ethnic lines. And even if there was an ethnic mismatch between the leadership and the officer corps, the presence of a shielding foreign military power could free the government to restructure their own military howsoever they chose, including along the lines of ethnicity. Either way, once established, an ethnically-based military, loyal to a co-ethnic leader, would be a stable institutional arrangement—for it would be in the military’s interests to defend a system that granted them preferential access to such an important source of power and patronage.
Civic-National Loyalty

On average, civic-national loyalty should be the more stable choice since inclusive promotion and recruitment practices (presumably based upon merit) should not inherently threaten the corporate interests of any particular faction of the officer corps—including ethnic groups. We can imagine circumstances, however, in which this is not the case. Specifically, where ethnicity was highly and meaningfully politicized in the pre-independence period—i.e., where political parties or independence movements were organized along the lines of ethnic identity—it would be very difficult to convince soldiers to buy into a civic-national vision. In a highly ethnically politicized society, nationalists wage an uphill battle against organized identity groups who believe that state power should belong to them (or perhaps merely fear that it will belong to another). When such sectarian groups are represented in the military, particularly in the officer corps, they can use their access to organized violence to unseat those opposed to their ethnic interests, including a nationalistic government that would promote ethnic inclusion in the military (countering the interests of any group seeking dominance of the security sector). A shared struggle against colonialism, however, could create an overriding sense of common destiny and perception of national unity, even where ethnic politicization had previously been a problem. Fighting and dying together can forge a sense of shared identity, transcending old divisions. Thus, I argue that where ethnicity was already politicized in the pre-independence period, and where no armed resistance had been fought, then another type of coup trap would result: a nationalist versus ethnic sectarian struggle for power. Where there was an armed resistance movement, however, or where there was no history of ethnic politicization, we would not expect the same sectarian opposition to emerge against the vision of the nationalists. Thus, in these cases, we would expect a robust nationalistic stability to emerge with an inclusive and diverse military.
Table 1.1 summarizes these hypotheses on the origins of African civil-military relations, with predictions regarding relative stability.

Table 1.1: Path Dependency Predictions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Choice</th>
<th>Constraints</th>
<th>Predicted Path</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic Loyalty</td>
<td>“unmatched” officer corps AND no foreign military</td>
<td>ethnic coup trap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“matched” officer corps OR foreign military</td>
<td>ethnically-based stability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civic-National Loyalty</td>
<td>ethnic politicization AND no armed struggle</td>
<td>nationalists v. sectarians coup trap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>no ethnic politicization OR armed struggle</td>
<td>stable nationalism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.2 Definitions and Scope

Nothing inherent to the argument presented above limits its applicability to African countries. Much of the developing world experienced similar dynamics of colonialism. Almost everywhere they went, European colonizers saw the societies they came into contact with through simplified lenses of ethnic identity—categorizing and counting populations via ethnic-racial classifications and establishing institutions of rule that heightened the meaning of those identities through discrimination. Systems of indirect rule tended to invest intermediary political power in the traditional authorities of a small subset of pre-colonial groups.

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15Young 1994, 76.
education gave differential early advantages to those groups whom they chose to
“civilize,” which often translated into dominance of the colonial civil service and
pre-independence politics by those same groups.\(^{16}\) And martial race doctrine—the
idea that some identity groups made for better soldiers than others—pervaded colo-
nial military recruitment practices across the globe, originating in India and then
spreading to the Middle East and Africa.\(^ {17}\) Much of the colonial world decolonized
according to similar processes in the aftermath of World War II as the British,
French, and Belgians gave up their empires by writing new constitutions, holding
elections, and beginning the processes of “nativizing” both the civil service and
the military. We would thus expect new states across regions to have faced the
same critical choices over building new military institutions. We would also expect
many post-independence leaders to have encountered similar sets of problems and
constraints; ethnic tensions and political parties built along identity lines, colonial
practices that left some groups dominate in the military and others in civilian poli-
tics, and pressures to rapidly “nativize” their armed forces. The dynamics that this
project identifies and tests in the African context should thus have broad applica-

So why focus on a single region? I limited this study to Africa for two reasons.
First and foremost, the type of fine-grained, cross-national data on colonial military
history, pre-independence politics, and ethnic recruitment practices needed to con-
vincingly test the theory required intensive data collection. A global approach, at
least initially, was simply beyond the realm of what was possible. Given this limi-
tation, a regional focus on Africa then made sense considering the severely unstable
history of civil-military relations that these states have faced—and the threat that
African armies continue to pose to democratization and stability today. By focusing
on Africa, the findings and policy recommendations that arise from this project will
have the most relevance to where they are most needed.

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\(^{16}\)See Baldwin 2011.
\(^ {17}\)Young 1994, 105-106.
Important to the arguments that I will develop throughout this project are two central concepts: military coups and ethnicity. Developing, here, a greater sense of what I mean by these concepts will render later arguments and coding procedures more comprehensible.

**Military Coups**

Military coups are those attempts to overthrow the incumbent government that involve active-duty members of the state’s own armed forces. They are thus qualitatively different than rebel insurgencies, palace coups (non-military elite in-fighting), and foreign or mercenary intervention—all of which are important but likely driven by different causal dynamics. In coding military coup attempts (discussed more fully in Chapter 4), I thus looked specifically for the involvement of soldiers.

Two characteristics of military coups—patterns that emerged while coding the data—are worth considering here. Understanding these traits will make some of the theoretical discussion and coding decisions more intuitive in subsequent chapters. First, military coups are almost always conducted by members of the army or presidential guard—and only rarely by soldiers in the air force or navy (and then usually with the assistance of ground troops). In most developing countries, if an air force and navy exist, they are dwarfed in size by the army, units of which are usually based in or near the capital city. Thus army participation, or tacit consent, would be necessary for any chance of success.

Second, in the vast majority of cases, military coups are conducted by officers. Exceptions include a handful of cases where non-commissioned officers (NCOs) have attempted to seize power—such as Sargeant Doe’s coup in Liberia. Coups are beyond the capabilities of rank-and-file soldiers. This has everything to do with the rigid nature of the command hierarchy. Field grade officers—those who command units such as battalions and brigades—are normally the only ones who can give the necessary orders to move troops from one location to another. Moving
troops into position for a coup is often suspicious to any civilian politicians or other field grade officers who notice—but such movements would not necessarily be suspicious to NCOs and rank-and-file soldiers who are not in the habit of questioning orders. This allows officers to confine the circle of plotters to as few knowing participants as possible, thereby minimizing their risk of early detection and arrest. For example, Nigeria’s first coup was led by merely 30 officers in an army of over 500 officers and 10,000 men. The command hierarchy thus allows officers—but not others—to solve collective action and coordination problems in a context where keeping information secret is of the utmost importance. NCOs and rank-and-file soldiers also do not have legitimate reasons to be in routine contact with other units geographically dispersed from their own, decreasing their ability to coordinate. Moreover, it usually takes an officer or academy commander to acquire keys to the armory: No bullets, no coup. Rare NCO coups thus tend to happen in either exceedingly small militaries or in armies whose command structures have been decimated by past coups and purges—where NCOs have de facto acquired the privileges and authority usually reserved for commissioned officers.

**Defining Ethnicity**

Like many others, I follow Horowitz’s seminal work on ethnic conflict in defining an ethnic group according to its ascriptive nature: “Ethnicity is based on a myth of collective ancestry, which usually carries with it traits believed to be innate. Some notion of ascription, however diluted, and affinity deriving from it are inseparable from the concept of ethnicity.” Individuals are born into ethnic identities and, while they may choose to highlight different aspects of their identity according to circumstances, they are largely stuck with the hand of choices they were dealt (with exceptions, of course, for those who can “pass”). And while the African experience

18 Luckham 1971, 33.
19 Horowitz 1985, 52.
20 This also follows Posner’s work on ethnic politics and voting in Africa (2004(b) and 2005).
certainly highlights the constructed nature of identity—we can see in the historical record the creation of new identity categories from tribes that, prior to colonialism, perhaps shared a language but no real mythology of common descent—I will maintain that once constructed and meaningful, they remain quite “sticky.” This is particularly true when the state conditions opportunities on those identities.

This narrow definition of ethnicity leaves its content blank—a group’s sense of shared inheritance could be based on cultural, linguistic, religious, racial or other traits. As Horowitz argues, the particular attributes that grow to define groups likely emerge endogenously from processes of continual construction between self and other with neighboring groups—changing over time and across contexts. A focus on attributes themselves would be a misleading way to think about ethnicity. Thus religious difference may be synonymous with ethnic difference in some places—where conversion is taboo or exceedingly difficult and individuals cannot realistically switch religions, for example—but not in others, such as in many Western countries where secularization is well advanced. Sub-group distinctions that, like the larger identity, are based on inheritance likewise count as ethnic groups, even if their salience or political relevance is low.

This conceptualization of ethnicity will be particularly important to coding decisions over ethnic politicization, loyalty choice, and the identity of political leaders.

1.3 Data and Tests

This project employs a combination of quantitative and qualitative tests. Cross-nationally, count and duration models are used to test two implications of the central argument: that countries predicted to be on unstable paths will destabilize more quickly and that they will experience more coup attempts on average, all else being equal. Logit models are then utilized to test the impact of these historical

\[21\] Horowitz 1985, 59-50
legacies—in particular, the construction of ethnic armies as a mode of stability—on
government survivability in the era of democratization. I then select two paired
comparisons, one set for each loyalty choice—ethnic (Sierra Leone and Cameroon)
or civic-national (Ghana and Senegal). First, the paired comparison is utilized to
test the key theoretical propositions explaining their divergent outcomes—in the
first pair, the diversity of the colonial military and, in the second pair, the politi-
cization of ethnicity in pre-independence elections. Then, process tracing techniques
are utilized within each case to analyze how well the historical experiences of each
country align with the observable implications of its predicted path.

Case selection was driven by the following concerns. First, in order to test mech-
nanisms, I chose countries that “fit” the quantitative models developed in Chapter
4. At this phase of theory development and testing, analyzing outliers would be
counter-productive. Rather, I selected cases whose codings on the key independent
variables placed them on a path whose general predictions for stability or instability
matched the historical record. Given this general alignment, the causal mechanisms
and observable implications of each path could then be tested against its matched
case. Second, cases were selected with an eye to their representativeness for the rest
of sub-Saharan Africa. Again, I wished to avoid outliers such as nearly ethnically
homogeneous states, unusually wealthy countries, or island nations. Tables 1.2 and
1.3 summarize data for each of the four cases on several variables that scholars tend
to think matter for a host of conflict and development outcomes—including GDP
per capita at the time of independence, major commodity exports, mountainous
terrain, and demographic structure—as well as for the key independent variables
of this study. Third, my initial theoretical insights grew out of an understanding
of two important and well-studied cases: Nigeria and Uganda. For the purposes of
theory testing, I thus avoided them. Even this narrowing, however, still left several
possibilities for each path. Out of these choices, the final selection was made based
on the quality and availability of source materials, both primary and secondary. The
ability to find detailed and reliable information was critical for successfully analyzing causal mechanisms.

In order to test this theory of military loyalty choice in a generalizable way, I first had to gather cross-national data. Many of the control variables were available from previous authors or large data projects: such as Angus Maddison’s historical GDP and population measures (2008); Macartan Humphrey’s diamond and oil data (2005); ethnic fractionalization scores from Alesina et al. (2003), Fearon (2003), and Posner (2004); export commodity data (United Nations 1965; Mitchell 2003); and Lindberg’s data on African elections (2009). I also drew from existing work for the dependent variable, military coups—cross-referencing McGowan’s (2003) data set on African coups with the Archigos data base on leadership transitions, resolving contradictions with primary source research, and then expanding the data to cover the years 1952–1955 and 2002–2010.

Most of the theoretically important independent variables, however, had not previously been coded across states—particularly the ethnic recruitment practices of colonial militaries, the loyalty choice of new leaders, the presence of foreign military troops and officers, the pre-colonial politicization of ethnicity and any associated violence, the ethnic identity of leaders, and the ethnic stacking practices of those leaders. Gathering these critical indicators thus involved extensive, original data collection on African military history and ethnic politics. I first constructed qualitative narratives for each variable, relying on a broad array of primary, secondary, and tertiary source materials (see below). The narratives were then used to code a series of binary indicator variables necessary for the quantitative tests. Coding procedures and the thorny issues they raised are discussed in depth in Chapter 4.

Both the construction of the cross-national data set and the case studies relied on a wide variety of source materials. I visited archives in Britain, France, Kenya, Senegal, and the United States to consult files, primarily on the processes of coloniza-

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tion and decolonization—including the continued interaction between the militaries and officers of former colonizers and newly independent states in the immediate post-colonial period. Kenya and Senegal were both administrative centers for larger colonial areas—British East Africa and French West Africa respectively—and thus their archives contained information on a significant number of other territories. The British kept detailed records concerning a number of important practices across colonies, including ethnic quotas for military recruitment and the early formation of political parties. French records also noted geographical military recruitment patterns and paid careful attention to political parties and their recruitment bases. I also looked for any available documents pertaining to elections or changes in military recruitment practices after independence. With some regularity, military intelligence reports in both the U.S. and British archives contained updated analyses of political dynamics and military forces in a variety of African countries, particularly those in which communist influences were feared—documenting some of the variation that occurred over time. I also relied, at times heavily, on articles drawn from a variety of global newspapers as well as Keesings World News Archive.

In addition to these types of archival documents, I also broadly consulted secondary academic accounts from political scientists, historians, and military sociologists as well as tertiary compilations of qualitative data. Particularly helpful were John Keegan’s exhaustive compendium of global force capabilities and military institutional development, World Armies (1983); the Minorities at Risk (2009) and World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples (2010) qualitative data projects; and the Library of Congress’ series of Country Reports, which contain detailed sections on militaries and military history.
Table 1.2: Comparison of Ethnic Loyalty Cases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Economy</th>
<th>Geography</th>
<th>Path</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>GDPk</td>
<td>Average Growth (first 5yrs)</td>
<td>Major Export Commodities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sierra Leone</td>
<td>$858</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>diamonds iron ore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cameroon</td>
<td>$829</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>cocoa coffee</td>
</tr>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Ethnic Demography</th>
<th>Military</th>
<th>Path</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Colonizer</td>
<td>Largest Group</td>
<td>2nd Largest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sierra Leone</td>
<td>Britain</td>
<td>Mende (30%)</td>
<td>Temne (30%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cameroon</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>Bamileke (25%)</td>
<td>Kindi (18%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1.3: Comparison of Civic-National Loyalty Cases

<table>
<thead>
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<th></th>
<th>Economy</th>
<th>Geography</th>
<th></th>
<th>Path</th>
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<td></td>
<td>GDPk</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Major</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Growth</td>
<td>Export</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(first 5yrs)</td>
<td>Commodities</td>
<td>Prevalence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(% land &gt;1500m)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghana</td>
<td>$1241</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>cocoa, gold,</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>diamonds, timber</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senegal</td>
<td>$1445</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>peanuts,</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>peanut oil</td>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Ethnic Demography</th>
<th></th>
<th>Armed</th>
<th>Path</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Colonizer</td>
<td>Largest Group</td>
<td>Resistance</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2ⁿᵈ Largest</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3ⁿᵈ Largest</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghana</td>
<td>Britain</td>
<td>Akan (45%)</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>unstable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mole-Dagbani (15%)</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ewe (11%)</td>
<td>no</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senegal</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>Wolof (44%)</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>stable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Peuhl/Toucouleur (24%)</td>
<td>no</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Serer (15%)</td>
<td>no</td>
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1.4 Overview of Chapters

This first chapter has aimed to establish the substantive importance of military coups for African politics. Not only do coups pose an inherent threat to political stability—often a valued good in its own right—but they also engender risks for broader social violence (including civil war), pose significant dangers to democratization, and undermine stability in neighboring countries. Chapter 2 examines the existing scholarly literature on military coups, arguing that there is a disjuncture between cross-national studies that focus on structural risk factors—and find no effect of ethnicity on coup risk—and the case study literature that speaks extensively of the ethnic dynamics that drive particular coup attempts.

Chapter 3 develops a theoretical framework, grounded in path dependency, for explaining the variance in coup patterns across post-colonial African states. I begin from the insight that decolonization was a moment of great upheaval and thus can be considered a shared critical juncture—a moment when new leaders made important and historically contingent choices over the construction of security institutions. Where leaders chose to build military loyalty on the basis of narrow ethnic attachments, they faced a far greater risk of instability. Either choice, however, could lead to an unstable path given an unfortunate set of historical constraints—leading to four possible paths (ethnically-based stability, ethnic coup trap, stable nationalism, or nationalists versus sectarians coup trap). The chapter also develops observable implications for each of the paths as well as an intuition for the when the paths may eventually breakdown.

These predictions are then statistically tested in a cross-national framework in Chapter 4, using original data on colonial militaries, decolonization, subsequent civil-military relations, and democratization. Three different types of models are used to test distinct implications of the theory. First, states predicted to be on unstable paths, whether ethnic or civic-national, should destabilize more rapidly
following independence. Duration analysis finds positive support for this hypothesis: Countries theoretically predicted to be unstable survive coup free from 9.4-12.4 years fewer than their peers. Second, tests using negative binomial (count) models find that these same states predicted to be on unstable paths experience between 2.7-3.5 additional coup attempts in the 20 years following independence, all else being equal. Third, my theory suggests that legacies of ethnic stacking that led to stability in the past (i.e., the “ethnically-based stability” path) threaten democratizing governments when electoral politics alter the “ethnic identity” of leadership. Where the old leader had created a loyal army by recruiting his own co-ethnics, and then leadership was transferred to someone of a different ethnic background, the officer corps would fear the loss of their power and access to patronage—often motivating them to seize power. This hypothesis is tested, using logit models, on all cases of constitutional and electoral transfers of power.

I then turn to paired case study comparisons, combined with process tracing, to further test the causal mechanisms of the theory. Chapter 5 analyzes Sierra Leone and Cameroon, both of which turned toward ethnicity as a basis for military loyalty. I argue that the critical difference between them lay in the colonial army they inherited. While newly independent Sierra Leone tried to restructure an already diverse officer corps along ethnic lines, Cameroon’s leadership was able to build an ethnic army from the ground up under the protection of the French. Faced with officer resistance, Sierra Leone quickly succumbed to instability while Cameroon remained highly stable until its first leadership transition (over 20 years later).

Chapter 6 compares Ghana and Senegal, both of whose initial leaders attempted to create truly national military institutions. Yet, they too experienced highly divergent outcomes—with Ghana succumbing to 10 coups and counter-coups and Senegal (arguably) experiencing none. Here, I argue that political party formation in the pre-independence period is critical to understanding their different experiences. In Ghana, ethnicity became central to the organization of many political parties, which
created an environment of ethnic politicization and undermined Kwame Nkrumah’s attempts to build national institutions. In Senegal, on the other hand, early political parties remained non-ethnic—being built rather on the basis of the Islamic brotherhoods—allowing Léopold Senghor the space to recruit broadly into the military without encountering resistance. Throughout all four cases studies, I also use process tracing techniques to test the observable implications of the theory for each of the predicted paths.

Finally, Chapter 7 concludes by analyzing both the scholarly and policy implications of the main findings of the dissertation. My work suggests that civil-military relations ought not to be ignored in the study of democratization and democratic consolidation. The tendency of African leaders to ensure stability in the past, by tying soldiers to the state through shared identity and ethnically-based patronage, can lead to military intervention when elections grant power to new ethnic groups. My findings also have important ramifications for peace-building efforts. My work emphasizes just how difficult it is to build nationally representative security institutions in ethnically tense and politicized contexts. As peacekeepers work in post-ethnic conflict environments to integrate rebels into national armies, they should be cognizant of the potential for destabilization once they depart. Finally, I build a case for merit-based military institutions as both normatively desirable and necessary for long-term peace and stability. The international community can play an important role in helping new democratic governments, or states emerging from conflict, to build and protect these merit-based institutions. International actors, however, have a limited ability to influence their entrenchment. The struggle for diverse and inclusive security institutions is one that must primarily be waged by domestic actors.
Chapter 2

Literature Review

“The military is both a resource and an object of ethnic conflict. It is a resource in conflict because... the military can become a hotbed for ethnic resentment and an instrument for the advancement of ethnic claims to power. Like the civil service, it is an object of ethnic conflict, because military positions, with substantial salaries and perquisites, are coveted, because skewed ethnic composition means these advantages are unevenly distributed, and because control of the military is a significant symbol of ethnic domination.”

Donald L. Horowitz, Ethnic Groups in Conflict

Despite the continuing significance of this problem for many countries, we have a limited understanding of why African militaries have been so predisposed toward violent seizures of power. Indeed, the in-depth case study and cross-national literatures on the subject are at odds—leading to a proliferation of hypotheses about causal factors and mechanisms without generalizable evidence to support them.

Early works on military interventionism focused on professionalization and the development of norms of civilian supremacy. In his foundational work, The Soldier and the State, Huntington argues that military professionalism is the decisive factor leading to military abstention from normal politics. Defining professionalism as expertness, social responsibility, and corporate loyalty to fellow practitioners, Huntington maintains that once a military embodies these characteristics it will turn

1Horowitz 1985, 443.
inwards within its autonomous sphere and leave governance to the politicians. In response, Samuel Finer emphasizes, in *The Man on Horseback*, that highly professionalized militaries have intervened in politics on numerous occasions. He points to pre-World War II Japan and Germany under Hitler as notorious cases wherein some of the most professionalized militaries the world had ever known attempted to depose their civilian regimes. Instead, Finer claims that militaries will abstain from politics where there is a strong political culture intolerant of military intervention and where the security sector has internalized a norm of civilian supremacy.

Both authors highlight important goals for military development that may indeed help to keep soldiers out of the political sphere. Both authors, however, focus largely on the developmental experiences of the West and thus may miss important aspects of the colonial experience and its aftermath as they relate to the processes of military formation and development in Africa.

Indeed, the spate of military coups across the decolonized world that began in the late 1950s and early 1960s, led to the development of a cross-national, quantitative literature that paid particular attention to the structural contexts faced by developing countries. Commendable for its efforts to understand a pervasive and complex global phenomenon, this literature postulates a multitude of potential risk factors. Data and measurement issues, combined with limited theorization of causal mechanisms, however, result in a quagmire of largely inconsistent findings—the exceptions being the robust results across studies that poor countries with a history of military intervention are likely to continue being vulnerable to coups in the future. I have classified the proposed structural risk factors into five categories and discuss them each, in detail, below: Explanations based on (1) underdeveloped political institutions; (2) characteristics of military institutions; (3) poor economic growth and development; (4) past histories of coup attempts; and (5) ethnic politics.

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2 Huntington 1957, 80-85.
3 Finer 1988, 21-22.
Political Institutions: The first type of explanation focuses on the nature and efficacy of political institutions. In *Political Order in Changing Societies*, Huntington argues that perhaps military intervention is an inherent part of political modernization. As societies transition from more traditional forms of rule to modern practices, demand for participation exceeds the capacity of new institutions to channel that participation in meaningful and satisfactory ways. In other words, normal political institutions become overwhelmed in the face of a politically modernizing polity and public order breaks down. The military, then, has both cause and motivation to intervene and restore order.

Various versions of this thesis have since been tested in large-N quantitative works. Measuring the demand for political participation as voter turnout, some studies have found evidence at least partially contradicting Huntington’s theory: that high voter turnout is negatively correlated with future military coups. Others have conceptualized rising demands for political participation in terms of social mobilization and development—then operationalized by measuring literacy rates, newspaper circulation, and educational levels. Such approaches have resulted in mixed findings with some studies finding positive correlations between these indicators for rising expectations and military coups and others finding negative correlations.

While measures such as voting behavior and educational achievement may capture rising demands for participation, they do not, however, account for the ability of state institutions to effectively channel that participation. Belkin and Shofer thus turn to civil society as an important intervening variable. They argue that strong civil societies can buffer the state against instability by providing citizens with resources and opportunities for participation outside of formal state institutions, thereby lowering the demands placed on the state itself. Indeed, they find the number of internationally registered NGOs in a country to be negatively correlated

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4 See Huntington, 1968, 192-205.
7 See Kposowa and Jenkins 1993; and Putnam 1967.
with military coups. Belkin and Shofer, however, fail to account for relative wealth in their model and thus have potentially biased results in favor of civil society as a coup-inhibiting factor (because relative wealth is consistently positively correlated with NGOs). There is thus no consistent evidence that Huntington’s story is a primary motivator of military intervention in developing countries.

**Military Institutions**: The second type of explanation focuses on the strength of security institutions, particularly on the size of the military and the resources and payoffs devoted to military personnel. While it is not clear why a larger military or a better financed military would be more disposed to intervention than a small, poorly-funded army—we might think that higher payoffs would actually reduce coup proclivity—some studies have found a positive correlation between military centrality (a measurement comprised of size, funding, and cohesion) and coups. Yet, within those few stable, civilian African regimes, military size and budget (however measured) range across a wide spectrum of possibility—nearly as wide a spectrum as exists across Africa as a whole. Indeed, it seems plausible to argue that a poorly-funded military would be more likely to intervene regardless of size. Finer has argued that the motivation for military intervention often stems from feelings of resentment and humiliation resulting from the lost prestige following budget cutbacks or generally low funding. Moreover, recent work by Collier and Hoeffler has argued that this positive correlation results from an endogenous relationship—that states faced with militaries predisposed to intervention will attempt to buy them off, thus potentially inflating both military size and spending (an extortion racket).

**Economic Development**: The third type of explanation analyzes economic variables—in particular relative wealth, growth rates, and commodity dependency. Studies have consistently found that overall wealth indicators, such as GDP per

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8See Belkin and Shofer, 2003.
10Decalo, 1989, 556.
11See Finer 1976.
capita, are negatively correlated with both successful coups and coup attempts, as well as with democratic stability.\textsuperscript{13} Londregan and Poole and Przeworski et al., even stipulate a wealth threshold above which military intervention is extremely unlikely to occur, if at all. Yet, Londregan and Poole also find that in the bottom three quintiles of economic wealth, the incidence of coups is approximately constant. At least amongst relatively poor countries, this suggests that factors other than wealth may drive the high variance we see in coup propensity (see Figure 1.1 in Chapter 1).

Less consensus exists concerning the role of economic growth and trade dependency on regime stability and military intervention. While some scholars argue that rapid economic growth acts as a destabilizing force and causes coups in the least developed countries,\textsuperscript{14} others argue that high growth rates are coup-inhibiting while negative growth rates facilitate coups.\textsuperscript{15} Likewise, results on primary commodity dependency (measured by reliance on export crops) vary widely across studies.\textsuperscript{16} The most sophisticated forthcoming work on commodity shocks and conflict, which disaggregates commodities and their price fluctuations by sector (allowing for separate analysis of minerals, oil, and gas versus agricultural commodities), however, finds no relationship between price shocks and coups—in either direction.\textsuperscript{17} Theoretically, one would imagine that severe economic downturns provide opportunities for coups where public resistance would be minimal. Yet, crises are trigger events and, in the presence of structural factors which inhibit military intervention, will not lead to military coups. Thus examining trigger events on their own may not lead to clear findings, even though they may cause coups regularly in some countries.

\textsuperscript{13}See Collier and Hoeffler 2005; Collier and Hoeffler 2007; Londregan and Poole 1990; O’Kane 1981; and Przeworski et al. 1996.
\textsuperscript{14}See Olson 1963; Janowitz 1964; and Zimmerman 1983.
\textsuperscript{15}See Collier and Hoeffler 2005; Collier and Hoeffler 2007; Londregan and Poole 1990; and Przeworski et al. 1996.
\textsuperscript{17}See Bazzi and Blattman 2011.
Past Coup Attempts: Many scholars have also argued that a past history of coups is likely to cause future military interventions: violence begets violence. The basic logic to this argument is that the capture of power by force undermines alternative principles of legitimacy. Since might appears to make right, those who seize power are subject to legitimate overthrow by anyone strong enough to take it from them.\footnote{This argument harkens back to Rousseau: “For once force makes right, the effect changes together with the cause: every force that overcomes the first, inherits its right. Once one can disobey with impunity, one can do so legitimately, and since the stronger is always right, one need only to make sure to be the stronger (Rousseau 1997, 44).”} Since they have no other grounds upon which to stake their claim to governance, they may thus be unseated via the same mechanism through which they came to power. This potentially explains the occasionally observed clustering effect of coups, wherein a series of coup attempts occurs in a short period of time in a given country.

Cross-national studies have indeed found past coup history to be one of the few consistently and strongly significant factors in explaining the variance of coups.\footnote{See Belkin and Shofer 2003; Collier and Hoeffler 2005; Collier and Hoeffler 2007; McGowan and Johnson 1984; and O’Kane 1983.} Yet, most of the time, successful seizures of power are not immediately followed by counter-coups. Examining the set of all coup events in Africa from 1952-2003, only in 23 out of 206 cases (out of 1738 country-years) did more than one coup attempt (successful or failed) occur in a single country-year. Thus, the questions arise: In cases where coups do not immediately follow one another, is the variable representing past history of coups capturing something else? Could it be masking underlying country-specific conditions that better explain why a particular state has many coups while another does not?

Ethnic Diversity: The final type of explanation centers on ethnicity, and particularly ethnic and cultural diversity, as a primary cause of political instability. Two main hypotheses connect ethnicity to coup attempts in the cross-national literature. First, it is argued that greater ethnic heterogeneity translates directly into higher levels of inter-group tensions which, in turn, undermines state strength—opening
the door to many types of violent challenges, including coups. Second, some have argued that numerically dominant groups capture the state and exclude others from positions of power, influence, and material gain. This exclusion then prompts violent challenges to the state which may take the form of military coups (although complete exclusion would mean exclusion from military institutions, which would logically preclude coup attempts on this basis). To test these theories, statistical works rely heavily on two measures of ethnicity: fractionalization (which captures diversity) and the share of the largest group in the total population (which captures dominance).

Results across studies, for both measures, are ambiguous and often contradictory. Measures of ethnic, cultural, and linguistic fractionalization are sometimes positively correlated with coup attempts while other authors find no such effect. Likewise, there is mixed evidence as to the effect of numerical dominance. While some authors find a statistically significant positive correlation between this measure and coups, others find a negative correlation or no relationship.

If we explore the theoretical link between ethnic and cultural diversity and military coups in a more systematic way, it is not surprising that large-N studies would fail to be illuminating. Indeed, ethnic fractionalization and dominance measures have increasingly come under fire across conflict literatures as “a meaningful operationalization of ethnic politics” for they do not capture what we may think of as conceptually important in explaining the connection between ethnicity and political violence. Imagine an ethnically fragmented society. There is no a priori reason to assume that the military of that society would be ethnically fragmented as well.

20See, for example, Rabushka and Shepsle 1972; and Kposowa and Jenkins 1993.
21See Brass 1985; and Jackman 1978. Also, with regard to the link between ethnic exclusion and insurgency, see Cederman and Girardin 2007; Cederman, Wimmer and Min 2010; Fearon, Kasara and Laitin 2007; and Wimmer, Min and Cederman 2009.
24Ibid.
26Cederman and Girardin 2007, 173.
States across Africa, and throughout the world, have used various strategies to incorporate and exclude ethnic groups into their militaries in order to achieve diverse political ends. At times, ethnic groups have been balanced against each other (either within units, across units, or across branches of the armed services) to prevent any one group from dominating. At other times, a government might match the ethnicity of the officer corps to the dominant civilian ethnic group in order to foster loyalty or to provide patronage rewards. The ethnic composition of the military is thus not a reflection of society at large, but the result of a series of political decisions and tactics which may or may not be a consequence of underlying social diversity. Thus, even if a clear relationship existed between the ethnic composition of the military and coups, which has to date not been tested, we would not necessarily expect that relationship to hold when examining the overarching relationship between nationwide ethnic and cultural diversity and coups. We would also expect the mechanisms linking ethnic politics, via their operation within military institutions, to political instability to be far more complex than currently theorized by these cross-national works (as the discussion of the case study literature, below, will suggest).

Thus, cross-national analyses have generated only two reliable and consistent findings: Coups tend to occur more frequently in poor countries and where there is a pattern of past military interventionism. While these are certainly important insights—especially the observation that countries can get functionally stuck in “coup traps”—the statistical literature has yet to uncover clear causal mechanisms driving military interventionism, and thus can neither reveal the origins of these traps nor proscribe policy interventions to escape them (besides perhaps to develop economically).

What these cross-national studies have missed is the potential centrality of ethnic politics to African military interventionism via mechanisms that cannot be captured by simple diversity or dominance measures. Scholars have thus prematurely

dismissed ethnicity as a causal factor, with significant repercussions for both policy recommendations and the growing formal literature on military coups (which tends to treat the army as a unitary, rational actor with no regard for internal factionalism). Yet, there is a significant case study literature—dating back to the 1970s—that highlights just how important ethnic identity and tensions have been to evolving military dynamics in African states. For example, thick descriptions of the Nigerian, Ugandan, and Sierra Leonean armies suggest that ethnic hostilities and tensions within these military institutions, and between them and their civilian administrations, have played an important role in inciting particular coup attempts.

While doing research on the Nigerian military, sociologist Robin Luckham happened to get caught up in the two coup attempts that occurred there in January and July of 1966. Based on his unparalleled access to the officer corps during a time of crisis and firsthand experience of events, his book, *The Nigerian Military: A Sociological Analysis of Authority and Revolt, 1960-67*, provides a detailed account of the coup participants and their motivations. The first coup, which failed, was characterized by the prominence of Ibo officers in the planning and execution of the attempt—which did result in several high level assassinations and the handing over of civilian power to a non-involved officer, who also happened to be Ibo. Whether or not this coup was a purposeful “ethnic plot” is unclear. Yet, interestingly, it was perceived as such by northern officers who then organized a successful counter-coup six months later. They then broke the military apart, sending Ibo officers and soldiers back to their home region—a move which, in combination with the northern character of the new regime, contributed to the decision of the Ibo to secede from the state and began the Biafra Civil War.\(^{28}\)

Ali Mazrui, writing on the early Ugandan military in his book, *Soldiers and Kinsmen in Uganda*, similarly finds that ethnic fears and tensions played a central role in the civil-military relations and intra-military violence under both the regimes

\(^{28}\) See Luckham 1971.
of A. Milton Obote and Idi Amin. After coming to power in 1962, Obote (a northern Langi) began packing the military with fellow northerners, particularly Langi and Acholi officers and NCOs. At the same time, Idi Amin (a northern Kakwa) rose to a prominent position within the military hierarchy and then began to build a following amongst officers from small, minority, northern ethnic groups such as the Kakwa, Lugbara, and Alur. Fearing Amin’s growing power and ethnic following, Obote threatened to move against him—leading Amin to preempt his own dismissal by seizing power in early 1971. Then, under Amin, a progressive narrowing of the ethnic basis of the state and military occurred. Southern ethnic groups were still excluded, but now Acholi and Langi soldiers were massacred and their further recruitment barred. Then the Madi and Alur officers were purged, followed finally by the Lugbara. By the time Amin was ousted by the Tanzanian military in 1979, the Ugandan army was comprised almost exclusively of Kakwa and other West Nile Muslims. During this process of ethnic narrowing, moreover, 8 failed coup attempts were launched by ethnically targeted officer factions.  

In a comprehensive study of Sierra Leone’s early civil-military relations, Thomas S. Cox attributes much of that country’s instability to the interaction between ethnic voting in elections and fears within military factions that an ethnic “other” would dominate the state. During the pre-independence and first post-independence elections, Sierra Leone’s political party system functioned essentially as an ethnic census—with the Sierra Leone People’s Party capturing the Mende vote and the opposition APC representing an alliance of northern tribal groups who feared Mende domination of the state. When the APC upset the ruling SLPP at the polls in 1967, the Mende-dominated military refused to allow a peaceful hand over of power. Instead, the army grabbed state power and then reinstated the old Mende regime, resulting in a series of counter-coups with ethnic factions seizing and reseizing power.

See Mazrui 1975; also Horowitz 1985, 487-492.
from one another—until Limba officers managed to purge everyone else and stabi-
lized the state under their rule.30

Common to these case studies, undertaken by scholars with rich contextual
knowledge, is a clear sense that without understanding ethnic politics we cannot
understand the cycles of military interventionism and violence that unfolded in each
country. Indeed, based on accounts such as these, medium-N comparative scholars
of African politics and ethnicity, such as Samuel Decalo and Donald Horowitz, have
claimed that “ethnic coups” are an important and distinct phenomenon worthy of
theoretical articulation. Decalo’s work emphasizes that late colonial practices failed
to create professional armies that transcended ethnic allegiances, thereby allowing
factionalization to persist within the military and render it weak and prone to in-
ternal divisions. His focus on delving into the African military as a non-unitary
institutional actor—through a series of in-depth case studies—was path breaking
and allows him to highlight the role of these internal, often ethnic, factions in cre-
ating instability.31 In Ethnic Groups in Conflict, Horowitz pushes this theorization
further by developing two types of “ethnic coup” dynamics—what he terms “ethnic
politics by military means”—through further case study exploration: the “see-saw”
and “attritional” coups. The concept of “see-saw” coups captures a set of dynamics
between civilian, electoral politics and the military: that where elections operate
as an ethnic census and grant executive power to a dominate group, out-groups in
the military will use their access to armaments to reverse such an outcome. This
often sparks a series of counter-coups that replace elections as the primary means
of transferring power between competing ethnic groups. He cites Sierra Leone as
a case in point. This type of coup then often morphs into the latter type, the
“attritional” coup, wherein winning ethnic factions in the officer corps attempt to
purge other groups in a progressive narrowing of the ethnic base of the state and
military—provoking more coups until one group comes to dominate (like in Uganda).

30 See Cox 1976.
31 See Decalo 1998, 5-7; Decalo 1990.
While immensely insightful, these works do have their limitations: primarily that they are based on a small set of comparative cases studies, focus on dynamics to the relative neglect of initial causation, and have not been tested in a framework conducive to broad generalization. It is exceedingly difficult, within the context of a single case, or even a few cases, to adjudicate between the relative causal weights of many competing mechanisms. How can we tell if competition for natural resource windfalls, a sharp decline in the economy due to severe drought, or ethnic factionalism within the army led to a particular military intervention when all three, amongst other potential mechanisms, are routinely present?

The existing military coup literature thus leaves us with a paradox. There is a striking discrepancy between these qualitative, case-study based works—that emphasize the importance of ethnic politics in understanding African coup dynamics—and the cross-national, quantitative literature that emphasizes the role of poverty and past coups on the future risk of military interventionism (but finds little support that ethnicity matters). One of the central missions of my research is thus to resolve this paradox.

Given the persistence of ethnicity as an important factor in micro-level motivations across case studies, I choose to begin my analysis by standing on the shoulders of these qualitative and contextually rich accounts. Without their prior work, mine would be impossible. I follow them in choosing to break down the assumption that militaries are unitary actors. Rather, my work will delve into the ethnic factionalism within these security institutions and place primacy on ethnic politics in explaining the early development of African armies and their resulting proclivities towards interventionism. Yet, I aim to move beyond the existing case study work by systematically theorizing how ethnicity came to be so central to the organization of many African militaries, under what conditions this “ethnicization” of the military led to instability and conflict, and how some countries escaped the dynamics that destabilized their neighbors. This dissertation project thus hopes to significantly improve
our understanding of how ethnic politics drives government instability in Africa—in a theoretically informed and generalizable way that transcends the limitations of single or comparative case studies.

First, the following chapter seeks to develop clearer specifications of the causal mechanisms that lead from ethnic politics to political violence. Using a path dependency framework, I articulate a limited set of conditions that set countries on either a stable or unstable path. Critically, I argue that the most important factor for predicting whether a country landed in a coup trap or not was the historically contingent choice of its independence era leadership to build military loyalty on either an ethnic or a civic-national basis. Ethnic loyalty was a dangerous and exclusionary path which provoked resistance from those it discriminated against. I then advance a set of theoretical mechanisms that sustain each pathway and that link the micro-level behavior of individuals and groups to macro-level outcomes of political violence—here, coup attempts.

The specification of these pathways and their causal mechanisms gives rise to a series of important concepts—such as the politicization of ethnicity, military loyalty based in ethnic ties, foreign military protection, ethnically matched officer corps, etc.—which are then operationalized and measured in ways that remain true to their case study origins but that also allow for cross-national quantitative testing. These measures can thus transcend previous reliance on ethnic diversity and dominance measures, move beyond current limitations, and best test a theoretical framework in which ethnicity plays a central role. Yet, given that fine-grained, cross-national historical data on African military institutions could not be easily found, this necessitated an extensive data collection effort. Time-varying, cross-national data on important indicators such as ethnic representation in the military, recruitment and promotion policies, purges, and the ethnic identity of coup plotters is difficult—but not impossible—to obtain. To compile the data I relied on a wide range of sources: including existing scholarly accounts (such as Luckham, Mazrui, and Cox’s work...
amongst many others), tertiary data sets (particularly the qualitative narratives of Minorities at Risk and the World Directory of Minority and Indigenous People’s), global newspaper archives (including *Keesing’s*), reference books on military development (particularly Keegan’s *World Armies*), and documents from the British, French, Kenyan, Senegalese, and American archives. See Chapter 4 for further discussion of variables, measurement, and data collection.
Chapter 3

Decolonization and the Development of Coup Traps

The argument developed here is one grounded in a path-dependency framework. Decolonization was a moment of deep flux and great transformation for African military institutions—a critical juncture wherein new leaders made important choices over how they would tie soldiers to the state. I will argue that where leaders chose to build military loyalty on the basis of narrow ethnic attachments, they substantially risked setting their countries on paths of profound instability—although under certain circumstances this choice could and did result in stable civil-military relations. Yet, choosing a broader notion of civic-national loyalty was no guarantee for stability. Where ethnicity had already been politicized during pre-independence elections, officers fearing future dominance of the state by a rival ethnic group faced strong incentives to resist the recruitment of those rivals into the military as part of a nationalist agenda.

Path dependency as a methodological framework of causal analysis is fundamental to this argument and to understanding my differential predictions for stability and instability. The two types of possible paths—persistent and reactive—also allow for the development of path-specific causal mechanisms and observable implications. Hence, I will first discuss this analytical framework in some depth before turning to my historical argument.
3.1 Path Dependency as a Historical-Causal Framework of Analysis

It is not enough to merely claim that history matters. Not everything that occurred in the past has meaningfully influenced the present; some events count more than others. Parsing out which historical experiences matter and how they matter requires more than a gnawing suspicion that contemporary variable-centered approaches have missed the mark. Rather, explaining both the proximate and distant effects of historical antecedents requires an analytical framework of causation.

Path dependency provides such a framework. Simply put, path dependency embraces the idea that once a particular path is embarked upon, it acquires its own inertia and tends to reproduce itself. Thus past choices, particularly ones that establish or significantly alter important social practices that then persist over time, can help to explain contemporary outcomes. Indeed, historical institutionalists repeatedly emphasize the critical importance of institutional origins and subsequent moments of great change and their effects on a variety of social, political, and economic outcomes. I will return later to the specific components of a good path dependent argument.

There is a rich history of path dependency arguments in the social sciences. To cite just a few examples: Barrington Moore has argued that the particular way states commercialized agriculture led to different paths of state formation and, ultimately, regime types. Ruth and David Collier use path dependence to explain how the original incorporation of labor movements into the state created legacies of regime dynamics in Latin America. James Mahoney, in his book on Central America, claims that choices made during the liberal reform period set states on different development trajectories that explain their degree of military authoritarianism decades

\[^1\] Mahoney 2000, 511.
\[^2\] Aminzade 1992, 462.
\[^3\] Lieberman 2001, 1015.
\[^4\] See Moore 1966.
\[^5\] See Collier and Collier 1991.
In the rentier state literature, Benjamin Smith complicates the understood relationship between resource wealth and political stability by arguing that the timing of oil discovery in relationship to state-sponsored development created different paths of political development that then explain later regime stability during boom and bust periods.

Economists seeking to explain anomalies within rational choice and utility maximization theories have also followed suit and turned to path dependency as an alternative theoretical framework. Processes as diverse as the adoption and persistence of inefficient technologies, the spatial location of economic activity (particularly industry clustering), and the organization of international trade are all understood to be affected by path dependence. Indeed, Douglas North won the Nobel Prize in Economics for his contributions to understanding varieties of modern capitalism and divergences in contemporary economic performance in terms of institutional path dependency.

The above discussion and examples have provided an initial, intuitive understanding of what general shape a path dependent argument takes. To reiterate the central logic: an initial event or choice triggers a self-perpetuating process that is then resistant to change. Yet, as an analytic framework for understanding historic causation, path dependency is more structured and more complex. James Mahoney, in his introduction to *The Legacies of Liberalism*, offers a wonderfully succinct description of path dependency’s core tenets:

With this formulation, antecedent historical conditions define a range of options available to actors during a key choice point. This key actor choice point, or what can be called a ‘critical juncture’ is characterized by the selection of a particular option... from among two or more alternatives. The selection made during the critical juncture is consequential.

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6See Mahoney 2001.
8See Arthur 1994.
9See especially North 1981 and 1990.
10Pierson 2000(a), 75.
because it leads to the creation of institutional or structural patterns that endure over time. In turn, institutional and structural persistence triggers a reactive sequence in which actors respond to prevailing arrangements through a series of predictable responses and counterresponses.

This quote aligns well with the emerging consensus over what constitutes a good path dependent argument. There are generally four components to such an argument: (1) An analysis of the key choices themselves, of the forks in the road—or what are known as critical junctures. (2) An examination of the particular conditions surrounding the start of the path, including the forces and constraints shaping the decisions of key actors—or the antecedent conditions. (3) An analysis of the period of path reproduction, focusing on the mechanisms that sustain the institution or practice under consideration. (4) And, finally, a discussion of the end of the path or the conditions under which the mechanisms of path reproduction break down. Each will be discussed in detail below.

**Critical Junctures and Choice**

The critical juncture period is the centerpiece of any path dependency analysis. Critical junctures represent moments of structural and institutional indeterminism. They occur during times of great flux and change when the range of options opens up and historic patterns and practices may shift. They are moments when willful actors can shape the future more so than in normal circumstances. They are junctures because they represent forks in the road where actors choose between two or more possibilities for institutional arrangements. And they are critical because once a choice is made, it becomes increasingly difficult to reverse—for the relevant institutional and structural frameworks resolidify.

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12 See Aminzade 1992, 463; Collier and Collier 1991, chapter 1; Pierson 2000(a), 76; Stinchcombe 1968, 102-103.
13 Mahoney 2001, 7.
14 Mahoney 2000, 513.
It is thus important for a path dependent analysis to examine the choices of actors. How and why were they made? What constraints did leaders face? What were the paths not chosen and what consequences might they have entailed? What, in other words, are the counterfactuals? And are there empirical, historical comparisons that can be made with similar times and places where leaders chose differently?

**Antecedent Conditions and Contingency**

No actor, no matter how powerful, has complete liberty in the choices they make. No institution or social practice is developed in a vacuum. There always exists some set of initial conditions that both constrain and enable decision makers. These antecedents are important because they shape the choices of actors during the critical juncture.\[16\] They do so by determining the range of options available, as well as their relative attractiveness. Initial conditions constrain by casting doubts over the viability of certain options and enable by making other options more attractive.

Yet, it is important to note that a path dependent outcome cannot solely be determined by the antecedent conditions. If this were the case, then there would be no need for a path dependency framework in the first place. Standard variable-oriented models would suffice to discover the relationship between historical indicators and contemporary outcomes. To some degree, outcomes must be stochastically related to initial conditions.\[17\] Thus, here, agency and choice matter most for it is the choice and not the antecedent conditions that predict outcomes.\[18\] And, ultimately, human choice is subject to historical contingency.\[19\]

I depart, however, from those who may claim that antecedent conditions can have no significant relationship to path dependent trajectories or their outcomes. It is certainly reasonable to think that the same factors impinging on leader choice

\[16\]Smith 2007, 46.
\[17\]Mahoney 2000, 511.
\[18\]Mahoney 2001, 7.
\[19\]Understood as the inability of generalized theory to routinely predict the occurrence of a specific outcome (Mahoney 2000, 513).
during the critical juncture period would continue to have effects on the resulting trajectories, especially when strategic actors make mistakes or overlook important constraints. There is thus a continued interaction to look for between antecedents, choices, and outcomes.

**The Paths: Persistent and Reactive Sequences**

In a path dependency framework, the choices made during the critical juncture, shaped by the antecedent conditions, lead to ‘sticky’ development trajectories. Indeed, a defining feature of path dependence is the extreme difficulty actors face in reversing decisions made during a critical juncture. In the language of game theory, these emergent paths are institutionalized equilibria that reinforce themselves through a variety of mechanisms. Which mechanisms matter depend on the path. Two general types of such ‘sticky’ trajectories have been theorized: persistent (self-reinforcing) and reactive sequences.

Self-reinforcing sequences are the more commonly cited of the two. They tend to follow a logic of increasing returns and are subject to what the sociological theorist, Arthur Stinchcombe, refers to as historical causes. The notion of historical causes means that while one set of factors led to the creation of the institution, a different set is responsible for its perpetuation. The key mechanism at work, then, in persistent sequences is some form of self-reinforcement or positive feedback generated by the institution itself that places the roads not chosen further and further out of reach as time passes. By logical consequence, these accumulating effects create powerful virtuous or vicious cycles of institutional development.

Different types of self-reinforcing mechanisms exist. James Mahoney, in his article “Path Dependence in Historical Sociology,” develops a useful four-fold categorization of such mechanisms: utilitarian, functionalist, legitimacy, and power

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20 Mahoney 2001, 8.
21 Stinchcombe 1968, 118-119; Mahoney 2000, 513.
22 Levi 1997, 28; Mahoney 2000, 512; Pierson 2000(a), 74-75; Pierson 2000(b), 253.
23 Pierson 2000(b), 253.
explanations. I will briefly review the first three and then focus on the last, as it is most central to the current project. In utilitarian explanations, institutional reproduction is achieved via the rational cost-benefit analysis of actors. In other words, the institution itself creates positive incentives for its own maintenance such that rational actors consistently choose participation in, and perpetuation of, the institution over setting up alternative arrangements. In functionalist explanations, the institution serves a critically important function for the overall political, social, or economic system such that it cannot be dismantled. In legitimacy-oriented explanations, the institution is reproduced because social actors collectively believe in its moral justness or appropriateness.

Power explanations, on the other hand, focus on the role of political authority in institutions as well as on the uneven distribution of incentives they create. New or reformed institutions tend to (re)invest authority in a particular group or subgroup of actors, who can then use their power to expand and reinforce the institution that so benefits them. Moreover, institutions often distribute rewards and punishments (or costs and benefits) unevenly, creating conflicting interests over institutional reproduction—with those supporting the institution in a privileged position from which to pursue their interests. Here, a subset of privileged actors choose to maintain institutions because of the differential access to power and resources that those very same institutions grant them.

Reactive paths or sequences, on the other hand, are characterized by an entirely different logic. Instead of being marked by a more or less constant set of self-reinforcing mechanisms, they are subject to extreme reactivity, a backlash process of powerful responses that could, eventually, severely undermine the institution.

24 Mahoney 2000, 517-519.
26 Ibid, 523-525.
27 Mahoney 2000, 521; Mahoney 2001, 9; Pierson 2000(a), 77.
28 Mahoney 2000, 527; Mahoney 2001, 10.
Reactive sequences are thus inherently unstable and prone to conflict. While self-perpetuating incentives certainly exist in these cases, considering that the institution must empower and privilege some set of actors however small, the mechanisms of reactivity swamp them. Perhaps, in these cases, the stakes are too high and the support base of the institution too small to allow for stability. Of course, theorizing when and why reactivity sets in as opposed to self-perpetuation will be a thorny issue to sort out in any empirical context.

Let us return, for the time being, to the internal dynamics of reactive sequences. In these sequences, events are tightly linked to their neighbors in a causal chain with its own “inherent logic” and inertia: “each event in the sequence is both a reaction to antecedent events and a cause of subsequent events.” Indeed, events in the sequence are often either necessary or sufficient conditions for later events. While it is unlikely that any two particular reactive sequences would be identical, this does not entail that no basis for comparison can be found. We should perhaps consider reactive sequences as a variety of sociological theorist Ronald Aminzade’s “robust processes” or “sequences of events that have unfolded in similar but not identical fashion in a variety of different historical contexts.”

Given similar antecedent conditions, similar choices by leaders, and similar initial institutions, even development trajectories subject to intense reactivity should follow identifiably similar paths.

Whether self-reinforcing or reactive, path dependent trajectories possess a logic that sustains them over time. Yet, importantly, self-reinforcing mechanisms predict institutional stability while the logic of reactive sequences predicts deep and abiding

29 Reactive sequences may, however, eventually give way to more stable solutions which, James Mahoney argues, could be considered the ultimate heritage of the critical juncture (Mahoney 2001, 11).
30 Abbott 1983, 445
31 Mahoney 2000, 526.
32 Ibid, 530.
institutional instability. Path dependence can thus provide a strong basis for developing theories about political stability and instability.\footnote{Pierson 2000(b), 264.}

\textit{Path Breakdown via New Critical Junctures}

Finally, it is important to consider the end of the path. Although institutions may endure for long periods of time, nothing is permanent and institutions are capable of significant change and breakdown.\footnote{Lieberman 2001, 1016.} Path dependence, then, should not entail being stuck in a particular rut forever, frozen in time and unresponsive to major fluctuations in the social, political, and economic spheres. Yet, change itself is bounded by the specific mechanisms that reproduce and sustain the institution. Whatever forces may induce such change, they must overwhelm the mechanisms of continuity embedded in the institution (even if those mechanisms sustain instability).\footnote{Pierson 2000(a), 77.} It is thus important to theorize the emergence of new critical junctures, of new choice points where the decisions of a new generation of leaders will pave a new institutional path. Such new critical junctures could arise from either external shocks or from internal crises, generated endogenously within the path dependent institution; in either case making the previous equilibria untenable and reopening the political space to alternative paths.

To summarize, a path dependent approach focuses on critical junctures as moments of agent choice. While the options available to actors are constrained and shaped by historical antecedents, these moments occur during times of great flux when institutions are founded or fundamentally transformed. The choices made during a critical juncture then close in on themselves, setting a trajectory that persists well into the future either through self-reinforcing mechanisms or by triggering a tightly linked sequence of reactions and counterreactions. Nevertheless, ultimately, new critical junctures emerge, creating new opportunities for institutional change.
3.2 The Historical Argument

This project seeks to theorize patterns of stability and instability in contemporary African civil-military relations through the lens of path dependency. I will argue that several paths of military institutional development emerged out of the common critical juncture of decolonization. In the immediate post-colonial era, African leaders faced decisions over the structure and design of new national armies, arguably the most important of which was on what foundation they would build military loyalty: ethnicity or civic nationalism. That choice, combined with important initial conditions such as the presence of foreign troops, the structure of any inherited native officer corps, and the relative politicization of identity, set countries on ‘sticky’ paths of political-military development. And differences in the nature of these paths, whether they followed a self-reinforcing or reactive sequence, determined the relative proclivity of military officers to seize power in the post-colonial era.\textsuperscript{37}

Decolonization as a Critical Juncture for Security Institutions

For the vast majority of African countries decolonization was, without a doubt, a moment of great institutional flux. Even the most far-sighted of the colonial powers, Britain, withdrew without more than a decade of preparation. Others left like thieves in the night. Nevertheless, in some areas of administration, ten years may have been enough time to train a full civil service and establish strong, lasting institutions (for better or for worse). But for colonial militaries, a decade was far from sufficient to build adequate security institutions for dozens of soon-to-be independent countries. Rather, African leaders tended to inherit small colonial armies that, although they were endowed with some preexisting structures and traditions, were being rapidly

\textsuperscript{37}This argument follows the model set forth in Ruth Collier and David Collier’s work on labor integration in Latin America—which identifies several trajectories resulting from similar critical junctures across cases and then uses differences in those trajectories to explain the success or failure of regime consolidation (See Collier and Collier 1991).
transformed along three important dimensions: (1) the territorial basis of command, (2) the scale of recruitment, and (3) the identity of the officer corps.

First, most colonial forces had been organized on a regional basis, with integrated command structures, instead of by colonial administrative units. For example, under British rule in East Africa, the King’s African Rifles (KAR) incorporated battalions drawn from Nyasaland (Malawi), Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda. Similarly, in British West Africa, the Royal West African Frontier Force (RWAFF) included units of varying sizes from the Gambia, the Gold Coast (Ghana), Nigeria, and Sierra Leone. Under the French, the Tirailleurs Sénégalais recruited from across Côte d’Ivoire, Dahomey (Benin), Guinea, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, Soudan (Mali), and Upper Volta (Burkina Faso), while French Equatorial Africa had its own forces pooled from Chad, Gabon, the Middle Congo (Congo- Brazzaville), and Oubangui-Chari (Central African Republic). Devolution of military power to smaller territorial units thus involved sweeping organizational changes including the transformation of the upper command structure.

Second, despite the fact that African soldiers had long constituted the entirety of the rank-and-file of colonial militaries, the scale of colonial recruitment was inadequate to support new national armies. Colonial militaries were designed to enforce internal pacification and to serve as a reserve force for metropolitan armies in case of widespread conflict (such as during the World Wars)—rather than for national border defense—and were consequently extremely small in size. Indeed, the most densely populated country in Africa, Nigeria, inherited a mere five battalions comprised of 800-1000 soldiers each, while many African countries inherited no more than a single understaffed battalion, including Uganda. Thus, independence often brought with it the need for rapid military expansion.

Finally, at the close of World War II, African colonial militaries collectively had but a handful of low-ranking African officers. Europeans staffed, and continued to

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38British National Archives, WO 389/94; Byrnes 1990.
staff throughout the 1950s and early 1960s, the vast majority of officer positions, at all ranks, across most countries. Africanization thus presented a major hurdle to the successful transition of colonial militaries to new national armies. Even the British, who perhaps perceived the issue first and began remedial measures the earliest, had made limited headway by independence: in 1960, the Nigerian army had only 82 indigenous officers and continued to rely on 243 seconded British officers to fill its ranks,\(^39\) while the Ghanaian army had merely 28 native officers out of a total of 212.\(^40\) The situation elsewhere was even more dire. The Belgian Congo, for instance, had no African officers upon independence—not a single one.\(^41\) In the best of circumstances, then, new African leaders had to rapidly recruit no less than three-quarters of their officers and, in the worst of circumstances, they had to construct an officer corps from scratch.

Nationalizing African militaries were thus being simultaneously transformed along three important dimensions: the territorial scope of command, the extent of society inducted into service, and the basis of identity for officer corps membership. Countries emerging from insurgencies, however, such as Algeria and the former Portuguese colonies, faced additional challenges. They had to either figure out how to integrate rebel forces with the troops that had defended colonialism, or deal with large-scale demobilization and all of its associated risks. In all cases, security institutions were in a state of deep flux and leaders faced important decisions, with lasting impacts, over many details of military organization and recruitment. For example, new leaders had to determine the size of the army, whether or not to establish navies and air forces, where to send recruits for training, when and how to found training academies, who to buy equipment and armaments from, what types of foreign aid and assistance to receive, and what model of command structure to follow, among other choices.

\(^{39}\)Clayton 1989, 160.  
\(^{40}\)Ibid, 218.  
\(^{41}\)Meditz and Merrill 1993.
Arguably, though, the most important military decision newly independent leaders made was on what foundation they would build military loyalty. Taken singly and together, the structural transformations that security institutions were undergoing at the time of decolonization not only enabled, but necessitated, decisions over identity, loyalty, and the state. Over which territories and populations would the state exert military control (and which would it leave alone)? Whose interests would power serve? And, most importantly for our purposes, who could be trusted to defend the state?

**Choices and Constraints: Finding a Basis for Military Loyalty**

In this moment of great flux, new leaders could and did construct new rationales for military service and new principles of inclusion and exclusion for the officer corps. While several models of military loyalty were possible, leaders tended to choose between only two such options: to construct loyalty on the basis of narrow ethnic attachments or to follow a broader, more inclusive vision of civic-nationalism.

The strength of military loyalty to a particular leader or to a concept of government plays a critical role in regime stability. Of primary importance is the loyalty of the officer corps. The rank-and-file can be drafted and coerced to fight via orders to shoot deserters. Most importantly, they do not command others and thus cannot easily organize large-scale resistance—and thus rarely accomplish anything more than a short-term mutiny. Against both foreign and domestic threats, governments rely on their militaries for security. A disloyal military affords no protection: It may watch from a distance as a revolution unfolds, stand to the side as a foreign army dislodges a distasteful regime, or decide to seize power—either to take the reigns of governance itself or pass them on to a more acceptable leader. The military can be a civilian government’s greatest ally or its worst enemy.

Military loyalty has historically been built on a number of different foundations. In the middle ages, European armies were built on reciprocal feudal ties. In exchange
for land rights and the ability to extract surplus production from peasants, feudal lords were responsible for mustering and supplying military units. The military command structure mirrored the greater social structure. The King commanded all and, in turn, was ultimately responsible for defense. The highest ranks of the nobility, who received the largest land grants and parceled out those grants amongst the lower nobility, were responsible for making sure those lower nobles showed up on the battlefield. The lowest rungs of the feudal ladder brought a small company of serfs with them, the rank-and-file of their day. Social and command hierarchies were thus one and the same and were, moreover, tied into economic production.

The collapse of feudalism led to a sustained period of mercenary armies which, in the aftermath of the Thirty Years War, was replaced across European countries by a reliance on the aristocracy for officers. In both France and Prussia, the officer corps were officially closed to anyone not of aristocratic birth (except for the engineering and artillery branches which relied on scientific education). Indeed, France’s officer corps became akin to an extensive pension system for semi-impoverished nobles via generous salaries. England, on the other hand, adopted a purchase system that de facto limited the officer corps of both the Army and Navy to the landed aristocracy. Both commissions and promotions had to be purchased. Combined with low salaries, this meant that only those with sufficiently large hereditary estates—that generated an independent income—could afford to become officers. Whether by patronage or purchase, what these systems of officer recruitment shared was the alignment of class interests between the civilian government and the military thereby, as Huntington argues, “secur[ing] the loyalty of the army to the state by insuring that the former would be controlled by the same property interests which dominated the latter.” This was particularly true in England where a large number of active-duty officers held hereditary seats in the House of Lords—commanding

42 See Spruyt 1996, Chapter 3.
43 As late as World War II, however, some non-European armies were still operating largely on the basis of feudal obligations, including that of Ethiopia (Keegan 1983, 175-180).
44 Huntington 1957, 47.
armies or ships while at the same time serving as legislators—creating a certain indistinguishableness between Parliamentary and military interests.\textsuperscript{45}

Beginning in the early 19th century, European aristocratic militaries were transformed into modern, professional armies—with officer corps recruitment and promotion based in education, seniority, and merit. Sometimes the transition was rapid, such as in the aftermath of the French Revolution when ideological commitments swept aristocratic privilege aside\textsuperscript{46}—and, more practically, when the massive emigration of noble officers (1789-1792) prompted the rapid promotion of enlisted men to fill out the ranks\textsuperscript{47} Prussia quickly followed suit after its spectacular defeat to Napoleon at Jena. Deprived of a military genius on the order of Bonaparte, the Prussians thought it best to invest their efforts in the systematic and superior training of ordinary men. Included in a series of major reforms, in 1806, all class preferences within the military were formally abolished\textsuperscript{48} Haunted by the ghost of Cromwell, the British eventually followed suit and abandoned the purchase system in 1871—after the Prussian military demonstrated its prowess in the quick crushing of France in the Franco-Prussian war of 1870\textsuperscript{49} Thus, by the beginning of the 20th century, the major European powers had abandoned aristocratic privilege as the foundation of military leadership—instead establishing military academies and basing recruitment and promotion on a combination of seniority and selection through merit\textsuperscript{50} Combined with the adoption of universal conscription that began with the French revolution, these armies thus moved ever closer to being truly national institutions\textsuperscript{51}

At the same time that they were expanding and nationalizing the foundations of their own militaries, European colonial powers were introducing racial divides

\textsuperscript{45}Ibid, 21-24.
\textsuperscript{46}Ibid, 42.
\textsuperscript{47}See Scott 1971; Skocpol 1979, 190.
\textsuperscript{48}Huntington 1957, 30-31.
\textsuperscript{49}Ibid, 38, 43 and 47.
\textsuperscript{50}Ibid, 39-55.
\textsuperscript{51}Nevertheless there were important instances of discrimination wherein a particular social group was denied representation within the officer corps. For example, the American military excluded African-Americans prior to World War II and the British army excluded Irish-Catholics from the 17th century until the 1780s (Enloe 1980, 46).
into their colonial militaries. Across Africa, for nearly a century, race defined the
boundary between officers and men. Africans were generally not trusted to command
conquering armies and, despite high death rates due to disease, colonial governors
relied upon white European officers to first expand their territories and then to
internally pacify them. Some colonial powers were, however, better than others. The
French commissioned a small number of African officers under the ancien régime. After
the French Revolution, the commander of the Tirailleurs Sénégalais, General
Faidherbe, who believed wholeheartedly both in assimilation and in the Jacobin
ideology of a democratic army, expanded the base of low-ranking native officers
(mostly drawn from Senegal) On the other hand, the first two Africans to receive
officer rank from Britain were commissioned in 1942 and 1945, both from the Gold
Coast Regiment. The Belgians were the worst and failed to commission any native
officers by the time of independence.

Conceptions of ethnic loyalty also informed recruitment into colonial militaries.
British martial race doctrine stipulated that some ethnic groups were naturally more
politically reliable and more suited to combat and military discipline than others.
Once groups were classified as martial, they were preferentially recruited into the
British colonial forces. Groups considered too educated, too political, and perhaps
even too effeminate, were likewise barred from military service. By such logic,
the Kamba and Kalenjiin came to dominate the Kenyan battalions of the KAR,
including its nascent officer corps on the eve of independence, while the Kikuyu
were purposely excluded. In Nigeria, recruitment primarily targeted the Hausa
tribes living to the North of an officially adopted geographical line, drawn from
Okula to Yola In Uganda, northerners, and especially the northwestern Acholi
and Teso ethnic groups, were targeted for military recruitment by the British.

56 Echenberg 1991, 64.
57 Byrnes 1990; Keegan 1983, 598-600.
French policy, on the other hand, tended to avoid deterministic group-based evaluations of military fitness, at least initially. In French West Africa, military recruiters attempted to draw evenly across groups according to population density. Each administrative unit, or “cercle,” was assigned a quota calculated from its population figures. Mobile draft boards would then visit the cercle each year, inspect the called-up batch of eligible young men (usually the 19-year-olds), and fill the quota.\footnote{See Echenberg 1991, chapter 4.} One consequence of this brand of equity, however, was that large ethnic communities came to dominate the army through weight of numbers, including the Bambara of Mali and the Mossi of Upper Volta (later Burkina Faso).\footnote{Ibid, 63.} Over time, like in the British territories, these groups came to be seen as more martial, and hence more desirable as army recruits, than the far less densely populated linguistic communities of the forest zones—reinforcing early recruitment patterns. Indeed, the forest peoples of the lower regions of Côte d’Ivoire were declared “too feeble and unwarlike” to serve.\footnote{Ibid.} Moreover, exceptions abounded to the quota system. The nomadic peoples of the Sahara and Sahel were considered unsuitable for formal military duty, including the Moors, Taureg, and Fulbe peoples\footnote{Ibid, 48.}—probably because the draft system itself was ill-suited to coping with highly mobile populations. The French recruitment system also struggled to fill quotas along imperial borders where young men could easily slip across to British territory when the draft board arrived.\footnote{Ibid, 63.} In these ways, a system seemingly far less dependent on ethnic stereotypes than the British recruitment system, did in its own way create ethnically based traditions of military service and non-service.

The purpose of this discussion of military history is not to assert a deterministic relationship between colonial practices and subsequent military development. Rather, I wish merely to demonstrate the range of loyalty options that had been

\footnote{Ibid, 63.}
imagined and practiced by European militaries, both at home and abroad, by the
time of decolonization. In short, existing bases of military loyalty included feudal-
ism, class, race and ethnicity, and civic-nationalism. Even if colonial militaries
themselves were based on a narrower set of practices, it is not unreasonable to as-
sume that African leaders and military officers had knowledge of the broader set of
options. African military units served alongside European units during both World
Wars (but especially during World War II) and afterwards in Indochina, Malaysia,
and the Middle East. Much of the rising African intelligentsia was educated abroad
and early political leaders sat in metropolitan parliament, circulated in European
capital cities, and observed the structures of European governance. And, most im-
portantly, leaders did in fact make different choices as to the foundations they would
build for military loyalty.

Again, which conception of military loyalty African leaders chose (ethnic versus
civic-national) was not determined solely by the colonial experience of their country
and its history of colonial military service. The choice, while certainly cognizant
of realities on the ground, I argue, was largely contingent and based in the will,
ideology, and national visions of those leaders and parties who attained power upon
independence. This is a broad claim—and one critically important to overcoming
endogeneity concerns—that some may contest. For example, it could be argued that

63 The term “civic-nationalism” is used instead of “nationalism” to emphasize that nationalisms
based on narrow identity constructions, especially ethnicity, are being excluded from this category.
64 In one case, Egypt, a third foundation for loyalty was chosen: class. This system proved to be
highly stable so long as the officer corps continued to draw from the aristocracy. It was, however,
vulnerable to instability following the opening of the officer corps to the middle and lower classes.
This transition period between an upper-class dominated military and a more broadly national one
opened the door to a military revolution from below. At the time of decolonization, command and
staff positions in the Egyptian army had already been transferred to native officers graduating from
the Egyptian Military Academy. At the time, admission rules restricted entrance into the academy
to the sons of the aristocracy. In 1936, however, the rules were changed to permit the entrance and
future commissioning of sons of middle-class families. Graduates of the academy classes of 1938,
1939, and 1940 later formed the Free Officers Movement, which included both Nasser and Sadat.
It was this very movement that, in 1952, toppled King Farouk’s regime and forced his abdication
in favor of his infant son. Leadership passed into the hands of General Naguib as official regent
for the infant King, who was still a member of the older upper-class generation of officers. Two
years later, still dissatisfied with the state of affairs, the Free Officers once again moved against the
government and, this time, ended the monarchy and assumed leadership themselves under General
Nasser. (Keegan 1983, 162-173; Keesings 1952.)
variation in the pre-independence salience of identity drove the choice over military loyalty: with those facing divisive ethnic tensions choosing to recruit their coethnics into the military to ensure the loyalty of soldiers in the event of ethnic conflict.

Table 3.1: Pre-independence Ethnic Violence and Loyalty Choice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic Violence</th>
<th>Ethnic Loyalty</th>
<th>Civic-National Loyalty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Burundi</td>
<td>Angola</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Congo-Brazzaville</td>
<td>Ghana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rwanda</td>
<td>Guinea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sierra Leone</td>
<td>Nigeria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Zimbabwe</td>
<td>South Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(n=5)</td>
<td>(n=5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>Algeria</td>
<td>Benin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cameroon</td>
<td>Botswana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chad</td>
<td>Lesotho</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Equatorial Guinea</td>
<td>Senegal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>Tanzania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Malawi</td>
<td>Zambia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(n=7)</td>
<td>(n=6)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In order to address this concern, I collected data on pre-independence incidences of ethnic violence. Consulting a wide array of source materials—from colonial intelligence reports, newspaper archives, secondary scholarly accounts, and tertiary data sets on minority groups—I identified occurrences of the following two forms of ethnic violence between the 1940s and the year of independence for each country: urban ethnic riots or violence conducted by ethnic political parties against their political rivals. As a first cut, I consider simply whether or not such an event took place or not and compare that to the choices initial post-independence leaders made over military loyalty (for a full description of coding practices for loyalty choice see 55).
Chapter 4). Preliminary results are presented in Table 3.1. Although there is much missing data, the even distribution across boxes is highly suggestive: existing ethnic tensions and violence did not deter committed African leaders from pursuing inclusionary policies and attempting to overcome the tribalism they saw in their societies.

Take, for example Kwame Nkrumah, who was highly committed to a nationalistic vision for Ghana. He considered ethnicity as “the canker-worm which, unless removed, may destroy the solidity of the body politic, the stability of the government, the efficiency of the bureaucracy and judiciary, and the effectiveness of the army and police.” Similarly, Nelson Mandela and the African National Congress were committed to a pluralistic vision of South African society and worked hard to assuage the fears of whites and other minority groups as they took power. Yet, both faced tense ethnic cleavages and recent violence between ethnic groups. In Ghana, pre-independence elections had led to violence between the Ashante political party, the National Liberation Movement and any opposition that attempted to campaign in their region and, in South Africa, the Zulu-based Inkatha Freedom Party had armed thousands against the ANC and initiated an ethnic insurgency. Despite these worrisome outbreaks of violence, both Nkrumah and Ghana chose to broadly recruit across ethnic groups into their national security institutions—including members of those groups who had participated in the violence. Human agency mattered and it mattered a great deal.

Nonetheless, important forces did act to constrain and enable leaders, especially in the enactment of their respective visions. These factors, in combination with the choice for loyalty, determined the resulting paths of political-military develop-

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65 This is an “in process” coding project, hence the large number of missing cases. Easy availability of source material drove the early selection of cases and whimsy the rest, leading to a selection process that was neither random nor driven by any process that might be systematically related to the results.
66 As quoted in Adkson 1976, 256.
67 Cawthra 2003, 32.
68 Mazrui and Tidy 1984, 59 and 88.
69 Cawthra 2003, 35.
ment that African countries followed. In the decolonization period, I argue that the structure of the existing (colonial) officer corps, the presence or absence of foreign troops, the degree to which ethnicity had become politicized, and the existence (or lack thereof) of an armed insurgency were the four most important factors that both enabled and constrained African leaders in the construction of their new national armies.

First, the composition of the existing indigenous officer corps constrained leadership choices since these officers were already accustomed to a particular set of military traditions. Moreover, where selective recruitment along identity lines had occurred during the colonial period, these officers already held privileged positions vis-à-vis other groups within the military. Attempts to change the structure of the officer corps would thus threaten these established interests, particularly where their privileges were actively stripped—fostering resistance, destabilizing the military, and in extreme cases destabilizing the country as well through a coup attempt and its after effects.

Yet, second, the continued presence of foreign troops could enable leaders to pursue such military restructuring without provoking resistance. The former colonizers maintained their military presence during decolonization and after independence in two principal ways. Directly, in many countries, they garrisoned home units via contracts with the new domestic regimes. The French, for example, established permanent bases in Cameroon, Chad, and Senegal (among others) while the British kept strategic units in Kenya. More commonly, the withdrawing colonial powers maintained their military presence, sometimes against their ideal wishes, by dominating the officer corps of the new armies with seconded personnel. Having spent insufficient time training up a cadre of African officers to fill out the command structure, most former colonial powers “lent” out their officers: such European officers

\begin{footnote}
Neither the Portuguese nor the Belgians had the desire and/or the ability to station troops in Africa after their respective colonial withdrawals. The Spanish maintained a small garrison in Equatorial Guinea for about a year after independence (Keegan, 1983, p.174).
\end{footnote}
continued to be formal members of their “home” militaries, while being officially appointed to command posts in new post-colonial armies. By acting as a powerful backer of the new regime, foreign militaries could mitigate the negative effects of restructuring: factions of the officer corps would be unlikely to seriously rebel or attempt to seize power if they knew their efforts could be easily overturned. In such circumstances, leaders could thus restructure the military according to their desired foundation of military loyalty without risking officer corps retaliation.

Importantly, such foreign troop presence did not serve to constrain which loyalty option new African governments chose. The nature of the transition process, combined with former colonizer sensitivity to charges of continued interference, precluded them from dictating military policy. The case of Nigeria may illustrate this point. During independence talks, the British government was deeply concerned with the possibility that the new Nigerian leadership would organize its national defense forces along regional lines (i.e., with each of the three major regions recruiting, funding, and basing its own units). The British government thought that such a military structure would bring the country quickly to the brink of civil war and preferred a strictly federalized army. They did not, however, dictate or enforce their preference. Instead, British policy makers constructed a long list of rationales they thought would be convincing to the Nigerians and persuaded them to initially adopt a federal military organizational structure.\textsuperscript{71} Six years later, however, the Nigerian leadership changed its mind and regionalized the military, which did in fact contribute to the outbreak of civil war.\textsuperscript{72}

Third, the degree to which ethnicity, religion or other identity factors had been politicized in the run-up to independence also served to constrain loyalty options and their implementation. The role of this factor, however, is highly dependent on the previous two. Where high politicization existed, the leadership should have been constrained to keep the current ethnic composition of the officer corps. Any changes

\textsuperscript{71}British National Archives, CO 968/478, Document 2.
\textsuperscript{72}Luckham 1971, 67-68.
or restructuring along identity lines, in a charged and tense ethnic or religious environment, would likely provoke a strong reaction from the existing officer corps. On the other hand, where foreign military backing buffeted the regime from such potential reactivity, restructuring could possibly be pursued.

Finally, for those leaders who chose civic-nationalism, whether soldiers had previously fought alongside one another could mitigate ethnic divisiveness. It has been documented that, in some cases, insurgent leaders have used their armies not only to fight against colonialism or an incumbent regime, but also as institutional mechanisms through which to build a sense of collective identity—through intensive socialization and political education. Such was the case with the Eritrean People’s Liberation Front (EPLF), who recruited across both religious (Christians and Muslims) and ethnic lines. To overcome the challenges of this heterogeneity, the EPLF invested resources in literacy training, educational cadres, and sustained socialization into a common fighting force.\textsuperscript{73} Even in the absence of such concerted efforts, shared collective identities could emerge naturally through the bonding that takes place in small units during combat. Facing life-threatening situations together—assuming integrated fighting units that cross identity lines—could overcome pre-existing tensions and divisions, thereby creating an esprit de corps within the rebel army that it would retain well into the future.\textsuperscript{74}

The following two sections will further discuss the interaction of these constraints during the critical juncture period of decolonization, both with the choice for loyalty and with each other, and the paths resulting from them. I will begin with the choice to build a military along ethnic lines and show how, theoretically, instability would result from the presence of an already diverse officer corps combined with the lack of foreign military protection. I will then turn to the choice for civic-national loyalty and hypothesize how instability would result from preexisting ethnic politicization

\textsuperscript{73}Weinstein 2005, 616.
\textsuperscript{74}Such a mechanism is hypothesized by Gates in his work on rebel recruitment and allegiance (2002).
in the absence of a shared fight for independence. Table 3.2 (a replication of Table 1.1) below summarizes all four of the path dependency predictions.

Table 3.2: Path Dependency Predictions (Same as Table 1.1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Choice</th>
<th>Constraints</th>
<th>Predicted Path</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic Loyalty</td>
<td>“unmatched” officer corps AND no foreign military</td>
<td>ethnic coup trap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“matched” officer corps OR foreign military</td>
<td>ethnically-based stability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civic-National Loyalty</td>
<td>ethnic politicization AND no armed struggle</td>
<td>nationalists v. sectarians coup trap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>no ethnic politicization OR armed struggle</td>
<td>stable nationalism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Ethnicity, Loyalty, and Paths of Stability and Instability*

Many African leaders chose to build their militaries and stack their officer corps with members of their own ethnic groups and, sometimes, with allied groups. Even North African regimes, often ignored by studies of ethnic politics in Africa, have largely excluded Berbers from their militaries and exclusively recruited officers of Arab descent. For example, Algeria relied upon large numbers of Berber guerrilla forces during the struggle against France and then decided, almost immediately following victory, to demobilize and disband the Berber units—some 40,000-50,000 soldiers in total.\(^{75}\)

In some cases, choosing ethnicity as the foundation for military loyalty led to lasting stability, while in others it led to cycles of military coups and civil war. Knowing the choice alone cannot explain later patterns of civil-military

\(^{75}\)Metz 1991.
relations—the constraints that leaders faced were also critically important in shaping subsequent events. I argue that two path dependent trajectories resulted from a decision to build a military based on ethnic loyalty, one characterized by self-reinforcing and thus stable mechanisms and the other marked by reactivity and thus instability. The first path I will call “ethnically-based stability” and the second path the “ethnic coup trap.” Although this framework cannot exhaustively account for every African coup—there are cases that fall outside of the theory—I will attempt to demonstrate in subsequent chapters that it does explain a significant amount of the variance in experiences. Below, for each path, I will enumerate the conditions that produced it and the mechanisms that sustain it. I will then develop the observable implications of the theory, which will guide the treatment of the case studies.

Path 1: Ethnically-Based Stability

Two sets of initial conditions could lead to a stable path of military loyalty based on ethnic matching. First, if the ethnic composition of the native colonial officer corps (if it existed) already matched the leadership who attained power upon independence, then no conflict would be produced by maintaining the arrangement. A leader who inherited a military dominated by his own group, in other words, could choose to continue recruiting co-ethnics without provoking a military reaction. In this case, everybody's interests would align. Second, even if there was a mismatch between the ethnicity of the leadership and the officer corps, or if diversity made a match impossible, then stability could still result, given the presence of a foreign military power. Again, the logic here is that the foreign power could shield the regime from any potential uprising by the officer corps (and thereby deter one from ever happening). The foreign military presence thus frees the government to restructure the military howsoever it chooses, including along the lines of ethnicity.
Once established, an ethnically-based military loyal to a co-ethnic leader is an highly stable institutional arrangement. Indeed, both Samuel Decalo and Boubacar N'Diaye, in their studies on long-standing civilian regimes, discuss ethnic military recruiting as a successful strategy for stabilizing civil-military relations. The general idea is that by “ethnically matching” the military to the civilian regime, a leader can build military loyalty through both the mechanisms of ethnic identification and patronage, thereby avoiding military coups and strengthening their hold on power. This path is marked by self-reinforcing, power-based mechanisms. Remember that power explanations of persistent sequences focus on how institutions distribute resources and political authority toward a subset of privileged actors who thus continually choose to maintain the institution along its existing trajectory. Security institutions comprise the formal, legitimate base of state violence. Of all institutions, they most clearly endow their members with access to power; not implicitly or subtly but in the most obvert and even crude sense of having control over weaponry. Those with privileged access to the military gain political authority, increased access to state resources, prestige, and other tangible benefits. They thus have every incentive to uphold and reinforce the institution, as well as to protect their position within it. When an ethnic group captures the military, these dynamics only intensify. It is only natural for those who base their rule on exclusionary principles to fear future exclusion if they allowed out-groups to gain a institutional foothold (paving the way for equality and perhaps eventual dominance). Thus, once dominant, members of an ethnic group have strong incentives to uphold the military as their own private institution; to shut out other groups and, by doing so, maintain and even expand their power, resources, and security.

Cases that follow an ethnic matching trajectory should be characterized by similar observable implications. First, each case should demonstrate covariance of the aforementioned initial conditions (a preexisting match between the ethnicity of

\[76\] A term coined by Cynthia H. Enloe in her 1975 article, “The Military Uses of Ethnicity.”

the officer corps and the executive leader or a foreign military presence) and the choice for ethnic loyalty with relative stability in the postcolonial period. While a path cannot last forever, it is sticky and thus, if the theory is correct, then we should witness stability for an extended period (I will analyze the first 15-20 years following independence). Coup attempts, mass mutinies, and army infighting along factional lines should rarely, if ever, occur—more than once or at most twice would signify that the case does not fit the predictions of the theory and may be better explained through factors outside its scope. Second, even after an ethnically-loyal military is established, leaders should still use political opportunities—such as an expansion of the armed forces, dissent or violence from opposing ethnic groups, or a failed coup attempt—to expand the co-ethnic base of the military. Third, there should be evidence of out-groups complaining or protesting about their lack of access to security institutions. Finally, once on the path, leaders should not undermine the basis of loyalty they have established or act to diminish the power and privilege of their co-ethnics in the military.

Path 2: The Ethnic Coup Trap

An ethnic coup trap results, arguably, from lack of strategic foresight. When a leader chooses to build a military on foundations of ethnic loyalty, they must recruit a co-ethnic officer corps. Yet, if upon decolonization the state inherits an existing, ethnically diverse officer corps, then such co-ethnic recruitment would require military restructuring. Such restructuring would threaten the existing officers and, without the protection of a foreign military power, likely lead to rapid destabilization. One could argue that a strategically-minded, forward-thinking leadership should recognize the dangers of choosing ethnic loyalty in these circumstances. Yet, ascriptive recruitment and “ethnic matching” have been widely practiced throughout Africa and there are many cases where ethnic loyalty was chosen despite the

existence of a diverse officer corps. To list just a few examples: In the Sudan, the southern Equatoria Corps was disbanded just prior to independence and the new northern Arab government restricted officer recruitment to northern Arabs until the peace accord of the 1970s. Likewise, the Arab-dominated Algerian government expelled Berbers en masse from the victorious guerrilla army upon independence. In Djibouti, President Hassan Aptidon forced Afars out of both the government administration and the army in the 1970s, stacking both institutions instead with Issa loyalists. In Sierra Leone, after the last successful coup of 1967, the newly installed Mende government rapidly increased the proportion of Mende army officers (from 26% in mid-1964 to 52% by mid-1967). And, in Zimbabwe, within two years of the transition to majority rule, Mugabe (a Shona) created an entirely Shona brigade to assist in the repression of Ndebele dissidents—who themselves were mostly foot soldiers and officers either expelled from the post-conflict, integrated army or who deserted it in protest.

The question then becomes, why would leaders knowingly implement policies that substantially increased their risk of being violently displaced by their own armies? I believe the answer lies in the general atmosphere of insecurity that Africa endured during the period of decolonization. In the 1960s, armed conflicts were being actively waged in Algeria, Burundi, Chad, and the Sudan, among others, many of which pitted ethnic groups against each other. In August 1960, the Congo completely collapsed after a rank-and-file soldiers revolted in response to continued Belgian officership—an event which led Britain to briefly delay decolonization in

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80 See Metz 1991.  
81 Minority Rights Group 2010.  
82 Minorities at Risk 2009.  
83 See Minorities at Risk 2009. Lest one think ascriptive recruitment is originally, or merely, an African phenomenon—the British excluded the “unreliable” Irish-Catholics from their army and navy from the 17th century until the 1780s (Enloe 1980, 46); the United Sates had a mere 5 African-American officers at the beginning of World War II, despite relying on black rank-and-file soldiers to fill man power needs since the Revolutionary War (Ibid, 69-72); and 91% of Generals in the Soviet Red Army between 1940-1975 were Slavic and a majority of those were Russian (Ibid, 66). Both “ethnic matching” and the exclusion of “untrustworthy” or “politically unreliable” groups are widespread practices that states have long used in order to increase their perceived security.
East Africa, put extreme pressure on Nkrumah and other already independent leaders to rapidly Africanize their officer corps, and spread fears of state failure across the continent. Additionally, no less than 34 coups were attempted in 18 different countries that decade. From the perspective of those governing at the time, there probably seemed to be no real safe path forward. Given this level of pervasive insecurity, it is no wonder that many African leaders turned to ethnicity as a solution to their loyalty issues—even some, like Ghana’s Kwame Nkrumah, who initially decried such practices. What may have been dangerous in the short-term may, despite the risk, have been viewed as a long-term solution to an endemic problem.

The ethnic coup trap trajectory should follow the logic of a reactive sequence. Remember that reactive sequences are subject to extreme backlash processes and tightly linked reactions that sustain conflict and instability. The initial attempt to restructure the military along ethnic lines, or perhaps even the anticipation of such restructuring, prompts the out-groups in the officer corps to protect themselves. While officers might react with secessionism (leading perhaps to civil war), their most likely response is to stage a coup d’état and attempt to capture government power for themselves. The hierarchical command structure of military institutions allows officers to give largely uncontestable orders to their subordinates, allowing field commanders to move troops into position and even engage in combat without informing the vast majority of “participants” of their anti-government intentions. Thus using the existing hierarchy allows coupists to easily overcome the organizational barriers and collective action problems inherent to starting an insurgency from outside of the state military. Whether they succeed or fail, an ethnically motivated coup attempt—even if inspired by a defensive logic—aggravates and threatens officers of other groups, who may then attempt coups of their own. Thus a cycle of tightly linked reactionary and counter-reactionary measures is triggered wherein

84See Meditz and Merrill 1993.
85Military coup data is discussed in Chapter 4.
86See Adekson, 1976.
ethnic factions within the officer corps attempt to seize and reseize power from one another—creating a vicious cycle of violence.

Cases that follow an ethnic coup trap path, while not identical in the unfolding of events, should all be marked by the following observable implications. First, the initial conditions outlined above, in combination with a choice of ethnicity as a basis for military loyalty, should consistently align with rapid destabilization. Second, coup attempts will be organized along ethnic lines, with the inner circle of organizers dominated by a single group or an alliance of out-groups. Third, we should witness frequent ethnically-organized counter-coups that follow other coups in close succession (often in a matter of months). Fourth, when a group does successfully seize power, it should use the period of upheaval to immediately move against out-groups and attempt to weed them from the military. Likewise, when a group fails in its coup attempt, those in power should take advantage of the turmoil and political cover to massively purge those sharing the ethnicity of the plotters from the ranks. Finally, the political environment and the psychology of military actors should be pervaded by fear and defensiveness, the markers of a security dilemma, making it difficult to end the cycle of violence short of the total victory of one group through its ability to finally purge the officer corps of competing groups.

Civic-Nationalism as a Basis for Loyalty

There were African leaders, and not an insignificant number, who chose differently—leaders whose visions of society and the nation, and thus of military organization, did not follow an ethnic logic. In particular, these leaders chose civic-national models of military loyalty which resulted in their own trajectories of political-military development. These paths generally fall into two camps: the robustly stable and those subject to a quite similar coup trap as before—except here the nationalists enter the fray as a faction competing with ethnic sectarians for power within security institutions. As with the two trajectories following ethnicity
as a choice for military loyalty, I argue that initial conditions are important in understanding why some countries were able to establish a stable national army while others fell into a pattern of instability. Unlike before, however, different antecedent conditions are of paramount importance: the politicization of ethnicity in the pre-independence period as well as whether or not the country fought an armed insurgency against colonial rule. Where ethnic politicization was already high and where no unifying armed struggle was conducted against colonial rule, we expect destabilization when civilian rulers attempt to create a diverse and representative army. Otherwise, we expect the nationalist project to achieve success. Below, I will develop the logic of each path, stable versus unstable, in more depth.

Path 3: Stable Nationalism

To build a truly national military means recruiting and promoting broadly across ethnic groups. Where colonial recruitment practices had created a dominant ethnic group within the army, the nationalist project would also entail diminishing that group’s privilege through diversification policies (usually conducted via expansion of the ranks). In the absence of salient and politicized ethnic cleavages, individual officers would not be threatened by such recruitment and promotion strategies that favored diversity. They would expect the continuation of ethnically neutral policies in the future and their own continued fair treatment (in the sense of not being discriminated against based on identity). A military based upon principles of merit and equality should reinforce the loyalty of those who rise through its ranks.

Even where ethnic tensions are salient and politicized—thereby creating fears of the ethnic dominance of security institutions in the future, even when the current government promotes diversity and merit (see the logic for Path 4 below)—fighting a unified struggle against colonialism could mitigate these fears and thereby allow stability despite ethnic politicization. As previously discussed, insurgent armies have taken great pains in some circumstances to use their armies as vehicles for social-
ization and political education into new, broader identities. Facing fire together could also, more spontaneously, lead to the creation of overarching identities that transcend ethnic divisions. Of course, for these mechanisms to apply, anti-colonial insurgent groups would have had to overcome potentially narrow ethnic identifications through explicit education and/or by making an effort to diversify the ranks at the operational level (i.e. within companies and platoons) since local recruitment often produces high homogeneity within such small units.

Like the path of ethnically-based stability, this path also follows a self-reinforcing logic based on power mechanisms. Once officers are invested in a merit-based system—or, at the very least, a non-identity based patronage system—they have no incentive to overthrow that system unless its underlying basis for promotion and recruitment changes. Soldiers granted power and material benefits through the current system have strong incentives to protect that system.

We should thus witness the following observable implications. First, the choice of civic-national loyalty combined with an absence of ethnic politicization or the presence of a unified struggle against colonialism should correlate with subsequent stability. There should be very few, if any, coup attempts and these should occur for contingent reasons outside the scope of the theory (for example, external intervention). Second, after independence, promotion and recruitment policies should continue to promote diversity. A change toward co-ethnic recruitment by the government would create a threat to some faction of the officer corps and thus induce a turn towards instability.

Path 4: Nationalists v. Sectarians Coup Trap

Where ethnicity is highly politicized in the pre-independence period, on the other hand, officers are unlikely to buy into a civic-national vision—leading to destabilization and the emergence of a reactive coup path. Particularly in the context of electoral politics where political parties have formed along ethnic lines, there is no guar-
antee that a hostile group will not win power in the future. And, having won civilian power, use their new found control over the government to implement discriminatory policies both toward society at large as well as within security institutions. Therefore, forward-thinking military officers have reason to fear the diversification of the officer corps: as other groups gain representation, they correspondingly gain power. And in a zero-sum game of competing group power, other groups gaining means that your group is losing. Therefore, every group should want to concentrate their power in the military as much as possible—and no group should want to sacrifice relative power by allowing the recruitment or promotion of others. This generates widespread hostility amongst ethnic sectarians—whether from aggressive intentions or merely out of fear of the potential aggressive intentions of others—toward a broad, civic-national vision that would expand access to the military. One of these sectarian factions within the military is thus likely to derail the current government’s nationalist agenda by attempting a coup.

This initial destabilization is then likely to lead to a reactive sequence of tightly linked backlash processes similar to the ethnic coup trap path. Once one group attempts a seizure of power, the fears of other groups are heightened, increasingly the likelihood that they will attempt a coup or counter-coup. Indeed, this path—wherein the nationalists play a significant role in the initial destabilization as well as potentially in subsequent power struggles—will turn into a purely ethnic coup trap if the nationalists are knocked out of the fight. In the absence of that outcome, however, the nationalists may continue to take part in the fray and seize or reseize power from one or more factions of ethnic exclusionists (who may also be fighting with each other).

The following implications of this path should thus be observable. First, we should find covariation between the choice for civic-national loyalty, ethnic politicization (in the absence of a unifying armed struggle) and post-independence instability. Second, broad recruitment policies that promote diversity, implemented
by the nationalistic leader, should result in a perceived threat to one or more ethnic groups within the officer corps. Third, the initial destabilization (coup) should be attempted by one such threatened ethnic faction of officers. Fourth, similar to the ethnic coup trap path, the successful seizure of power by an ethnic group should result in purges of out-groups and nationalists. A failed attempt should likewise lead an “ethnic” government to use that political opportunity to weed out ethnic others (but not necessarily a nationalist government). Finally, we should see the same fearful environment and security dilemma dynamics emerge as in the ethnic coup trap path, making it difficult for the nationalists to create a diverse military whenever they hold power.

**Why Not Bargain?**

As with many conflict situations, the question of bargaining failure naturally arises\(^7\) Why can’t military officers and the government come to some kind of arrangement that would allow both to avoid the costs of conflict? Given that the costs for coup plotters and instigators are quite high (imprisonment, exile, or death), one would think that they would be amenable to being bought off. Would it not make sense for the government to identify the threatening groups and pay them some acceptable bribe to forestall a potentially deadly and destabilizing attack—not just on the institutions of governance, but on the lives of the current civilian leaders?

There are several reasons why we would expect bargaining to fail in this context. First, coupists rely on stealth for success. Indeed, officers often need not inform either their NCOs or rank-and-file soldiers of their anti-government intentions, instead counting on their authority within the command hierarchy to mobilize and deploy units during a coup attempt. For example, during the 1971 Moroccan coup, 1400 cadets from the NCO training academy were mobilized by rebel officers (including the commanding officer of the academy) to attack the King at the Royal Palace in

\(^7\)For a fuller treatment of bargaining models see Fearon 1995; Powell 2002 and 2006.
Rabat—telling them that they were on an anti-coup rescue mission. The plot was only foiled when several of the cadets recognized the King, who called to them for help, and were then able to spread the word and rally a large enough loyalist faction to secure the palace on the King’s behalf. Indeed, coups are routinely organized by a small number of junior or senior officers with command authority over field units (over which they have tactical authority). Thus, the exposure necessary for coup plotters to partake openly in negotiations would undermine their chances of operational success. It would inform not only the government of their intentions but also, and perhaps most importantly, their subordinates—upon whose unquestioning obedience of orders they depend. For potential plotters to participate in such negotiations would directly undermine any real threat they could pose.

Hence, the only possible bargaining option would be a unilateral government concession. The question then arises, to whom would they target this pay off? Buying off the whole officer corps would fail to resolve the original recruitment issues that, in the theoretical story outlined here, underlie the motivations of the plotters. Everyone within the military might be receiving a higher salary, but those targeted for dismissal because of their ethnic identity would find little solace in that fact. Alternatively, pay-offs could be directed at the group being purged—accept a generous retirement package in return for leaving peacefully. While this seems intuitively sensible, credible commitment issues quickly come into play. Officers of particular ethnic groups are being asked to surrender a key source of power within military institutions to a state that is openly discriminating against them (or that they fear will do so in the near future). To accept declining relative power in return for material benefits, one must believe that the government will not use its increased power to renege on those concessions in the future. And why would anyone believe that a discriminatory state would not use its increased powers to discriminate further? Rather, we should expect officers to hold onto whatever power

\[88\] Keesings 1971.
they have within security institutions and not to gamble their futures on promises which they will no longer be able to enforce.

New Critical Junctures

No path lasts forever and it is important to theorize the emergence of potential new critical junctures. Furthermore, analyzing path breakdown may enable us to levy additional evidence in evaluation of the theory. There are many theoretically possible ways in which a new critical juncture may emerge—both endogenously from the paths themselves or exogenously (as in cases of outside military intervention). Although I will discuss several different possibilities below, which will be relevant to analyzing the later case studies, I will focus on one particular new type of critical juncture of substantive importance—the pressures of democratization that swept Africa after the end of the Cold War.

First, however, let us consider countries on the highly unstable, coup trap paths (both ethnic and those involving the nationalists). Overcoming the dynamics of instability marking these paths seems difficult to imagine. Tightly linked backlash processes, within an ethnic security dilemma, engender fear and inhibit peaceful coexistence, cooperation, and the sharing of military institutions. Yet, there are a number of ways in which such a path could break down, possibly leading to long-term stability. Although, as with much in life, the cure may be just as harmful, and as objectionable, as the disease. First, a stability based on ethnic matching could be achieved if one group actually succeeded in purging all other groups from security institutions. This would be akin to emerging victorious from a war of attrition; damaged, untrusting, and having caused a lot of bloodshed. Second, an outside military power, either a foreign government or a domestic armed opposition group, could militarily defeat the existing system. In the latter case, the recruitment and ideological tendencies of the rebel military would then be central to understanding the likely trajectory of the new national army and its relationship to civilian power.
In the former case, the new state may get to (re)build security institutions essentially from scratch. Tanzania’s overthrowing of Idi Amin and, subsequently, Museveni’s military defeat of Obote in Uganda might both count as such opportunities. Finally, fatigued by years, if not decades, of coups and counter-coups, groups could achieve stability while maintaining diversity in the military through inventive power-sharing solutions that changed institutional incentives. For example, if groups significantly represented in the officer corps rotated executive power between them on a set basis, then groups might moderate themselves in the short-term, knowing that they would regularly be in and out of power. Countries such as Benin, Burundi and the Comoros have all tried such arrangements, some with great success.

For countries on a stable path of civic-nationalism, on the other hand, the rise of ethnic political parties through electoral processes could jeopardize their stability. If ethnic political parties gained power through democratic elections and then sought to recruit co-ethnics into security institutions, they would threaten officers of other identity groups and hence risk destabilization.

Finally, for countries on the stable path of ethnically matched civil and military authorities, two separate processes would likely lead to the emergence of new critical junctures. First, the construction of ethnic armies inherently excludes other groups from important state institutions—at the same time that they are excluded from executive power—which has been shown to contribute to the emergence of ethno-national insurgencies. While the government may win some such wars outright, other possible outcomes include rebel victory and a negotiated settlement. As discussed above, rebel victory would mean the displacement of state security institutions by rebel armies—whose recruitment and promotion practices and new choice of military loyalty would then shape the new trajectory of the state. Negotiated settlements, on the other hand, often include provisions for the incorporation of former rebels into national armies (roughly 37% of peace agreements have in-
cluded military integration provisions since 1989 and 53% since 2000. \(^{90}\) When it involves the officer corps, this military restructuring process subverts that original ethnic-matching arrangement and thus may also break down the previously stable relationship between the military and the civilian government.

Second, the pressures for liberalization and democratization that swept Africa in the aftermath of the Cold War disrupted the self-reinforcing mechanisms that stabilized civil-military relations where a leader had successfully built an army of his own co-ethnics. The opening of political systems and the increasing use of democratic means of contestation have led to more and more peaceful transitions of power—wherein one leader hands over executive office to another via constitutional means. Given Africa’s multi-ethnic character, these developments have increased the likelihood that the ethnic identity of leadership also changes during such transfers of power. In other words, the odds that the pre- and post-transition leaders share the same ethnic heritage has diminished.

A change in the ethnicity of a country’s leader, whether by democratic means or not, is a real problem in places where the military was stacked with the previous leaders’ co-ethnics. Under a new leader who no longer shares their identity, military officers may fear or even immediately experience a rapid decline in their power and privilege. In these circumstances, ethnically based factions in the military have strong incentives to mutiny or try and seize government power for themselves, both being tactics to restore the previous status quo. This situation shares many traits with a classic security dilemma: Both civilian and military personnel fear that the other will eventually move against them; both may then take actions to protect or defend themselves while they still can; both may view the others’ defensive actions as aggressive; and, ultimately, conflict may result where no party really desired it. Whether coup attempts are staged preemptively, or in reaction to real moves by the new leadership to restructure the military, they at best severely destabilize civil-

\(^{90}\) Derived from Table 1 in Derouen et al. 2009, 373-379.
military relations. At worst, they may lead to the collapse of constitutional politics, the ethnic fragmentation of the army, and even the outbreak of civil war. Stability may then breakdown into instability.

Given the difficult time that African states have had consolidating democracy, and the continued threat that military coups seem to pose to democratization, the following chapter will test this additional implication of the theory in a cross-national statistical framework, as well as the theoretical predictions about relative stability in the immediate post-independence period.
Chapter 4

Loyalty Choices, Structural Constraints, and Cross-National Empirical Patterns of Military Intervention

In this chapter, I will test the predictions of my argument cross-nationally, using original data on African colonial and post-independence military history. Four specific implications of the theory are tested. First, I predict that relative instability should have been greater amongst those countries on “coup trap” paths. Where leaders chose ethnicity as the basis of military loyalty and had to restructure an existing, diverse officer corps without the protection of a foreign power, we expect instability. Similarly, where leaders chose a broader notion of civic-national loyalty, they still faced instability when they attempted to impose that vision on an already ethnically politicized society. Table 4.1 (a reproduction of Table 1.1) re-summarizes the predictions of the path dependency argument. Second, this same set of countries on “coup trap” paths should destabilize more rapidly following independence. Countries on stable paths may experience the occasional idiosyncratic coup attempt—but these should not be tied up in the dynamics of decolonization discussed here and thus would likely occur later in time. Third, yet despite the risk of instability given either choice, those choosing ethnic loyalty should face the highest risk of instability in the post-independence period. Placing military power and the patronage granted
by an essential state institution in the hands of a single ethnic group is decidedly more threatening, and thus more likely to provoke a response, than the possible threat posed by diverse recruitment and promotion policies.

Fourth and finally, I argue that understanding these historical choices to build military loyalty along ethnic lines is critical to understanding why African military officers have consistently deposed elected, or otherwise constitutionally appointed, leaders in the contemporary period. Democratization disrupts the self-reinforcing mechanisms of stability that tied ethnically constructed armies to the state, creating new critical junctures and opening the door to instability. In Africa, where most states are highly diverse and where no single ethnic group constitutes a majority, the opening of political competition increases the likelihood that executive power will rotate between individuals of different identities. Where past leaders stacked their militaries with co-ethnics, changes in the ethnic identity of the chief-executive, no matter how peacefully attained, pose a real danger to stability—for such changes threaten these ethnically-based military factions, who now face strong incentives to defend their positions of privilege by deposing the new leaders and restoring their co-ethnics to power. Thus, where democratization disrupts the “ethnic matching” between civil and military authorities, we should witness an increased probability of coup attempts.

Descriptive data, count models, duration analysis, and logistic regression are all brought to bear on these hypotheses, which required the construction of two different data sets and three slightly different dependent variables. On all four counts, the empirical analysis supports the theoretical predictions. Countries predicted to be stable survive coup free from 9.4-12.4 years longer and experience 2.7-3.5 fewer coups in the 20 years following decolonization than those on “coup trap” paths. Moreover, consistently across tests, the choice to build loyalty on ethnic lines is more destabilizing than civic-nationalism, even controlling for the factors that undermine a nationalist project, particularly ethnic politicization. Elections also prove highly
destabilizing when they involve a change in the ethnicity of leadership. Where the pre- and post-transition leaders were co-ethnics, elections generated a coup risk of 4.2-8.5%. When they came from different ethnic groups, however, the coup risk jumped to 48.5-62.7%. These results are highly statistically significant and robust across different model specifications.

Table 4.1: Path Dependency Predictions (Same as Table 1.1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Choice</th>
<th>Constraints</th>
<th>Predicted Path</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic Loyalty</td>
<td>“unmatched” officer corps AND</td>
<td>ethnic coup trap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>no foreign military</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“matched” officer corps OR</td>
<td>ethnically-based stability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>foreign military</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civic-National Loyalty</td>
<td>ethnic politicization AND</td>
<td>nationalists v. sectarians coup trap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>no armed struggle</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>no ethnic politicization OR</td>
<td>stable nationalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>armed struggle</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.1 Data and Coding

In order to evaluate whether or not this theory resonates with the historical experiences of African countries, I collected cross-national data on each of the key variables of interest: loyalty choice, “matched” versus “unmatched” officer corps, foreign military presence, ethnic politicization, armed struggle, ethnic changes in leadership, and the coup attempts experienced by each country. For each variable, qualitative narratives were developed first out of which quantitative codings were generated. The data was collected from a wide variety of sources including archival
documents (from Britain, France, Kenya, Senegal, and the United States),1 newspaper articles2 tertiary reference books and data sets3 and secondary scholarly accounts. Below I discuss in detail how each variable relevant to the choice of “ethnic loyalty” and its associated structural constraints was coded. All variables are coded at the time of independence unless the country in question did not establish a military until some years later, in which case variables are instead coded at the time that the military was established. The one exception is the ethnic change in leadership variable, which is coded at the time of the relevant election or other constitutional change in power. A summary of codings by country, for each data set, is contained in Appendices I and II.

Loyalty Choice: While there are many potential bases upon which African leaders could have chosen to build military loyalty, in the vast majority of cases leaders chose only one of two mutually exclusive possibilities: to tie military officers to the state through either a narrow sense of identity-based attachments (ethnic loyalty) or through a broad sense of national belonging (civic-national loyalty). Since the fundamental difference between these two visions of loyalty is their degree of inclusiveness, I looked specifically at recruitment policies to code this variable. If the first head of state purposefully recruited officers and/or created a presidential or republican guard from members of his own ethnic group—and, in some cases, their known allies—then loyalty choice was coded as “ethnic.” The creation and maintenance of an ethnically-based presidential or republican guard is a particularly important indicator that the leader is building loyalty on the basis of ethnic attachments. The purpose of these elite units, which are usually better trained and better equipped than the regular army, is to ensure the safety, security, and continued power of

1The following archives were consulted: The British National Archives (Kew), French Colonial Archives (Aix-en-Provence), French Military Archives (Vincennes), U.S. National Archives II (College Park), National Archives of Senegal (Dakar), and the Kenya National Archives (Nairobi).
2Principally through Keesings and Lexus-Nexis Academic searches.
3Such as John Keegan’s World Armies, Minorities at Risk, the World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples, and Library of Congress country studies.
the chief executive. The composition and recruitment practices of these units thus strongly reflect the intentions of the leader.

On the other hand, if there is evidence that the first leader recruited officers from a diverse cross-section of society—or, most importantly, from across the set of identity groups competing for political power at that time—then loyalty choice was coded as civic-national. Ethnic federations, such as Nigeria and Ethiopia, that tried (at least initially) to balance military recruitment across groups thus get included in the set of civic-national cases. This may seem at the outset a mischaracterization. Such governments were, however, attempting to implement a type of broad and inclusive vision that transcended a narrower reading of the state as belonging to one and only one ethnic group. In that sense, they were striving for something akin to civic-nationalism.

A few illustrative examples should help illuminate the coding procedure. After Algeria gained independence from France, then Minister of Defense Colonel Houari Boumediene retained the largely Arab officer corps of the French colonial military and integrated it with the Arab leadership of the “external” revolutionary army. At the same time, Boumediene purged the vast majority of the Berbers, both officers and rank-and-file soldiers, who had fought in the “internal” guerilla revolutionary army. Algeria is thus coded as choosing ethnic loyalty since there was a conscious effort to make the military Arab. On the other hand, after Zambia achieved independence, military recruitment was conducted on the basis of voluntary enlistment, with no known exclusionary practices, and with the result that no particular ethnic group predominated. Therefore, Zambia is coded as choosing civic-national loyalty.

Of course, the complexity of some cases posed a greater challenge to the coding procedures than others, Malawi proving a particularly difficult example. Walking through my reasoning on this case may both illuminate the careful balance that I attempted to strike between strict coding practices and sensitivity to context. Upon

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4Metz 1993.
independence, President Hastings Banda, an ethnic Chewa of the central region (historically part of the south during colonial times, inherited a military almost entirely comprised of southerners, many of whom were co-ethnics\textsuperscript{6} Banda continued to selectively recruit men from the central and southern regions, particularly those of the Chewa and Lomwe ethnic groups, and to discourage Yao and other northerners from joining the military service and (for those that did join) from attaining high rank\textsuperscript{7}. Yet, Banda placed Lomwe (rather than his co-ethnics) in key senior positions of the armed forces because they were (and are) perceived as ethnic “neutrals” due to their “immigrant” status (despite generations of residence in the territory).

Although President Banda’s strategy of selective ethnic recruitment deviated in a meaningful way from other countries, with an emphasis on regional identity and the employment of ethnic neutrals, his was still a narrow and exclusionary vision of loyalty centered around his own ethnic group and their traditional allies. Thus Malawi is coded as choosing ethnic loyalty.

\textit{Matched Officer Corps}: This variable indicates whether the existing officer corps, at the time of independence, ethnically “matched” the new civilian leadership. Coding thus requires knowledge of both the ethnic identity of the President (or Prime Minister or whoever runs the executive branch of government) as well as of the ethnic composition of the officer corps. If a single group dominates the officer corps, and the chief executive of the state is from that same group, then this variable is coded as “matched.” In all other cases it is coded as “unmatched.”

Yet, several tricky questions quickly present themselves: What if the chief executive is of mixed identity? How much of a majority is necessary to say that a particular group dominates the officer corps? What if there is no native officer corps at the time of independence? The last question is perhaps the easiest to address. If there is no pre-existing officer corps, then there is no one to rebel against its restructuring along ethnic lines. Since this situation entails the same theoretical

\textsuperscript{6}Parsons 1999, 60-61 and 91.
\textsuperscript{7}Decalo 1998, 79 and 88.
prediction as when the civilian government continues to selectively recruit an ethnic group that already dominates the officer corps (i.e., no rebellion) it is coded the same: as “matched.”

Issues of mixed identity, and of coding individual identity in general, are much thornier. If we give constructivist arguments due credence, then we must recognize that individuals can emphasize aspects of their identity in strategic and flexible ways. Leaders can also marry outside of their own group and utilize the identity-based attachments of their spouses to foster political loyalty. Nonetheless, in practice, things are far less muddy than their theoretical potential. Most of the time independence leaders self-identified—and were identified by their peers and followers—as having a single ethnic identity. And while spousal affiliations could play a role in the political game writ large, when it came to the choice of choosing soldiers, those who went the ethnic loyalty route chose their own group and usually exclusively so (with some exceptions for traditional ethnic allies or neutrals). Where mixed identity did occur, then if any group dominated the officer corps and that group matched any part of the leader’s identity, the variable was coded as “matched.”

Finally, and perhaps most controversially, are the problems associated with defining when a particular ethnic group dominates the officer corps. Given that we are concerned here about coup attempts and stability, dominance should imply such a majority that no other group has a realistic chance of successfully seizing power. There is no clear way, however, to set a numerical line above which all cases would meet the qualitative standard, because dominance (as defined above) depends on how many other identity groups have representation in the military, how large each group is, how they are distributed across the branches of military service, whether

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8For example, Posner 2004(b) and 2005, argues that individuals are born with a (limited) range of identities which they can emphasize strategically in different institutional contexts to achieve valued ends—such as identifying with a particular ethnic group while voting where administrative boundaries make that group a minimum winning coalition.

9Londregan, Bienen, and van de Walle discuss these same issues in their 1995 article, “Ethnicity and Leadership Succession in Africa.” They chose not to complicate their codings by adding in multiple ethnic or religious affiliations (6).
multiple small out-groups can cooperate or not, among other considerations. I have thus stayed with more qualitative understandings: Did observers at the time of independence think that the officer corps was dominated by a particular group?

Immediately, however, an objection arises: what about bias in sources? Perhaps observers with a vested interest in portraying colonial military recruitment practices in a certain light—as discriminating against their group or in down-playing their group’s representation—will introduce significant distortion into the data. Careful attention to sources and their potential biases can alleviate some of this concern. Most countries were coded based on official military intelligence reports from the French and British archives. Indeed, the British were particularly candid about their ethnic recruitment practices. When such documents were unavailable, I turned to the accounts of sociologists and historians writing about these militaries in close temporal proximity to decolonization. Such academics had deep contextual knowledge and a better capacity than we do today to weigh the various biases of their sources. Where these types of accounts were missing, I then searched news archives to see if a general consensus emerged as to whether or not the leader matched the officer corps. If newspapers remained silent on the issue, then the case was left uncoded and became missing data. I should note, though, that for 11 of the 21 successfully coded “ethnic loyalty” countries, it was clearly the case that the native officer corps was either highly diverse (hence “unmatched”) or simply did not exist in any meaningful way at the time of independence (hence “matched”).

Foreign Military Protection: A country is coded as having foreign military protection if in the immediate years following independence either (a) a foreign government had garrisoned its own combat troops on the country’s soil or (b) a significant proportion of the new army’s officer corps was comprised of seconded, foreign personnel. If this protection was withdrawn or expelled within three years of independence, however, the country is coded as being unprotected. Three or less years would simply

\[10\] In many countries, seconded officers from former colonial armies dominated the new militaries for some years after independence.
not be enough time to complete a restructuring of the officer corps. Officer training programs, at the time, typically consumed two to three years, much of which occurred at European military academies such as Sandhurst in Britain and the Mons Officer Cadet School in France. For example, the commissioning process—from initial recruitment to the completion of training—for the first classes of British East African officers lasted from January of 1959 to December of 1961.\footnote{Kenya National Archives, DC/KTI/16/1, Document 55.}

While cases of garrisoned troops are relatively straightforward, there should be debate over what theoretically constitutes a significant enough proportion of foreigners in the officer corps to qualify as protection. Again, in practice, coding was quite simple. At the time of independence, the armies of the former Belgian colonies (Burundi, the Congo, and Rwanda) were entirely officered by Belgians—they had zero native officers.\footnote{Lefèvre and Lefèvre 2006, 11; Meditz 1993.} Even the British, who had begun preparations for decolonization in the 1950s, had yet to Africanize more than a quarter of the officer corps of the Nigerian and Ghanaian armies (where they had invested the most in Africanization). In the year of independence, Ghana (1957) had 29 African officers out of 238 and Nigeria (1960) had 82 African officers out of 325.\footnote{Clayton 1989, 160.} With more than three-quarters of the officer corps still comprised of foreigners, it would have been near impossible to stage a coup attempt without the knowledge and consent of the involved foreign power. We can reasonably conclude that countries in this position benefited from foreign military protection.

Countries without foreign military protection in the immediate post-independence period tended to fit into three categories. First, some countries had fought a war for independence and in the process built their own armies (such as Algeria, Angola, Guinea-Bissau, and Mozambique). These countries also tended to include the rapid withdrawal of foreign troops from their soil as a condition of peace. Second, some countries inherited or established small militaries at independence—sometimes...
a mere company—and were thus able to train enough officers to fill their ranks during the decolonization process (such as Togo). Finally, as previously noted, their were some countries who began the post-independence period with foreign military protection in the form of seconded officers but, for one reason or another, en masse expelled foreign officers following decolonization.

**Politicization of Ethnicity:** This concept is intended to capture more than mere conflict or tensions between ethnic groups. I am interested, rather, in whether, by the time of independence, ethnicity already played a central role in political organization and contestation. Where ethnicity was already central to the struggle over power, where elections were already seen as a contest between identity groups, it would be quite difficult to convincingly indoctrinate military officers in a civic-national vision. The civilian regime would, in essence, be telling officers that ethnicity was not relevant to their careers and their promotion potential—and hence that they should accept broad and inclusive recruitment practices—when a different and potentially hostile ethnic group could rise to power in the next election and implement exclusive, ethnic policies to the detriment of out-group officers. In such a context, many a rational actor might choose to preempt future electoral vagaries by seizing power in the here and now for the benefit of their group.

This variable is coded positive (ethnicity politicized) if during the elections prior to independence there is strong evidence that political parties were formed on the basis of ethnic attachments. Here, my coding practice closely follows that developed by Kanchan Chandra for classifications based on group-based voting (one measurement that forms a part of her larger EVOTE project) which also aligns with procedures recommended in Donald Horowitz’s work on ethnic politics and conflict.[14] Instead of focusing on individual political parties, however, I focus on characterizing the system as a whole. First, the major parties competing in pre-independence elections were identified and coded as ethnic, non-ethnic, or multi-ethnic. Both ethnic

14Chandra 2011, 162-164; Horowitz 1985, 293.
and multi-ethnic parties garner the support of particular ethnic groups and even campaign with appeals to identity. The key difference between them is that ethnic parties purposefully exclude the members of at least one other identity group while multi-ethnic parties are open to all. I then coded the system according to the following criteria: if at least one major political party was coded as ethnic, then the system was coded as ethnically politicized.

Here, perceptions are just as important as objective reality. What matters to officer’s strategic thinking is how they believe political parties are organized and how they think electoral winners are likely to treat the military and out-group officers within it. Thus, observer bias—although still potentially important—should concern us less here than for other variables because what people perceived was critically important.\footnote{One could reasonably argue that systematic differences between French and British observers at the time—the British being primed to think in terms of ethnicity and the French in terms of socialism and class differences—could introduce severe bias not related to the perceptions of local strategic actors. This issue merits careful attention when reading the scholarly literature from the 1950s-1970s. I think it is less of a concern with intelligence officers on the ground, colonial administrators in Africa generally thought in terms of race and ethnicity regardless of which metropole they served.}

For evidence, I relied heavily on two sets of sources: (1) Pre-independence western intelligence reports (largely from the 1950s) that talk about the organization, implementation, and results of initial (largely parliamentary) elections; and (2) the substantial scholarly literature on political party formation in this period. I particularly looked for consensus between these two sets of sources that political parties aligned clearly with constituent ethnic groups and that identity seemed more important to voters than ideological platforms. If no elections were held, then the variable is also coded as positive if multiple, organized movements for independence existed and there is strong evidence that these were formed along ethnic lines. Otherwise, the variable is coded negatively.

The differences between Kenya and Tanzania may prove illuminating. Both were British colonies with small intelligence field offices that produced monthly reports.
The British intelligence officers who wrote these reports not only received the same training at home, but also often rotated postings throughout East Africa and sometimes throughout the larger British empire. This implies that sometimes, but not always, reports from different countries were in fact written by the same men. When this small set of observers saw different outcomes across countries, we can thus have great confidence that their findings reflect objectively different realities. In Kenya, pre-independence British intelligence reports indicate that politics fractured along tribal lines in the wake of the Lancaster House Constitutional Conference in 1960. The Kikuyu and Luo ethnic groups formed the Kenyan African National Union (KANU). This caused a variety of other groups (including the Kalenjin, Masai, and Somalis), united in their fear of Kikuyu domination, to create the Kenyan African Democratic Union (KADU). In Tanzania, on the other hand, similar British intelligence reports describe a politically harmonious atmosphere under the Leadership of Julius Nyerere and the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU). Indeed, in an highly ethnically diverse country, TANU won 70/71 seats in the first general parliamentary elections of 1960, the last seat being won by a pro-TANU independent. Kenya is thus coded as ethnically politicized while Tanzania is coded as not ethnically politicized.

Armed Resistance: This variable was coded as positive if evidence exists that any independence movement engaged in armed resistance against colonialism (or apartheid in the case of the southern African countries) in the decade prior to independence—whether or not they won that struggle. Otherwise, the variable is coded as negative. Cases of armed resistance include the ALN in Algeria, UNITA and the MPLA in Angola, the ALNK in Cameroon, the PAIGC in Cape Verde and Guinea-Bissau, the EPLF in Eritrea, Mau Mau in Kenya, the ALN in Morocco,

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16This insight came from encountering the same names across British military intelligence documents from Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania: see CO 822/2056, CO 822/2061-62, CO 822/2064-65, and WO 32/18516.
17British National Archives, CO 822/2056, Documents 8 and 15.
18British National Archives, CO 822/2061-2062.
FRELIMO in Mozambique, the ANC in South Africa, the PSD in Tunisia, and ZANU and ZAPU in Zimbabwe.

**Constitutional Transfers of Executive Power:** To qualify as a case, the change in leadership must have occurred through competitive, national elections or by constitutional provisions given the natural death or non-militarily coerced retirement or resignation of the former leader. Hereditary monarchies, where the monarch still controls the government and the military, are not included since there is no possibility of an ethnic change in leadership occurring (examples include Morocco, Swaziland, and Ethiopia under Haile Selassie)—and hence should be excluded from the set of negative cases according to the possibility principle. Also not counted are transitions to an interim leader or committee that acts as the head of state during a constitutional process to appoint, elect, or otherwise determine the new leader. When such a new leader does successfully come to power according to those constitutional means (i.e., the process is not violently interrupted), the case is counted and for coding purposes the “old leader” is taken to be the one who preceded the special, transitional arrangements. For example, where the violent deposition of a leader led directly to a transitional government that then quickly held elections (within a year or two), the ethnicity of the deposed leader and the ethnicity of the newly elected leader are used to determine whether a change in ethnic leadership took place. Finally, more recent transitions (post-2005) are not included in the data set as sufficient time has not elapsed to ascertain the military’s reaction. At most, a single country contributed 5 transitions to this universe of cases, Mauritius, with only a handful of countries represented more than twice (Benin, Burundi, Comoros, Ghana, Liberia, Madagascar, Sierra Leone, and Tanzania each contributed 3 transitions each).

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19 See Goertz and Mahoney 2006.
20 Many other countries have never experienced a constitutional change in leadership, including Burkina Faso, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gambia, Guinea, Libya, Togo, Uganda, and Zimbabwe.
Ethnic Change in Leadership: Coding ethnic change was, in practice, not as difficult as current paradigms of understanding ethnic identity might suggest. While ethnic categories are certainly constructed, mutable, and porous at the edges, they also persist over long periods of time and leaders often readily identify, or are identified with one or more of them. Data was culled from a wide variety of primary, secondary, and tertiary sources including, but not limited to: documents from the British National Archives, Library of Congress country studies, the World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples, Minorites at Risk qualitative data, obituaries, BBC articles and country timelines, the Encyclopedia of 20th Century African History, and scholarly articles on African history. The ethnicity of each leader (before and after the transition) was coded at the highest level of ethnic aggregation—unless a compelling reason emerged to consider a sub-group. This sub-category coding was only done in three cases: Clan was recognized in Somalia, the Ashanti were considered separate from other Akans in Ghana, and the Djerma were recognized as a politically relevant subgroup of the Songhai in Niger. Returning these cases back to the highest level of ethnic aggregation would only alter the final coding in one case, Somalia in 1967. If the ethnic identity of the leader prior to the transition was different from that of the leader assuming power, the ethnic change variable was coded as 1 (and 0 otherwise).

In no case was regional identity used as the basis of coding, even though region plays an important role in the politics of many African countries—such as Malawi, Nigeria, and the Sudan where North-South divides are arguably more important than ethnic differences in shaping the struggle for power. While such contextual awareness in coding is desirable, it also increases the risk of fitting the theory to the evidence rather than evaluating hypotheses according to the data. For this reason, I chose a more strict coding procedure. Moreover, excluding region likely biases the results against the proposed theory. Ethnic group territories do not tend to cross important regional divides. Thus, we rarely, if ever, see cases where recoding
by regional identity would alter a “no ethnic change” categorization into a positive one. Rather, we would only tend to find the reverse—positive codings of ethnic change that do not involve a difference in region and thus, when coded by region, would become instances of “no ethnic change.” Here, since the theory predicts a coup attempt under the original coding rule but not when region is taken into consideration—and since we do not empirically observe coup attempts in cases where regional identity is highly salient and power transfers between leaders from the same region (such as Malawi in 1994 and 2004)—the new coding procedure would actually increase the observed effect of an ethnic change in leadership. Therefore, the more stringent coding rule that excludes regional identity likely biases the results in a downward direction—increasing our confidence in positive results.

Military Coup Attempts: I identified both the total number of coup attempts for each country for the first 20 years following independence, as well as whether there was a coup following an electoral transfer of power, by cross-referencing McGowan’s data set on African coups with the Archigos data base on political leaders. This data was then expanded to cover the years 1952-1955 and 2002-2010, using McGowan’s coding procedures, via searches of European, North and South American, and African papers. Only the world news sections of foreign governments—i.e., outside the country in question—were considered so as not to include “plots” invented by dictators to arrest opposition leaders. A minimum of two reports citing evidence of actual military violence, military occupation of a government building, or military occupation of a communication or transportation center count as a coup attempt. Even in such cases, where there is strong evidence that there was no plan or ambition to seize national power, it is not counted as a coup attempt.

4.2 Descriptive Statistics

Before turning to the evidence on democratization, I will first present the post-independence patterns of coup attempts broken down by loyalty choice—ethnic versus cross-national—and then within each choice by the structural constraint variables. I calculate the average number of coup attempts in the 20 years following independence for each set of countries experiencing the same constraints, and then compare those averages both to each other and to their theoretically predicted outcomes.\textsuperscript{22} I chose to look at the 20 years following independence for two reasons: First, because path dependency should last for a significant period of time but does ultimately break down, and, second, because it standardizes the time frame of analysis across countries in a meaningful way.\textsuperscript{23} Changing the period of observation to 15 years or to the total time since independence, however, does not significantly change the results of the analysis.

Table 4.2 presents both the predictions and descriptive results for countries whose post-independence leaders chose to build military loyalty on the basis of ethnic attachments. The left side of the table summarizes the theoretical predictions: In cases where we find an unmatched officer corps and also the absence of foreign military protection, we expect instability—as out-group officers would likely resist an ethnic restructuring of the military by an unprotected civil authority. In all other cases, we predict stability—since either there was no out-group element to resist ethnic restructuring or a foreign power was able to protect the civilian administration in its restructuring efforts.

\textsuperscript{22}Unfortunately, there are a number of missing country-cases within the data set. Two countries are excluded on purpose: Mauritius, because it has never had a military, and the Congo, because its military collapsed within a month of independence. Ten additional countries cannot be included because of missing data problems: Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, the Central African Republic, Comoros, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Namibia, Niger, and the Sudan.

\textsuperscript{23}Some minor exceptions to this rule should be noted: For countries that did not have a military at independence, I calculate the 20 year window following the initial establishment of their first military institution (this coding rule primarily effects Botswana and Gambia, as all other countries either had militaries at independence or established them within a couple of years). After all, you cannot have a military coup without a military.
Table 4.2: Ethnic Loyalty Predictions and Cross-Tabulations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictions</th>
<th>Average Coup Attempts (first 20 years after independence)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>foreign military</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>matched stable</td>
<td>1.00 (n=8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unmatched stable</td>
<td>2.75 (n=4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The right side of the table shows the average number of coup attempts experienced by the countries that fit into each possible combination of structural constraints. A total of 21 African countries were coded as making an ethnic loyalty choice. Each logical combination of constraints empirically occurred in at least two countries, although the distribution of cases across boxes is somewhat uneven. On average, the 7 countries in the box predicted to be unstable experienced 4 coup attempts each in the 20 years following independence; significantly higher than the average for any other combination of variables. Also, notably, the average number of coup attempts for both configurations involving unmatched officer corps were more than double the rates where the dominant ethnicity of the officer corps matched that of the chief executive. This suggests that even with foreign military protection, having an unmatched officer corps and attempting to restructure the military along ethnic lines may still have led to instability.

A closer examination of the countries occupying this box—foreign military protection and an unmatched military—may reveal further insights. Congo-Brazzaville,
with 6 coup attempts, seems to be driving the higher rate of coups here. No other country with foreign protection, regardless of the state of the officer corps, experienced more than 3 attempts (see Appendix I). The question thus arises: Why did the presence of a foreign military fail to protect the civilian regime of Congo-Brazzaville? In short, France refused to come to the aid of President Youlou a mere three years after independence when he was deposed by his own military—despite maintaining a garrison of troops in the country.\footnote{Keegan 1983, 126-127.} To say the least, this certainly did not set a precedent that would deter military factions from attempting to seize power in the future. Indeed, French troops quickly withdrew from the territory, signaling French disinterest in Congo’s domestic politics, and a rapid succession of coups and counter-coups followed with two attempts in 1968 and one each in 1970, 1972, and 1977. The coups then stopped for 15 years, a period which coincided, at least partially, with the presence of Cuban troops.\footnote{Europa 1987, 401.} This case suggests that the deterrent power of a foreign military presence depends, not surprisingly, on its willingness to intervene.

Table 4.3 shows both the theoretical predictions and descriptive results for countries whose first leaders chose a broad conception of civic-national identity on which to build military loyalty. Again, the left side of the table summarizes the theoretical predictions: Where ethnicity was already politicized in the pre-independence period, and no common armed resistance was waged against colonial authority, we expect instability—since under these circumstances it would be difficult to convince officers to abandon identity politics and allow broad recruitment and promotion policies that could potentially disadvantage their group. In all other cases, in which either ethnicity was not politicized or a unifying armed struggle was fought, we expect relative stability.
Table 4.3: Civic-National Loyalty Predictions and Cross-Tabulations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Predictions</th>
<th>Average Coup Attempts (first 20 years after independence)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>armed</td>
<td>no armed resistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>armed resistance</td>
<td></td>
<td>armed resistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ethnicity</td>
<td>stable</td>
<td>unstable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stable</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n=2)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(n=6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not politicized</td>
<td>stable</td>
<td>stable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stable</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n=4)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(n=8)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As before, the right side of the table shows the actual average number of coup attempts experienced by the set of countries occupying each box. Twenty countries were coded as building loyalty on the basis of civic-nationalism. Though each logical combination of constraints empirically occurred, the distribution of cases across boxes is again somewhat skewed. The six countries whose structural constraints predict instability experienced an average of three coup attempts each in the 20 years following independence, more than three times the number experienced by any other set of countries. Indeed, no other category experienced, on average, more than a single attempted coup in the time period under examination.

I now turn to the question of how these historical legacies have impacted the current period of democratization. From 1950 to 2005, there were 74 cases of power changing hands from one African leader to another by constitutional means. Table 4.4 summarizes the reasons for these changes in leadership, broken down by electoral and non-electoral successions of power. The majority of transitions were the result of electoral processes, usually regularly scheduled or part of a planned democratization.
Table 4.4: Reasons for Constitutional Changes of Leadership, 1950-2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event Type</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Elections (n=55)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planned Democratization or Regularly Scheduled</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By Transitional Government after Coup</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After Retirement, Resignation, Impeachment, or Death of Leader</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By Transitional Government after Peace Treaty</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-Electoral Successions (n=19)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After Death in Office (natural) of Leader</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After Retirement (non-coerced) of Leader</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After Resignation (non-militarily coerced) of Leader</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By Terms of Power Sharing Agreement</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Many of these power transfers were followed closely by violent military reactions. The most commonly experienced of these reactions, and the one analyzed here, is the coup attempt. But note that other negative, and equally violent, reactions from the military do occur and that these types of events may involve the same kinds of ethnic dynamics theorized here. For example, elections held in the Central African Republic in 1993 led to the transfer of executive power from André Kolingba (of the southern Yacoma) to Ange-Félix Patassé (of the northern Gbaya). Patassé rapidly implemented a general policy of providing patronage positions in his administration to fellow northerners. The expansion of this policy to the armed services, involving the blatant replacement of southerners with northerners, sparked three army mutinies between 1996 and 1997. Examples such as this one suggest that the findings presented here, which are restricted to coup attempts, may actually understate the connection between ethnic changes in leadership and military reactivity.

Of the 74 constitutional power transfers, approximately one-third are followed by a coup attempt within four years (42% for electoral transitions). No country experienced a coup attempt in the fifth year after a transfer and the average length of time

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26 Minority Rights Group 2010.
to elapse between transition and coup is 2.0 years (see Figure 4.1 for distribution). Tables 4.5-4.6 periodize the data by decade, showing the patterns of constitutional changes of leadership and subsequent military coup attempts over time. From the table, we can clearly see that this is not merely a cold war phenomenon. As the third wave of democratization swept across Africa in the 1990s, the number of constitutional leadership transitions skyrocketed. Yet, so too did the number of coup attempts undermining those transitions. And while the record has improved in the 2000s, the problem has by no means disappeared.

Such a long window of observation may strike some as counterintuitive. We tend to expect military officers to react immediately to perceived threats to their corporate interests. Especially in countries with high ethnic tensions and a history of ethnic violence, fear may drive officers to prompt action when the presidency passes into the hands of a different ethnic group—rather than wait to see if they will be ill-treated. The 1967 elections and subsequent string of military coups in Sierra Leone exemplify this path (see Chapter 5). Yet, in other contexts, it makes more
sense for military officers to wait for an actual threat to materialize. After all, coups are highly risky endeavors—the punishments for treason usually involving death—and in the absence of actual restructuring efforts, the power of out-group officers does not in fact decline relative to the new leader’s co-ethnics. Officers motivated by self-interest and self-preservation may thus logically reserve such extreme action until all other alternatives have been exhausted.

Table 4.5: Periodization of Constitutional Changes of Leadership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decade</th>
<th>Number of Leadership Changes</th>
<th>Number Followed by Coup Attempts</th>
<th>Percentage Followed by Coup Attempts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1950-59</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960-69</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970-79</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980-89</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990-99</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000-05</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.6: Periodization of Electoral Transitions Only

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decade</th>
<th>Number of Leadership Changes</th>
<th>Number Followed by Coup Attempts</th>
<th>Percentage Followed by Coup Attempts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1950-59</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960-69</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970-79</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980-89</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990-99</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000-05</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In both cases—whether we expect a quick reaction or a more drawn out process—the predicted coup attempt is predicated on the same underlying theory of ethnic politics: An ethnic change in leadership threatens the identity-based patronage networks of an entrenched officer corps that then reacts violently against that threat. It thus makes sense to test for both short- and long-term reactions simultaneously.
by lengthening the observation window. Four years was chosen as a reasonable time frame as it should account for both processes without extending too far into the future.

By this coding method, approximately 55% of constitutional leadership transitions in Africa, between 1950-2005, involved a change in the ethnicity of the country’s leader (41 of 73, with 1 case indeterminable)\textsuperscript{27} Table 4.7 depicts the bivariate relationship between ethnic changes in leadership and coup attempts\textsuperscript{28} The distribution of cases indicates that an ethnic change in leadership is practically a necessary condition for a coup attempt to occur after a peaceful, constitutional change in leadership. Where there is ethnic continuity in leadership, militaries very rarely attempt to seize power. Moreover, of the three cases that do defy the general pattern, two may not appropriately belong in this contextual setting of peaceful, constitutional politics: Lesotho in 1993 and the Sudan in 1986. In both of these cases, elections were held by a transitional government immediately following a successful military coup (and Sudan was also embroiled in civil war at the time). Indeed, of the 12 cases in which successful coups led to elections and a transfer of executive power, 10 were then subject to additional coup attempts (within 4 years). A solid argument can thus be made that these cases are caught up in cycles of violence with their own causal dynamics—whose exploration is beyond the scope of this article. All statistical models were thus subjected to robustness checks that included an indicator variable to control for this possibility.

\textsuperscript{27}The 1997 electoral transition in Liberia was dropped because the context preceding the election prevent a sensible coding of the ethnic change variable. From 1994-97, Liberia was governed by a 5 member transitional council under the terms of a peace treaty—which followed a period of extremely high executive turnover during the civil war (6 presidents ruled between 1990-94).

\textsuperscript{28}All statistical models were run using the Zelig package for R. See Imai, King, and Lau, 2008.
Table 4.7: Ethnic Changes in Leadership and Coup Attempts, 1950-2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic Change in Leadership?</th>
<th>Coup Attempt within 4 years?</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bivariate Logit: Coefficient= 2.415, SE= 0.682, significant at $p \leq 0.001$ level
Predicted Probability of Coup Given Ethnic Change= 0.532
Predicted Probability of Coup Given No Ethnic Change= 0.104
Difference in Predicted Probabilities= 0.428
Missing Observations= 1 (Liberia 1997; no coup attempt)

4.3 Regression Analysis

These cross-national, descriptive patterns lend some initial support to the theory developed in this dissertation. They do not allow us, however, to control for potentially confounding variables, such as relative wealth and natural resource endowments, or to rigorously estimate uncertainty. I thus turn to regression analysis, employing three different classes of models, with three slightly different dependent variables, to test distinct implications of the theory. Although each class of models requires a different dependent variable, all are based in the same measure of coup attempts constructed for the descriptive statistics.

First, the theory implies that countries on the predicted paths of instability should rapidly destabilize compared to their peers. Thus we should expect a military coup to occur closer to independence amongst these countries. A duration model (Weibull) is used to test this implication and the dependent variable is consequently constructed as the years of government survival prior to the first coup attempt (whether or not that attempt was successful). Countries that did not experience

\footnote{All statistical models were run in R using the Zelig package. See Imai et al 2007 and 2008.}
any coup attempts in the first 20 years following independence are treated as right
censored.

Second, the theory predicts that relative instability should be greater amongst
those countries on “coup trap” paths. To test this implication, the dependent vari-
able is constructed as the number (or count) of military coup attempts in the 20
year observation window following independence. The variance-to-mean ratio of
this dependent variable (about 4.0) suggests over dispersion and thus a negative
binomial model is employed. Although this approach departs from existing studies
of military coups, which normally use time-series probit or logit models, it has an
advantage in that it retains observations of the (rare) dependent variable usually
discarded. When multiple coup attempts occur in a single year, these time-series
models still code the dependent variable as a 1. Given that we may expect reactive
coups and counter-coups to occur in short spans of time—and that this is valuable
information about instability—it makes sense to include a model that can retain
that information.

Finally, countries whose leaders have employed ethnic stacking policies in the
past—those that historically followed a path of “ethnically-based” stability—are
predicted to be vulnerable to military reactivity while democratizing. This impli-
cation of the theory is tested using logit analysis on the coup variable constructed
for the descriptive statistics: whether or not a coup attempt occurred in the 4 years
following the transfer of executive power.

*Independent Variables*

The key independent variables for the first two tests are difficult to integrate
into the models. The theory I have developed to explain relative stability in African
civil-military relations explicitly develops multiple causal pathways to the same out-
come (coup attempts). In other words, I use specific configurations of variables to
predict outcomes. Yet, regression frameworks tend to assume that each included
variable has a uniform effect on the unit of observation, regardless of the context in
which those variables are embedded. From the standpoint of my theory, it makes
little sense to include loyalty choice, matched officer corps, foreign military protec-
tion, ethnic politicization, or armed resistance as traditional independent variables
because I make no claim that they have an effect independent of their membership
in a particular configuration of variables. Furthermore, the limited size of the data
set (n= 41) precludes the inclusion of all of these variables as well as their myriad,
theoretically important interactions.

Within the regression framework, an indicator variable allows us to separate out
a category of observations and measure whether or not being a member of that
set is correlated with the dependent variable. Political scientists are familiar and
comfortable with using categories such as gender, oil exporter, and the American
South in this way. Here, I propose treating theoretically important configurations
of variables as categories. We can measure the independent effect of the category
and only assume uniform effects for the set taken as a whole (and not make such
assumptions for the variables considered when coding the set). Indeed, this logic
parallels to some degree the standard use of interaction terms (and the practice of
coding I employ here will mirror the construction of multi-variable interaction terms)
except that the original variables will not be included directly in the model.

Following this logic, I create an indicator variable for each combination of factors
theorized to cause instability. Predicted ethnic instability represents the countries
predicted to be unstable given a choice of ethnic military loyalty. For each country,
the variable is coded 1 if the leader chose ethnic loyalty, if the officer corps was
unmatched, and if there was no foreign military protection. For all other countries,
the variable is coded 0. Predicted civic instability represents the countries predicted
to be unstable given a choice of civic-national loyalty. It is coded 1 if the leader chose
civic-national loyalty, if ethnicity was politicized in the pre-independence period,
and if no armed resistance was fought—and 0 otherwise. I also create a general
indicator variable, _predicted instability_, that encapsulates both causal pathways. For any given country, this variable is coded 1 if the variable for either _predicted ethnic instability_ or _predicted civic instability_ is coded positively, and 0 otherwise. A version of each duration and count model will be run to test the combined category, _predicted instability_, and to test the separate effects of each configuration.\(^{30}\)

The key independent variable for the logit models on democratization is the ethnic change variable, whose construction is discussed in the section on data and coding.

**Control Variables**

Given the small size of each data set—n= 41 for the post-independence period and n= 73 for democratization—only a limited number of control variables can be included. These controls were carefully selected on the basis of prior theoretical work, which suggests that their exclusion would constitute missing variable bias and thus pose a significant threat to inference. Table 4.8 summarizes all of the control variables and robustness checks discussed below.

First, for the models testing the path dependency predictions, dummy variables are included to control for colonial legacy—one each for former British and French colonies. This follows Ali Mazrui’s work on the differential effects of British versus French colonialism on subsequent African political trajectories.\(^{31}\)

Past studies have consistently found that poorer countries experience more coup attempts, all else being equal.\(^{32}\) Thus, all model variations include the log of GDP per capita, \(\ln GDP/k\).\(^{33}\) For the first two models, this is measured in the year of independence to test whether relative wealth at the starting gate affected subsequent,

\(^{30}\)All three category variables cannot be run in the same model as _predicted instability_ is a perfect linear combination of the other two variables, which prohibits a solution to the matrix algebra behind the model.

\(^{31}\)See Mazrui 1983.

\(^{32}\)See especially Londregan and Poole 1996; Przeworski et. al. 1996.

\(^{33}\)All data for GDP and growth variables was derived from Maddison 2008.
long-term patterns of civil-military relations. For the last model, it is measured in the year of the power transfer.

Table 4.8: Control Variables and Robustness Checks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Variable</th>
<th>Alternative Measures</th>
<th>Models</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>wealth</td>
<td>all</td>
<td>all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ln gdp/k)</td>
<td>EF Alesina</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ethnic diversity (ELF)</td>
<td>EF Fearon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Posner’s PREG</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>largest group’s % share in population</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>any group over 50% of population</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British colony</td>
<td>duration count</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French colony</td>
<td>duration count</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mineral exporter (at independence)</td>
<td>late discovery</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>economic shock (CAB as % of GDP)</td>
<td>-1% or lower growth</td>
<td>logit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-3% or lower growth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-5% or lower growth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-10% or lower growth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prior coup attempts</td>
<td>prior successful coup attempts</td>
<td>logit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>coup before election</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>oil production</td>
<td>oil reserves</td>
<td>logit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>diamond production</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>indicator for either oil or diamonds</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>margin of victory</td>
<td>% vote for winning party</td>
<td>logit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>regime continuity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prior successful electoral transfer</td>
<td></td>
<td>logit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is also reasonable to think that economic shocks, understood as sharp downturns in a country’s economic well-being, may also make a coup attempt significantly more likely—as they create a window of opportunity when public support for govern-
ment change may be high and a discontented military could intervene in civilian affairs without significant public backlash. Due to data constraints, pre-independence economic shocks could not be included in the count and duration models where they would be appropriate (including independent variables measured after decolonization would introduce a host of endogeneity concerns into these models). For the democratization model, I construct measures of economic shocks largely based on current account balance data. Large current account balance deficits tend to cause (or at least reflect) greater financial struggles as well as a government’s inability to pay its employees—including the military. I thus measure the \textit{economic shock} variable by using the country’s lowest (i.e., worst) current account balance (CAB) as a percentage of GDP in the four year window following the power transfer. Nonetheless, since previous work on military coups has measured economic shocks in terms of growth rates, I also construct several indicator variables to capture significant contractions of the overall economy. A 1\% economic shock variable was coded 1 if, in any year during the four year period following the leadership transition, the country experienced a negative growth rate of 1\% or more (and 0 otherwise).\footnote{Note that for all of the economic variables, if during the four year period of observation there was a coup attempt or another constitutional change in leadership, the period was truncated so as not to introduce the potential for reverse causality or other threats to inference. Coup attempts themselves have been known to have disastrous effects on economic growth, especially when they descend into more widespread violence, and thus I attempted, wherever possible, to cease observing growth rates in the year prior to a coup attempt.} Additionally, 3\%, 5\%, and 10\% economic shock variables were coded in a parallel fashion to capture increasing levels of crisis severity. Each of these four indicator variables was run in turn as a robustness check on the CAB measurement.

A measure for \textit{ethnic diversity} is also included in all models to replicate previous studies which, based on this variable, have dismissed ethnicity as unimportant in explaining cross-national variation in coups.\footnote{See Belkin and Schofer 2003; Collier and Hoeffler 2005 and 2006; Jenkins and Kposowa 1992 and 1993.} In the base models, 1961 ELF scores
are used\textsuperscript{36} with robustness checks run with the competing fractionalization measures of Alesina et al, Fearon, and Posner. Robustness checks are also run using two measures for economic dominance constructed from Fearon’s data (the percent share in the total population of the largest ethnic group and an indicator variable coded 1 if any ethnic group constitutes more than 50% of the total population and 0 otherwise).\textsuperscript{37}

The potential relationship between natural resources and military coups is unclear at best. Scholars of the rentier state claim that natural resource revenues can stabilize authoritarian governments by providing a source of fiscal revenue independent of citizens, which they can then use to increase their repressive capabilities and build and support extensive patronage networks—both of which insulate the government from potential challengers.\textsuperscript{38} In terms of the military, we could think of resource rents as a pool of funds that could be used to “buy off” discontented officers and/or to hire and embed political operatives in military units as an early warning detection system against coups. By this logic, we would thus expect a negative relationship between rents and coup attempts. Macartan Humphreys’ work on civil wars and natural resources proposes an alternative mechanism—what he terms the “greedy rebels” mechanism—which cuts in the opposite direction.\textsuperscript{39} Humphreys argues that “the state becomes more valuable to men with guns when there are oil revenues in the bargain.”\textsuperscript{40} Whether we are speaking of rebel groups or internal military factions, revenues from the control and sale of natural resources increase the potential rewards of state control—thereby encouraging challenges to the center which could plausibly include military coups.\textsuperscript{41} We thus have two sets of mecha-

\textsuperscript{36}See Roeder 2001. Sao Tome and Principe’s score was estimated from Cape Verde’s score as the 2 island nations were uninhabited prior to Portuguese colonization and had the same immigration patterns and racial structure imposed on them by the Portuguese.

\textsuperscript{37}See Alesina et al 2003; Fearon 2003; Posner 2004.

\textsuperscript{38}See Ross 2001 and 2004.

\textsuperscript{39}See Humphreys 2005.

\textsuperscript{40}Ibid, 519.

\textsuperscript{41}Collier and Hoeffler 2005 also suggest that large rents at the center, whether from aid flows or natural resources, will increase the probability of a coup attempt (4-5).
nisms, either one of which could be significant—or that could wash each other out in the observed data. For both the survival and count models, I include a dummy variable, *mineral exporter*, for whether or not—at independence—oil, gas, or minerals\(^{42}\) constituted a “major” or “principal” export of each country according to either the United Nations’ *World Economic Survey* or B.R. Mitchell’s *International Historical Statistics*.\(^{43}\) For the count model only, as a robustness check, I also re-code the variable to include later discoveries using a wide variety of sources. This version is coded 1 if at any point in the 20 year post-independence window minerals, oil, or gas became a major export of the country in question. For the logit models on democratization, I include Humphreys’ variable for *oil production*—the average amount extracted per day in a given year in thousands of barrels per day (for the year of the transition). As a robustness check, I also run each model variant with Humphreys’ *diamond production* and *oil reserve* variables—the estimated amount of oil known to be in the ground in billions of barrels—as well as with an indicator variable for whether a country was either an oil or diamond producer (all measured in the year of the power transition).\(^{44}\)

Extant studies of military coups and democratization consistently find that coup attempts are more likely to occur where there is a recent history of military intervention. For the count and duration models, no control need be included since there was no history of military coups under colonialism. This does become a concern, however, for the tests on democratization. The logit models thus include a variable for past military intervention, *prior coups*, which is the number of coup attempts in the previous ten years. As prior successful coups may set a precedent and demonstrate to future military officers the ease or plausibility of seizing power, a robustness

\(^{42}\)All mineral commodities, from diamonds to copper, were treated equally here as the mechanism does not distinguish between the source of resource rents—only that they occur.


\(^{44}\)For a full description of how this data was collected and coded, see Humphreys 2005, 523-524. Some missing observations were filled in using United States Geological Survey: Minerals Information. Although these measurements exclude many types of natural resources whose rents could produce the same theoretical effects as oil and diamonds (such as gold, copper, uranium, etc.), systematic data on these other resources is currently unavailable.
check is run by substituting the number of successful coup attempts in the 10 years preceding the power transfer in question for prior coups. Also, as previously discussed, in cases where a successful coup leads to immediate elections which in turn leads to a power transfer, we may expect further violence. Thus, another robustness check is conducted by adding an indicator variable for this set of 12 observations (coup before election).

The analysis on democratization and military coups is run on two slightly different versions of the data: The first model examines all constitutional changes in leadership (n=73), while the second model drops the 19 cases of non-electoral successions of power (n=54). While certain unpredictable events can cause leadership to change hands without immediate elections in even the most advanced democracies (impeachment and the natural death of the president while in office, for example), it is important to analyze electoral successions on their own terms—especially since some of the non-electoral, yet still constitutional, changes in power took place in arguably autocratic contexts.

For the logit models on elections only data, three additional control variables are considered. First, closely contested elections—especially those accompanied by ethnically-motivated social violence—may increase the probability of a violent military response by those officers sympathetic to the losing side. Drawn from Lindberg’s data on African elections, margin of victory is measured by subtracting the vote share of the second place candidate (or party for parliamentary elections) from that of the winner.\footnote{See Lindberg 2009.} Second, continuity in leadership may exist despite a change in the chief executive. If there is no change in political party, then military officers may not expect a change in policy and thus would not feel threatened despite the change in leadership. Likewise, and perhaps more importantly given the poorly institutionalized nature of many African political parties, where superficial changes in party names or recurrent splits and merges can mask an underlying continuity in
the cadre holding power—if the new leader held a significant post in the old regime, the military may also expect continuity in their treatment—and thus no threat. Therefore, a *regime continuity* variable is included. Again, following Lindberg, this variable is coded 1 if the post-transition chief executive either belonged to the same political party as the pre-transition leader or played a meaningful role in the prior administration, such as the vice-president, foreign minister, or secretary of state (and 0 otherwise).

Finally, past success with peaceful, electoral transfers of executive power could, hypothetically, encourage the military to stay out of civilian politics in the future. The variable, *prior successful electoral transfer*, is coded 1 if at any point in the past—no matter how long ago—executive power was transferred from one leader to the next via electoral means without a successful coup attempt occurring within the subsequent four years (and 0 otherwise). Failed attempts do not count, in this instance, since those governments did, in fact, survive.

**Results**

The regression analysis confirms the findings of the descriptive statistics. In the survival model, all of the configuration variables, representing the theoretically predicted paths to instability, are negative and statistically significant (see Table 4.9). Note that the reported coefficients have been transformed for easier interpretation: Instead of the raw hazard rate, the reported coefficient represents a change to the baseline hazard. Thus, the predicted instability configurations are correlated with a decrease in the time elapsed between independence and a country’s first coup attempt. Indeed, the magnitude of the effect is striking: countries on predicted paths to instability are expected to survive coup free from 9.4-12.3 years fewer than their peers, all else being equal (see Figures 4.2 and 4.3). When the configurations are run separately, *predicted ethnic instability* has a marginally lower mean expected survival time versus *predicted civic instability*: -10.54 as opposed to -9.432. Simi-

\footnote{See Lindberg 2009. Missing cases were filled in using biographical data found in BBC Country Timelines and other BBC articles.}
larly, in the count model, the configuration variables are positive and statistically significant—predicting an increase in the average number of coups attempts experienced by countries that share these initial conditions (see Table 4.10). Remembering that coup attempts are generally rare events, the magnitude of the effect is quite high: While it ranges slightly between the three variables, a country moving from a predicted stable pathway to a predicted unstable pathway is expected to experience approximately 2.7-3.5 additional coup attempts over the 20 year period under examination (see Figure 4.4). As with the survival model, predicted ethnic instability

Table 4.9: Survival (Weibull) Model

| DV= years until first coup attempt, right-censored |
|---|---|
| robust errors, n=41 |
| transformed coefficients reported—interpret as change from baseline hazard |
| | a | b |
| “Predicted Instability” | -1.098*** | -1.210*** |
| | (0.319) | (0.290) |
| “Predicted Ethnic Instability” | -1.153** | -1.305*** |
| | (0.395) | (0.347) |
| “Predicted Civic Instability” | -1.014** | -1.072** |
| | (0.376) | (0.336) |
| ln GDP/k | -0.656* | -0.654* |
| | (0.310) | (0.277) |
| mineral exporter | 0.501 | 0.564 |
| | (0.320) | (0.313) |
| ethnic diversity | 0.477 | 0.560 |
| | (0.536) | (0.537) |
| British colony | -0.249 | -0.241 |
| | (0.349) | (0.353) |
| French colony | -0.542 | -0.560 |
| | (0.319) | (0.316) |
| intercept | 7.025*** | 7.241*** |
| | (2.056) | (1.834) |
| log (scale) | -0.227 | -0.268 |
| | (0.133) | (0.149) |

** = p ≤ 0.05, *** = p ≤ 0.01, **** = p ≤ 0.001
Figure 4.2: Graph of first differences, $E(Y|X = 1) - E(Y|X = 0)$, where $X$ is “Predicted Instability.” The graph thus depicts the predicted change in survival time when a country moves from a theoretically stable to unstable path—a mean difference of -12.28 years.
is slightly more destabilizing than predicted civic instability: 3.5 additional coups versus 3.3. These findings, across both model classes, are robust to different measurements of ethnic diversity.

Likewise, the multivariate results for democratization confirm the findings of the bivariate analysis: The ethnic change variable is positive and statistically significant across all models and their variations. For the full data set, a movement from 0 to 1 in the coding of the ethnic change variable increases the predicted probability of
a coup from under 9.5% to 47.6\%{47} When only analyzing the subset of electoral successions, the difference is even more striking: here, a movement from 0 to 1 in the coding of the ethnic change variable increases the predicted probability of a coup from 4.2-8.5\% to 48.5-62.7\% (depending on the model specification). See Table 4.11 for the full results of the statistical analysis and Figure 4.5 for the predicted probabilities of the significant variables.

A prior history with coups also consistently and meaningfully raises the probability of a coup attempt after a constitutional change in leadership. In the following reported ranges, the first (lower) number was derived from the model based in the full data-set while the second (higher) number comes from the elections only data. All else being equal, a country with no past history of military interventionism has a 12.9-15.4\% predicted probability of experiencing a coup attempt after a constitutional transfer of executive power. A country with the average number of coup attempts in the ten year period preceding the change in leadership (0.97 for all constitutional transfers and 1.11 for electoral only) has a 24.1-29.4\% predicted probability of another coup. Meanwhile, a country with the maximum amount of prior coups (6 for both) has a remarkable 81.4-92.0\% predicted probability of a post-transfer coup attempt. The results are similar when substituting past successful coups for mere coup attempts (not reported in Table 4.11): A country with no prior successful coups in the decade preceding the power transfer has a 15.1-17.8\% predicted probability of a post-transfer coup, while a country with the average number of such prior successful coups (0.34-0.43) or the maximum (3) have 24.6-32.9\% and 93.1-93.9\% predicted probabilities, respectively. Finally, constitutional changes in leadership that occur directly as a result of military interventionism are, not surprisingly, less likely to endure than change induced by other means. When substituted for prior coups, the coup before election variable has a large, positive, and statistically significant effect on the likelihood of a future coup with a movement from 0 to 1 in its coding result-

\footnote{Predicted probabilities calculated using 100,000 simulations.}
ing in an increase from 13.3-16.7% to 83.6-85.2% in the predicted probability of a subsequent coup attempt. Regardless of which measurement is chosen to capture a past history with military intervention, the predicted probability for the ethnic change variable remains stable in the reported range.

Table 4.10: Count (Negative Binomial) Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DV= number of coup attempts in first 20 years after independence</th>
<th>a</th>
<th>b</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Predicted Instability&quot; --- Predicted Ethnic Instability&quot; --- Predicted Civic Instability&quot;</td>
<td>1.267*** (.280)</td>
<td>1.306*** (.314)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ln GDP/k</td>
<td>0.318 (0.251)</td>
<td>0.294 (0.2538)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mineral exporter</td>
<td>-0.549 (0.298)</td>
<td>-0.543 (0.2966)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ethnic diversity</td>
<td>0.149 (0.506)</td>
<td>0.073 (0.5176)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British colony</td>
<td>0.022 (0.3721)</td>
<td>-0.002 (0.3740)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French colony</td>
<td>0.571 (0.3650)</td>
<td>0.600 (0.3663)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>intercept</td>
<td>-2.008 (1.802)</td>
<td>-2.089 (1.8129)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* * * = p ≤ 0.001, ** = p ≤ 0.01, * = p ≤ 0.05

Neither relative wealth nor oil/mineral exportation (at the time of independence) are consistently significant. When considering electoral and other constitutional transfers of power, neither GDP per capita levels in the year of the power transfer nor economic shocks in the period following it, are statistically significant (although GDP/k is in the predicted direction). While only the current account balance measurement is reported in Table 4.11, each of the negative growth rate measures (more than a 1%, 3%, 5%, or 10% contraction of GDP per capita) were run in its place—without any meaningful change in the results (the magnitude of the ethnic change coefficient increases slightly at the same significance level). This is an encouraging finding: Poor countries are not necessarily more inhibited by their militaries from engaging in electoral and other constitutional means of transferring power. Nor do economic downturns, even acute ones, pose insurmountable challenges to newly installed constitutional governments.
Similarly, GDP per capita does not attain statistical significance in the count model. Yet, it does in most versions of the survival model—although these findings are not robust to different measurement specifications of the ethnic diversity variable. The coefficients, however, run in the opposite direction to what we would expect given the results of past studies (see Table 4.9). Here, higher initial starting wealth is negatively correlated with duration, suggesting that relatively richer countries, all else being equal, were more likely to experience an early coup attempt by their militaries (by a mean simulated difference of 5.8-6.1 years). These findings suggest that the typical positive correlation found between GDP per capita and coup patterns in time-series studies (mainly of Africa) may be problematic. Rather than poverty causing coups, perhaps coups and the instability they generate have dampened growth and led to greater disparities in wealth as the decades pass—such that when we measure wealth and coups in the 1970s or 1980s a positive correlation emerges. Yet, given that African countries were all relatively poor by global standards at the time of independence, this result may not be so contradictory to the positive correlation findings of cross-regional studies. For example, in their study of democratic stability, Przeworski et al note that amongst the poorest states, small differences in income levels do not seem to increase the likelihood of regime death.\footnote{See Przeworski et al 1996.} Scholars of political development have also theorized a u-shaped relationship between economic development and political stability—that increasing wealth initially also increases demands on political institutions, which they cannot yet accommodate, leading to instability.\footnote{See Huntington 1968.}

Mineral and oil resources were not significant in the original specifications of any model, but did achieve statistical significance in some of the robustness checks for the count model. In the logit analysis, the oil production variable fails to attain statistical significance—as do the measures for oil reserves, diamond production, and the indicator variable for whether or not a country is either an oil or diamond

\footnote{See Przeworski et al 1996.}

\footnote{See Huntington 1968.}
producer (not reported in Table 4.11). Similar null results were obtained in the survival model and most specification of the count model for the mineral exporter variable. In the “Predicted Ethnic Instability” count model variations only, however, when substituting Alesina et al’s measurement for ethnic fractionalization or ethnic dominance measured as the percent share of the largest ethnic group in the total population for the ELF score, the natural resource variable became significant (and in the same negative direction and of roughly the same magnitude as reported in Table 4.9). These results seem to at least partially discount the argument that a large pot of natural resource money tempts militaries to seize power when they otherwise might constrain themselves. Nor do the results support rentier theory arguments about oil wealth increasing the repressive capacities of the state such that they can successfully deter violent challenges (at least from its own military). Perhaps both logics are in operation but since their effects counteract each other we cannot observe their operation in data at this level of aggregation.

None of the measures for ethnic diversity achieves statistical significance in any of the count or duration models, including in robustness checks. Ethnic fractionalization and dominance measures were not meaningfully correlated with either initial regime survivability, patterns of coups in the post-independence period, or military reactivity to either constitutional or electoral power transfers. Moreover, regardless of which measure was used, the theoretically important independent variables—the predicted paths of instability, ethnic change in leadership, and prior coups—remained statistically significant with only minor fluctuations in the magnitude of their coefficients (which more often than not increased).\textsuperscript{50}

\textsuperscript{50}The correlation between the ethnic change variable and the four ethnic fractionalization measures ranges from 0.198-0.424—with the correlation being slightly higher, on average, for the elections only subset of the data. Thus, more diverse countries do not necessarily have more ethnic changes in leadership than their diverse peers. The correlation between the ethnic change variable and the ethnic dominance measure (percent share of the largest group in the total population), on the other hand, ranged from -0.421 to -0.479. While still underwhelming, this seems to suggest that countries whose largest ethnic group constitutes a significant proportion of the total population may be less likely to transfer power between groups—although such transfers do occur.
None of the election-oriented variables—margin of victory, regime continuity, or prior successful electoral transfer—attained statistical significance in the logit models examining constitutional transfers of power. Moreover, their inclusion in the elections data models did not decrease the effect of the ethnic change variable. In fact, including margin of victory resulted in a significant increase in the magnitude and predicted probability of an ethnic change in leadership. On the other hand, in the two model variants that accounted for margin of victory and regime continuity, the prior coups variable lost statistical significance. These findings suggest that neither prior, successful experiences with constitutional transitions nor large margins of victory mitigate the danger created when the military's corporate interests are threatened. Moreover, neither does regime continuity—whether via consistency in which political party governs or the promotion of an already entrenched leader to the head of state—seem to diminish this danger.

Finally, due to the substantial variety of reasons behind these constitutional changes in leadership (see Table 4.4), unit heterogeneity may be an issue. A separate analysis was thus conducted on the most homogeneous subset of electoral transitions—those regularly scheduled or occurring through planned democratization efforts. Although the small number of observations here is limiting and potentially of concern (n=37), we can test to see if the ethnic change and prior coups variables retain their significance and direction. First, only these two variables were included in the model. Further, the other non-significant variables (in the original analysis) that nonetheless have potential theoretical importance were added (and removed) one at a time. Through the majority of the tests, ethnic change remained statistically significant and its magnitude fluctuated within the same range as in the original analysis. Only when margin of victory and regime continuity were added did its p-value drop below 0.05. On the other hand, prior coups lost statistical significance in all of the tests. This result is probably due to the 12 cases of elections immediately preceded by coups were dropped—which all, naturally, have a prior
coup history. This finding suggests that if we confine the data to a truly peaceful context, a distant history of coup attempts may cease to matter.

Table 4.11: Determinants of Military Coups after Constitutional Changes in Leadership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>all data n= 73</th>
<th>elections only n= 54</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a</td>
<td>b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ethnic change</td>
<td>2.3609**</td>
<td>3.2198*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.8996)</td>
<td>(1.3456)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prior coups</td>
<td>0.6063*</td>
<td>0.8539**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.2401)</td>
<td>(0.3164)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ln GDPk</td>
<td>-0.4256</td>
<td>-0.3944</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.5416)</td>
<td>(0.6581)</td>
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<tr>
<td>ethnic diversity</td>
<td>-0.19380</td>
<td>-2.0249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.2798)</td>
<td>(1.8690)</td>
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<tr>
<td>economic shock</td>
<td>0.00784</td>
<td>0.0243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0337)</td>
<td>(0.0442)</td>
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<tr>
<td>oil production</td>
<td>26.4404</td>
<td>32.5293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(26.0453)</td>
<td>(35.2083)</td>
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<tr>
<td>margin of victory</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.0410</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0254)</td>
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<tr>
<td>regime continuity</td>
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<td>-0.5150</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>prior successful electoral transfer</td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*** = p ≤ 0.001, ** = p ≤ 0.01, * = p ≤ 0.05
4.4 Conclusion

The cross-national evidence, both the descriptive statistics and the regression results, lend support to the theory that how leaders chose to build military loyalty affected the later propensity of those militaries to seize power. Countries that chose
a broad and inclusive vision of loyalty, experienced fewer observed coup attempts (by nearly half) than those who chose to tie soldiers to the state via a narrow conception of ethnic loyalty. Both choices, however, entailed the possibility of either stability or instability. In the statistical analysis, the configurational variables—representing combinations of loyalty choices and structural constraints predicted to lead to instability—both shortened the expected post-independence duration of coup-free civil-military relations and increased the expected frequency of instability (measured as coups) in the 20 years following decolonization.

Similarly, the evidence contained here lends significant support to the claim that understanding ethnic politics and the historical legacies of military recruitment practices are critical to understanding contemporary civil-military relations in Africa. Ethnic changes in leadership, even when they occur by peaceful and constitutional means, often lead to violent military reactions, which can be traced to the policies of past leaders who have stacked military institutions with their own co-ethnics in an effort to secure military loyalty. These systems of ethnic recruiting created vast, identity-based patronage networks within African military institutions—networks inherently threatened by a change in the ethnic-identity of the chief executive and willing to act violently in defense of their power and prestige.

Observational quantitative data, however, has its limitations; while revealing important correlations between concepts of interest, it cannot itself establish causal effect. These results thus only confirm a suspicion that ethnic politics matter to government stability. To understand why and how ethnicity may drive military reactivity, we must turn to history and the qualitative evidence it provides.
Chapter 5

Ethnic Loyalty: Sierra Leone and Cameroon

While the cross-national results presented in the preceding chapter lend correlational support to the proposed theory, they cannot presume to establish causal impact. In this chapter and the next, I thus turn to case study evidence in order to test the causal mechanisms and observed implications of the theory against the historical experiences of particular African countries. Each of the four pathways will be analyzed through the lens of a single case: the ethnic coup trap path through Sierra Leone, ethnically-based stability through Cameroon, nationalists versus sectarians coup trap through Ghana, and stable nationalism through Senegal.

This chapter will compare the two cases where newly independent African states chose to build military loyalty on the basis of ethnic identity—with contrasting results. While Sierra Leone experienced four destabilizing coup attempts in the twenty years following independence, Cameroon escaped any such turmoil during this period. I propose that this divergence in civil-military relations is primarily a result of the differing initial conditions that they faced. Though the leaders of each state made similar choices when it came to building a new military, they inherited colonial armies with different ethnic compositions. Colonial officials in Sierra Leone had created a diverse military with a diverse officer corps, one in which all of the major

1Cameroon has experienced one failed coup attempt in its post-independence history: in 1984 after the first successful transfer of power.
competing ethnic groups were represented. Colonial officials in Cameroon, on the other hand, had failed to train native officers prior to the devolution of internal autonomy—and then assisted the civilian leadership that would gain power upon independence in constructing an officer corps of co-ethnics. Thus, when Cameroon continued to build an ethnic army in the post-independence period there was no minority faction in the officer corps to resist. When the leadership of Sierra Leone, however, attempted to implement the same policies, they faced stiff resistance from ethnic groups already in the military who were to be disenfranchised and thus tumbled rapidly toward instability. Figure 5.1 presents the essence of this argument in abstract form.

Figure 5.1: How Ethnic Military Loyalty Results in Stability or Instability

As well as highlighting this distinction in colonial experience, the following discussion of each case study will also test both components of the path dependency argument. Within each case study, it will first be demonstrated that the historical experience of the country matches the necessary initial conditions for the theorized path. Then, the hypothesized mechanisms of path maintenance will be traced throughout the early post-independence years. Furthermore, the Cameroon case will be used to qualitatively test the argument that the historical choice to build military loyalty along ethnic lines—to achieve stability with an ethnic army—can
lead to destabilization when constitutional or electoral processes cause an ethnic change in leadership.

5.1 Sierra Leone and the “Ethnic Coup Trap”

Before turning to evidence from Sierra Leone, further discussion of path dependency and reactive sequences is necessary to fully develop the framework of analysis for the case study. Path dependency relies on two important analytical phases of causation: path initiation (critical junctures) and path maintenance (mechanisms). We have already discussed decolonization as a moment of great transformation—where historical actors made contingent choices over military loyalty—and how those choices, combined with a limited set of constraints, led to path initiation. Where leaders chose ethnic loyalty and where they neither benefited from foreign protection nor an already ethnically “matched” officer corps, I expect countries to become embroiled in ethnic coup traps.

Let me first review the mechanisms that maintain that path. Typically, when we think of path dependent arguments about institutional development, we think in terms of stability generated by increasing returns. Such paths are maintained by self-reinforcement or positive feedback loops generated by the new institutions themselves that place the roads not chosen further and further out of reach as time elapses. Yet, scholars have also theorized an alternative set of mechanisms that can perpetuate path instability. Reactive paths or sequences are characterized by an entirely different logic than stable paths. Instead of being marked by a more or less constant set of self-reinforcing mechanisms, they are subject to extreme reactivity—a backlash process of powerful and tightly sequenced responses that could (eventually) severely undermine the institution itself. While self-perpetuating incentives

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2 Stinchcombe 1968, 118-119; Mahoney 2000, 513.
3 Pierson 2000(a), 74-75; Pierson 2000(b), 253.
4 Mahoney 2000, 527; Mahoney 2001, 10.
certainly exist in these cases, considering that the institution must empower and
privilege some set of actors however small, the mechanisms of reactivity overwhelm
them. Reactive sequences are thus inherently unstable and prone to conflict.5

The ethnic coup trap path follows this logic of a reactive sequence. An initial
attempt to restructure the military along ethnic lines, or perhaps even the antici-
pation of such a restructuring, prompts out-groups in the officer corps to protect
themselves. While officers might react with secessionism (perhaps leading to civil
war), their most likely response is rather to stage a coup d’état—as it requires more
limited resource mobilization and involves fewer participants and thus fewer coordi-
nation and collective action problems. Whether they succeed or fail, an ethnically
motivated coup attempt, even if inspired by a defensive logic, aggravates and threat-
en officers of other groups, who may then attempt coups of their own. Thus a cycle
of tightly linked reactionary and counter-reactionary measures is triggered wherein
ethnic factions within the officer corps attempt to seize and reseize power from one
another.

Cases that follow an ethnic coup trap path, while not identical in the unfolding
of events, should thus all be marked by the following observable implications. First,
derstabilization should quickly follow the choice to restructure the military along
ethnic lines. Once threatened, out-group officers should rapidly mobilize to defend
their interests since restructuring efforts will only decrease their (collective) relative
power over time. Second, coup attempts should be organized along ethnic lines,
with the inner circle of organizers dominated by a single group or an alliance of out-
groups. Third, we should witness frequent ethnically-organized counter-coups that
follow other coups in close succession. Fourth, when a group does successfully seize
power, it should use the period of upheaval to immediately move against out-groups
and attempt to weed them from the military. Likewise, when a group fails in its coup

5Reactive sequences may, however, eventually give way to more stable solutions which, James
Mahoney argues, could be considered the ultimate heritage of the critical juncture (Mahoney 2001,
11).
attempt, those in power should take advantage of the turmoil and political cover to massively purge those sharing the ethnicity of the plotters from the ranks. Finally, the political environment and the psychology of military actors should be pervaded by fear and defensiveness. Once the path is initiated, it takes on the markers of an ethnic security dilemma.

In analyzing the case study, I will focus first on path initiation—showing whether the conditions in Sierra Leone upon decolonization align with the theorized configuration of variables predicted to lead to an ethnic coup trap path. Then, I will turn to path maintenance and attempt to show that, following the choice of Prime Minister Albert Margai to restructure the military along ethnic lines, a tightly sequenced pattern of ethnic coups and counter-coups resulted, marked by the observable implications outlined above.

5.1.1 Path Initiation

Sierra Leone at the time of decolonization fits the profile of a country theoretically predicted to travel the ethnic coup trap path: military loyalty was built upon ethnic identity, an “unmatched” officer corps was inherited from the colonial security forces, and foreign military protection had been withdrawn. Specifically, at the time that Prime Minister Albert Margai decided to restructure the Sierra Leone military along ethnic lines (around 1966-67)—to make it a Mende-dominated institution—the officer corps was still quite diverse (middle ranks included only 4 Mende officers out of 13) and British military personnel had largely been withdrawn from the army (only 3 remained by 1967).

Loyalty Choice

Sierra Leone gained independence in 1961, under the leadership of Prime Minister Milton Margai (a Mende). During his three years of rule, Milton Margai paid little heed to the new national army—leaving it essentially in the hands of the British.
Indeed, British majors continued both to perform general recruitment duties and to stand as the final judges over who could obtain an officer commission. Thus, during these first few years, no real loyalty choice was made as the Sierra Leone government had yet to become actively involved in military matters—most importantly in recruitment.

This began to change with the death of Milton Margai in 1964 and his brother Sir Albert’s ascension to power as both the Prime Minister and new head of the dominant political party (the SLPP). In 1966, increased opposition to Sir Albert’s domestic policies—particularly to his proposal for a one party state—combined with fear generated by a military coup that year in nearby Ghana, led the Prime Minister to reexamine his own army. In response to these events at home and abroad, Sir Albert decided to bind military officers to civilian authorities through tribal affiliation—the civilian government being primarily Mende—which became, according to Thomas Cox, a historian of Sierra Leone’s civil-military relations, “the sole basis for one’s recruitment as an officer.” Indeed, Cox reports that:

“Between mid-1964 and mid-1967—Sir Albert Margai’s period of Tenure—the African contingent of the Sierra Leone officer corps more than doubled in size from an establishment of thirty-four men to one of seventy-nine. Whereas Mendes represented some 26 percent of the total at the time of Sir Milton’s death, by mid-1967 their proportion of the entire officer corps had reached approximately 52 percent, well over the Mende proportion of the population as a whole. Furthermore, of the forty-five officers commissioned in that three-year period, some twenty-nine or 64 percent were Mendes.”

Thus, under Prime Minister Albert Margai, a clear choice was made to construct military loyalty on the basis of ethnic identity—in this case, according to Mende

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6Cox 1976, 54 and 73.
7 Keesings 1967.
8 Cox 1976, 73.
9Minorities at Risk Project 2009.
10 Cox 1976, 73.
11 Ibid, 75.
tribal identity (with Mende the largest minority group, constituting roughly 30% of the total population\textsuperscript{12}).

\textit{“Unmatched” Officer Corps}

At the time that Sir Albert decided to restructure the military along ethnic lines (about 1966), the existing officer corps of the Sierra Leone army (the only branch of service) was still quite diverse. In April of 1964, the closest point of measurement we have prior to the start of restructuring, there were a total of 34 African officers—26% of whom were Mende while 12% were Temne (the second largest minority group) and the remaining 64% were drawn from other tribes, mostly from northern Muslim groups\textsuperscript{13} Even after significant changes had already been made, at the end of 1966, the middle officer ranks (i.e., Captain) still only included four Mende officers out of a total of 13\textsuperscript{14} When ethnic restructuring began, there were thus many out-group officers within the army that would have been threatened by moves toward Mende domination and capable of organizing a response.

\textit{Foreign Protection}

Although British officers maintained a significant presence in the new Sierra Leone army immediately after independence, they had almost completely departed by the time Albert Margai began his ethnic restructuring efforts in the mid-1960s. Hand-over day for the Sierra Leone army (January 1, 1959) preceded independence by approximately two years. According to British military documents, at that time the force was expected to have 51 British officers, seven African officers, 46 British NCOs, and 1215 African other ranks. It is unlikely that there were any African officers above the rank of Captain—since pay rate scales for higher ranks had yet

\textsuperscript{12}Minority Rights Group 2010.
\textsuperscript{13}Cox 1976, 54.
\textsuperscript{14}Ibid, 78.
to be constructed. Moreover, in 1959, the British government still covered 71% of Sierra Leone’s military budget. By independence, these numbers had hardly improved: detailed archival records indicate that there were now 9 African officers in the army out of 57 as well as a continued reliance on British NCOs (about 50). Thus, looking at the situation immediately surrounding independence, we would conclude that Britain still had a heavy military presence in Sierra Leone.

This British presence, however, rapidly departed. By 1963-64, the number of African officers in the army had been increased to 34 of 50, reliance on expatriate NCOs had been reduced to 20 of 132, and British financial support had decreased to roughly 25% of the military budget with the Sierra Leone government assuming full financial responsibility the following year. On January 1, 1965, the position of force commander (highest position in the command structure) was finally transferred to a Sierra Leonean, David Lansana, who assumed responsibility for recruitment duties and decisions over officer commissions (which had remained in British hands until that time). Prior to the start of restructuring, then, the British presence in the Sierra Leone military had already been greatly diminished.

The final departure of the British, however, overlapped with the beginning of Albert Margai’s ethnic restructuring efforts. Unfortunately, hard data on British seconded officers is unavailable for 1965-1966—limiting our ability to understand the interaction between declining British involvement and the original implementation and escalation of ethnic recruitment practices. What we do know is that Sir Albert and Lansana established a local officer training academy in March of 1966 so that the British could be fully circumvented in the selection of officers. This action, combined with the aforementioned transfer of recruitment duties to

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15 British National Archives, CO 968/681, Document 22A.
16 Cox 1976, 41.
17 Ibid, 45.
18 British National Archives, CO 968/681, Document 22A.
19 Cox 1976, 41 and 45.
20 Ibid, 61 and 73.
21 Ibid, 74.
Lansana in 1965, opened the door to a full stacking of the officer corps with Mende co-ethnics. We also know that by 1967, only three of 88 officers were still British and that these few held relatively unimportant offices such as bandmaster and force paymaster; they held neither field command nor general staff positions. It thus seems reasonable to conclude that what little influence Britain had at the start of the restructuring period had fully dissipated within a year—affording the Sierra Leone government little opportunity for protection were they to encounter a challenge from their own military.

5.1.2 Path Maintenance

Having established that Sierra Leone met the criteria for path initiation—ethnic loyalty choice, unmatched officer corps, and an absence of foreign protection—we can now examine whether or not the country experienced a series of subsequent coups characterized by the observable implications of the theory.

Destabilization and Ethnic Coup Attempts

Our first set of predictions are that out-group officers (i.e., non-Mende officers) should have acted in defense of their interests shortly after threatening ethnic restructuring efforts began, leading to rapid destabilization. There is some reliable evidence that planning for a coup attempt did occur amongst non-Mende officers almost immediately after Sir Albert began stacking the army with his own ethnic group. In January of 1967, Captain Seray-Wurie (of the Fula tribe) approached a senior government official with details of an imminent coup attempt being planned by Temne officers. Apparently, the Captain was related to the Minister of Education and lost his stomach for the operation when high level assassinations were planned. Court records from later treason trials (related to a different coup attempt) that were

\footnote{Ibid, 61.}
leaked to local newspapers also support the real existence of this plot. At the time of these trials, the political party accused of backing this early plot against Sir Albert and the SLPP (the APC) was in power. Given their tenuous hold on power, the APC’s interests would have been to suppress news of their potential involvement in past coups. It is thus unlikely that they would have fabricated evidence or testimony about the existence of this particular coup plot. The following month, the 2nd in command of the army—Bangura, of mixed Temne-Loko descent—along with 8 other mainly Temne officers were arrested for the alleged coup plot. Indeed, after this purge, only one non-southern (the Mende-dominated region of the country) officer remained with a rank of Major or above, Mark Koroma. Thus, there is evidence that as the Prime Minister began to ethnically restructure the military, out-group officers began to fear for their security within the military and to plan a seizure of power. Yet, this initial coup plot was reported and foiled before it could destabilize the government—and even served to further the civilian government’s efforts to make the army Mende-dominated. We might then expect remaining out-group officers to increase their efforts to force change.

Electoral politics, however, interrupted these civil-military dynamics. Parliamentary elections had been scheduled, prior to independence, for March of 1967—and these elections promised non-Mende officers a real chance for peaceful change. The opposition party (the APC) had formed in 1957 and coalesced around northern tribal groups and their interests—including the Temne, Susu, Loko, and Mandingo peoples. Due to Sir Albert’s unpopularity, and despite systematic efforts by the SLPP to rig the outcome, the APC emerged victorious (albeit barely) from the

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23 Ibid, 100-102.
24 Minorities at Risk Project 2009.
25 Cox 1976, 106.
26 Minority Rights Group 2010.
27 For example, SLPP candidates were provided with extra ballots for distribution to their supporters; non-SLPP candidates were sometimes intimidated and prevented from campaigning; violence was employed against APC voters in some districts; and local chiefs threatened some non-Mende’s with the withdrawal of mining and market licenses if they voted (Allen 1968, 218).
elections—winning 31 seats to the SLPP’s 27 (with 5 independents).[28] Initially, before the returns had fully been counted, the two political parties were asked by the Governor-General to form a coalition government. Siaka Stevens, head of the APC refused, and on March 20th the Governor-General permitted him—based on the official seat total from the election returns—to form a wholly APC government.[29]

Thus, constitutional politics switched the “ethnic identity” of the civilian government—from Mende dominated to a northern coalition of tribal groups—leaving Sierra Leone, however, in essentially the same predicament: with an unmatched officer corps, no external protection, and (now) Mende fears of a military based on (non-Mende) ethnic loyalty. Destabilization then rapidly ensued, this time within a day. On March 21, 1967, a successful coup was carried out against the new government, led by the Chief of the Army (Brigadier Lansana, a Mende) with the intention to restore Albert Margai and his Mende-dominated civilian regime to power.[30] Such a quick response was enabled by prior planning. Sensing the likelihood of an SLPP loss, Lansana had mobilized the army strategically during the elections to facilitate a later coup attempt: units commanded by Mende Lieutenants were deployed as sentries to the Sierra Leone Broadcasting Service and the Goderich Transmitting site (the radio and television facilities). In some key units only Mende rank-and-file soldiers were issued arms and ammunition, and the army was also deployed to guard the State House (the seat of executive power).[31]

Even though elections held out some promise to halt the destabilization of the country, they did not alter the essential dynamics underlying Sierra Leone’s devolving civil-military relations. Destabilization thus occurred as predicted, driven by the same concerns over ethnic loyalty and the fear it inspired in out-groups, despite the change in who held civilian power.

[29] Ibid.
Ethnicity and Counter-Coups

As a reactive sequence, the ethnic coup trap path should also be marked by tightly linked counter-coups, also organized along ethnic lines, that reinforce the destabilization of the first coup. In the four years following the March 21st coup, three more coup attempts occurred in Sierra Leone: The first on March 23, 1967, the second on April 18, 1968, and the third on March 23, 1971. All involved ethnic factions within the officer corps attempting to seize government power for themselves and their co-ethnics: first a Mende continuance of the original coup to rid the army of Lansana, followed by a counter-coup by allied northern groups, followed by a Temne coup attempt when Limba members of the original coalition turned against them.

The successful March 23, 1967 coup should be understood more as a continuation of the original coup, begun two days prior, than as an entirely separate event. It involved internal frictions between the original coup plotters over the restoration of Sir Albert Margai versus installing a different Mende leader and was resolved without further violence. Both Sir Albert Margai and Brigadier Lansana were unpopular with many Mende army officers, who saw the upheaval of the coup attempt as an opportunity to rid themselves of these two powerful leaders without jeopardizing Mende-domination of the army. The three leaders of this second coup—Major Blake, Lieutenant-Colonel Genda, and the Commissioner of Police William Leigh—had, in fact, supported the initial coup but were strongly opposed to Margai being restored to power. Their coup was bloodless and afterward they formed a military council headed by (now) Brigadier Juxon-Smith, who had been recalled from training in Britain by the coup leaders.

The successful “sergeant’s coup” of April 18, 1968, on the other hand, is best understood as a counter-coup and reaction to the events of March of the previous year. While no systematic accounting of the ethnic identifies of those involved in the

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\(^{32}\) Allen 1968, 324.
^{33} Keesings 1967.
coup is available, the logistical mastermind of the operation, private Morlai Kamara, was a member of the Temne tribe.\footnote{Cox 1976, 198.} Conducted largely by NCOs, the coup entailed a large-scale sweep of the prior military regime with almost all of the existing (Mende) officer corps arrested—40 senior army and police officers immediately and 45 more after a new military ruling council took power, comprised largely of warrant officers and junior police officers.\footnote{Keesings 1968; Minorities at Risk Project 2009.} The council then brought Siaka Stevens, leader of the APC and the Prime Minister ousted by the March 1967 coups, back from exile and installed him as head of a new civilian government.\footnote{Keesings 1968.}

Although in the aftermath of the 1968 coup, Mende officers were entirely purged from the army, instability was nonetheless perpetuated by Siaka Stevens’ attempts to narrow the base of ethnic loyalty upon which he had tied the military to the state. Although a coalition of northerners restored Siaka Stevens (a Limba) to power, in 1970 serious divisions emerged between the Prime Minister and members of the Temne tribe—both civilian and military. Temne leaders, in fact, withdrew their support from the APC in that year and formed a new opposition party (the UDP), which was subsequently banned. Stevens then employed Limba and allied northern Yalunka and Koranko troops to arrest Temne army officers and NCOs and purge them from the military. Some months later, on March 23, 1971, John Amadu Bangura (one of the few remaining Temne officers) attempted to stage another seizure of power but failed when his Creole and Limba subordinates refused to follow his orders. After this failed coup attempt, Stevens continued his restructuring of the armed forces such that all commanders of the army, paramilitary and police were soon Limba.\footnote{Minorities at Risk Project 2009.} An end to instability was thereby achieved when, through the destructiveness and violence of a series of coups and counter-coups, the Sierra Leone military was finally homogenized as a Limba institution.
There is thus strong evidence of tightly linked reactions that maintained the instability of the path. Initial moves toward a restructuring of the military along ethnic lines inspired coup attempts by out-group officers, furthering fears and insecurities and thus causing the “winners” to redouble their efforts toward ethnic recruiting and homogenization. The instability only ceased when the path had exhausted itself—when, through repeated cycles of violence, one ethnic faction finally achieved uncontested dominance over the armed forces.

5.2 Cameroon and “Ethnically-Based Stability”

In contrast to the reactive sequence of instability that Sierra Leone experienced, cases of path dependent “ethnic” stability arise out of a similar choice to build military loyalty on the basis of ethnic identity but, because of differences in initial constraints, are then stabilized and maintained via positive feedback loops. In these cases, ethnic stacking is successfully achieved because either the colonial officer corps contains no out-groups who would oppose ethnic restructuring or because the departing colonial power protects the new regime as it restructures the military. Once achieved, a military ethnically matched to the civilian leadership invests control over all of the power and resources of the state in a single group (and potentially their allies). Members of such ethnic groups then have little incentive to overturn the institutions that endow them with both power and material resources. At the same time, excluded groups have, by definition, no access to the military hierarchy or the armaments of the state—which they could otherwise use to destabilize the regime. Rather, their only recourse to change lies outside of the current political and military institutions—in grassroots rebellion.\textsuperscript{38} Thus, instead of a series of destabilizing coups and counter-coups, we should see the successful early construction of

\textsuperscript{38}Indeed, some argue that it is precisely this kind of exclusion from state institutions that motivates ethnic minorities to rebel (see Adekanye 1997, Cederman, Wimmer, and Min 2010; Fearon, Kasara, and Laitin 2007; and Wimmer, Cederman, and Min 2009).
an “ethnic army” along with other institutions whose incentives perpetuate the rule of that group. Yet, this stability can be undermined if the mechanisms of ethnic matching between civil and military authorities break down. If a change in executive leadership also entails a change in identity—if the new leader belongs to a different ethnic group than the previous leader who built an army of his own co-ethnics—then military officers now face a threat. What leader would want to maintain an army stacked with ethnic others? In order to prevent the dismantling of their power and privilege, the officers of this ethnic army are likely to respond by attempting to seize power and install a leader who shares in their identity.

5.2.1 Path Initiation

First, we must establish that Cameroon fits the initial conditions theorized to lead to a path of ethnically-based stability. We should find evidence that the leadership inheriting power from the colonial regime purposefully recruited co-ethnics into the military officer corps, rather than implementing broad recruitment policies as Kwame Nkrumah attempted in Ghana. We should also find evidence that the new regime did not face prohibitive constraints to the construction of such an ethnic army, as so many did. In other words, unlike in Sierra Leone, there should have been no significant group of native officers inherited from the colonial army who would have been discriminated against under the new policies. Such an out-group would have strong incentives to react violently to ethnic manipulations of the officer corps, preventing stable institutions from emerging. Alternately, protection from the departing colonial power could overcome this potential resistance, allowing newly independent leaders to restructure as they pleased.

In the case of Cameroon, a diverse country with an estimated 250 ethnic groups and sub-groups[39] these initial conditions were met. President Ahmadou Ahidjo took power at a time when there was no existing Cameroononian officer corps and

proceeded to construct one along ethnic lines—recruiting heavily from amongst the Fulani and Peuhl of the north (being himself an ethnic Peuhl). In addition, he benefited from strong French protection as he was actively fighting a communist-leaning insurgency in the south of the country: seconded French officers filled the senior ranks of the Cameroon army and French combat troops remained in the country to assist with stability and counter-insurgency efforts.

Loyalty Choice

The southern UPC insurgency, and its purported ties to international communism, strongly shaped France’s decolonization process in Cameroon. Fearing the loss of Cameroon to the Soviet bloc, as well as the precedent that devolving power onto an active insurgency would set for Algeria, the French marginalized the UPC from pre-independence elections and searched instead for a moderate government that would commit to remaining within the French community. Their choice fell, almost as a last resort, on Ahmadou Ahidjo as the leader of the Groupe d’Union Camerounaise—a northern, Muslim political party dominated by the Peuhl and Fulani. Ahidjo’s rise to power immediately preceded deep political upheaval in France—caused by the protracted struggle in Algeria—and the subsequent rapid devolution of powers onto the local governments of overseas territories by Charles de Gaulle. In Cameroon’s case, this included power over internal defense which involved the construction of a national army and the training of an officer corps. Using his powers over the transitional state, from the very beginning, Ahidjo built an army and Presidential Guard based on coethnic recruitment and extensive patronage benefits.

The Union des Populations du Cameroun (UPC), a political movement and then official party, was founded in 1948 in the south of the country. Led by Ruben Um Nyobè, it advocated for rapid and total independence combined with the unification of the British and French administered territories (following WWI, colonial administration over German Kameroun had been split between the two powers un-
der League of Nations trusteeship). In 1955, after the colonial state had turned a strong, repressive hand against the UPC, a series of riots broke out across the territory in which some party militants participated—and which they may have had a hand in organizing. In any case, the French administrators blamed the violence fully on the UPC and the party was banned, pushed underground, and denied participation in the 1956 parliamentary elections. In reaction, the UPC formed an armed wing, the Armée de Libération Nationale Kamerun (ALNK)—that was dominated by members of the southern Bamiléké and Bassa ethnic groups—which immediately began establishing bases in the jungles of the Sanaga-Maritime region. The ALNK launched its violent opposition just prior to the scheduled elections (of December 23, 1966): blocking roads and railways, cutting telephone lines, and assassinating elites, including two legislative candidates.

Both the ALNK and its political wing, the UPC, adopted a socialist ideology and insurgents received military training and support from various communist governments, including China and the USSR. Given the escalating Cold War context of the 1950s, the ALNK/UPC were thus perceived as an extreme security threat to the region. British military intelligence reports are filled with references to the communist funds, arms, and advice flowing to the “terrorist” ALNK. French administrators, also wary of growing communist influences in Africa, moreover viewed the Cameroon insurgency as tightly linked to events transpiring in Algeria. As Atangana, a historian of the decolonization period, argues, “...the outbreak of the Algerian revolution in 1954 was considered by France to be not only a new challenge, but also a gangrene whose spread had to stop immediately. It was essential for the French authorities that the request of independence by the UPC should not create a precedent in Black Africa.”

40 Atangana 2010, 17.
41 Ibid, 16-24; Minority Rights Group 2010.
42 British National Archives, WO208/4386, Documents 52A and 80A; WO208/4385, Document 57A.
43 Atangana 2010, 14.
sion, carried with it the risk of setting expectations for the Algerian insurgents—a
territory that French leaders and many citizens held to be an integral part of the
metropole. These considerations of the broader, international ramifications of policy
towards Cameroon only served to redouble France’s efforts to exclude the UPC and
its political sympathizers from the legitimate government.

Rather, French administrators desired to work with a moderate Cameroonian
government that would support maintaining strong ties with the French commu-
nity and would shun both demands for immediate independence and communist
overtures. Initially, in May of 1957, the French High Commissioner, Pierre Mess-
mer (who at this time retained broad powers over territorial governance), appointed
André-Marie Mbida as the first Prime Minister of Cameroon, who was then con-
firmed by the elected legislature. Mbida was the leader of the moderate Démocrates
Camerounais political party and associated with the cohesive catholic center of the
political spectrum.\footnote{Atangana 2010, 40-41.} By the end of the year, however, a new High Commissioner,
Jean Ramadier, had arrived in the territory—and decided that Mbida’s leadership
was anathema to France’s interests. Wishing to avoid an expansion of the insurgency
and an increase in France’s troop commitment, Ramadier wanted to find a political
solution to the conflict. He considered Mbida too autocratic and too ruthless to make
the necessary compromises and thus began searching for a replacement—Mbida had
publicly proclaimed that “the whole of Cameroon will come together to exterminate
the Bassa.”\footnote{Mbida as quoted in Atangana 2010, 56.} Such rhetoric also served to alienate the British Cameroons, who were
scheduled to vote on unification in 1960, and thus undermined another important
French goal in Ramadier’s opinion.\footnote{Atangana 2010, 64-66.} Almost by default, Ramadier turned to the
remaining “moderates” in the legislature—Ahidjo and his northern-based political
party who had previously, publicly opposed demands for immediate independence.\footnote{Ibid, 38; Joseph 1978, 52.}
Together, and acting without metropolitan approval (indeed, Ramadier was recalled
to France and disciplined subsequently), they manufactured a cabinet crisis that caused the fall of Mbida’s government and allowed Ramadier to replace him with Ahidjo. A highly historically contingent series of maneuvers by French administrators thus led to Ahidjo’s rise to power.

Importantly, Ahmadou Ahidjo gained control over Cameroon’s domestic institutions at a critical moment: just prior to significant devolutions in power and the construction of a new, national army. Decolonization processes envisioned to last at least a decade, if not more, were unexpectedly accelerated after France’s military commanders in Algeria revolted in 1958, causing the Fourth Republic to collapse and Charles de Gaulle to resume executive power bent on retrenching the empire. On January 1, 1959, France granted internal autonomy to Cameroon, including full control over legislative and regulatory matters, the appointment of ministers, the civil service, and the evolving security institutions. At the same time, France began transitioning its equatorial security forces from a regional force (French Equatorial Africa had a single colonial military) to a set of of national armies. Ahidjo thus gained broad discretion in the early construction of the military, while Cameroon was still under French colonial rule, and the selection of officers into it.

Ahidjo used his powers over the formation of the national army to recruit an officer corps that largely matched the ethnic power base of his political party. Because he was able to exert control over military recruitment prior to the existence of a native officer corps, he faced no resistance from the military to his policies. This sequencing of events is a critical difference from cases like Sierra Leone, who attempted the same policies but against a diverse, preexisting officer corps who could resist. The first cohorts of native Cameroonian officers, who began graduating and being deployed in 1960-61, were trained at a newly established cadet school in Yaounde. They, and those who followed them, were recruited extensively from

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48 Atangana 2010, 74.
49 Ibid, 98.
50 British National Archives, WO 208/4386, Document 71A.
the north and particularly from the Fulani and Peuhl ethnic groups. Moreover, shortly after independence, Ahidjo founded an elite paramilitary Presidential Guard unit that operated outside of the normal command structure of the army and was charged specifically with the protection of the President. Into this elite unit, that also benefited from the highest patronage rewards available in the security sector, Ahidjo exclusively recruited not just members of his own ethnic group, but soldiers originating from his home town. Decolonization thus entailed the handing over of power to a northern-dominated and western-friendly government led by Ahmadou Ahidjo, backed by an ethnic army comprised of northern Fulani and Peuhl.

**Matched Officer Corps**

At the time that Ahidjo rose to power and began to influence officer recruitment, the native Cameroonian officer corps was practically nonexistent, giving him a free hand to construct an ethnically-based army without opposition. As previously noted, the first intake of officers that graduated from the Yaounde cadet school were not integrated into active military units until 1960-61 (after independence). At that time, moreover, there were still only 54 native officers (out of 175) with only one, a Captain, above the rank of Lieutenant—the second lowest rank in the hierarchy (most graduating cadets would receive the rank of Second Lieutenant). Likewise, the Gendarmes—an elite force of rural military policeman within the French security system—had only 39 Cameroonian officers for a force larger than the army in 1961. Thus, unlike in West Africa where a small group of commissioned officers existed prior to decolonization and could thus be promoted to fill some of the senior ranks, in Cameroon, an officer corps had to be created from scratch. With-

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51Minorities at Risk, 2009; Minority Rights Group 2010.
52DeLancey 1987, 17.
53British National Archives, WO 208/4386, Documents 1A, 65A, and 80A.
54British National Archives, WO 208/4385, Document 60A.
out a preexisting faction of officers present to resist ethnic restructuring, Ahidjo could manipulate recruitment and promotion as he saw fit without fearing a revolt.

**Foreign Military Protection**

The lack of Cameroonian officers described above resulted, correspondingly, in a preponderance of seconded French officers within Cameroon’s military following independence. In 1961, 69% of army officers were French.\(^{55}\) And, as late as 1971, a majority of senior officers were still on loan from the French government.\(^{56}\) With so many Frenchman in key command and control positions, the ability of disgruntled Cameroonian officers to covertly organize and stage a mutiny or coup was low.

Moreover, due to the ongoing ALNK insurgency in the south, Ahidjo had requested and been granted the assistance of French combat troops. Even though independence had been the primary war aim of the UPC/ALNK, the granting of independence did not lead to an end to hostilities—but rather to their intensification. As already noted, the UPC had been excluded from the 1956 elections that led to the autonomous governments under Mbida and then Ahidjo. After De Gaulle rose to power in France, leading to devolution policies and a firm commitment to independence for France’s African colonies, the UPC did temporarily suspend violent operations and appeal for new elections to form a properly representative government prior to decolonization. Neither the Ahidjo administration nor the French, however, wanted to risk such elections. The matter was brought before the United Nations (as a trustee territory, Cameroonians had a right to bring issues before it) with the vote falling along Cold War lines. In the end, the UN backed France’s decision not to hold new, nationwide elections and the UPC relaunched its insurgency, claiming that the Ahidjo regime was a puppet of the French and not representative of the people.\(^{57}\) Ahidjo then requested the continued presence of French combat troops.

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\(^{55}\) British National Archives, WO 208/4386, Document 80A.

\(^{56}\) Joseph 1978, 16.

\(^{57}\) Atangana 2010, 102-107.
troops to help him secure the country. At independence, one battalion of French troops was deployed in the south and remained until 1964.\footnote{Antangana 2010, 124; British National Archives, WO 208/4386, Document 24A.}

Thus, Ahidjo had two sources of French military support in the early years after independence—seconded officers to command the regular army and combat troops to help quell internal dissent—providing ample protection for him to construct Cameroonian institutions as he saw fit.

### 5.2.2 Path Maintenance

Given the lack of an opposing faction in the officer corps to resist ethnic restructuring combined with the continued protection provided by French military officers and combat troops, we expect Cameroon to follow a stable path based in the construction of an ethnic army. We should thus not see the development of a coup trap like occurred in Sierra Leone. Rather, we should witness the construction of self-reinforcing institutions, grounded in an ethnically matched army, that persist over time. Cameroon’s historical experience under Ahidjo’s long rule matches this expectation. Using his control over the security sector as a power base from which to induce and enforce other institutional changes, Ahidjo transformed the electoral system and modified the constitution to prevent the rise of legal challenges to his reign. He also used state resources and his control over ministerial appointments and the legislature to coopt the leaders of major ethnic groups—tying them (and through them their groups) to the state through extensive patronage networks. Repression by the loyal ethnic army was levied against any who resisted the centralization and unification of the state under Ahidjo’s personal rule. Thus, those included in the system had every incentive to continue their cooperation in order to retain their patronage benefits—thereby further reinforcing and perpetuating a system of governance that fundamentally excluded members of most ethnic groups from the highest levels of state power. Those who voiced dissent continued to face violence by ethn-
ally loyal security institutions. Thus the power and stability garnered by an ethnic army allowed Ahidjo to build other self-reinforcing institutions of dominance that, together, perpetuated his rule for over 20 years.

From the time the Ahidjo government attained significant powers of self-government in 1958 until Ahidjo retired in 1982, members of the northern Fulani and Peuhl groups were recruited extensively into the security forces. Such ethnic recruitment was combined with extensive patronage rewards to ensure officer loyalty. This deep control over the security sector then allowed Ahidjo to transform Cameroon’s civilian political institutions. First, after the British Cameroons united with the French Cameroons, a new constitution was adopted that granted the President (Ahidjo) total authority. There was no longer any separation of powers: the President had full control over the appointment and termination of ministers, judges, and governors; he also controlled the introduction of legislation, could veto it with no override, and, as a last resort, could rule by decree; the President was considered the head of state, head of government, and commander of the military; and he could also easily amend the constitution.

Second, Ahidjo transformed the electoral system such that no opposition leader or party could realistically challenge him. By 1966, de facto one party rule had been accomplished under Ahidjo’s new Cameroon National Union (CNU). Rather than outlaw opposition parties outright, Ahidjo changed the electoral system to a winner-take-all, single-list system with the entire country constituting the sole electoral district. This meant that the party who won more than 50% of the national vote controlled everything—the Presidency and each and every seat in the legislature. Given Ahidjo’s vast incumbency advantages, including the ability to use the security services to harass and repress the preexisting parties that refused to merge into the CNU, no fledgling party could hope to win. Moreover, as head of the CNU,

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59 Minorities at Risk Project 2009.
60 DeLancey 1987, 11-12.
61 Ibid, 5.
Ahidjo controlled who went on the legislative lists, giving him absolute sway over the electoral process and the legislature it produced—and creating strong incentives for those included in the political system to cooperate fully. Thus, although opposition parties were legal and had every right to compete in elections, under Ahidjo, Cameroon was centralized into a de facto, one party state controlled from the Presidency.

Finally, Ahidjo used his centralized and legally uncontestable power over the state to coopt ethnic groups via strong patronage ties. Using an “ethnic arithmetic,” Ahidjo included major ethnic groups in the civilian side of the administration—not the security side—by appointing important tribal and ethnic leaders as ministers or legislators. With these positions came access to state funds and projects that could then be distributed amongst their clients and within their ethnic homelands. Continued access to these resources depended on cooperation with the system and those who failed to follow the wishes of the President would soon find themselves outside of the state’s largesse. And those groups relegated outside of the system would find themselves at the mercy of the state’s northern army and Presidential Guard, who would be used to repress dissent and rebellion if it arose.

The stability of these institutions was remarkable. As repeated coups infected regimes and rebellions and civil wars broke out across Africa, in the twenty years following independence Cameroon definitively defeated the UPC rebellion (the last holdouts were captured in 1970) and steered clear of any civil-military instability. Yet, this stability was fundamentally rooted in Ahidjo’s personal and centralized control over the political system and his reliance on an ethnically loyal army and Presidential Guard. Ahidjo’s eventual departure from office, if only by death, thus created an unavoidable moment of potential institutional crisis—creating opportunities for change as well as the danger of instability.

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62 Ibid, 12.
63 What weak federal institutions that did exist, primarily as a result of the merger with the British Cameroons, were all formally abolished by 1972 (Ibid, 6).
64 Ibid, 5-6 and 15-16.
That day finally arrived in 1982, 22 years after independence; convinced of his own severe illness and pending mortality, Ahmadou Ahidjo retired from office. According to established constitutional procedures, he was then succeeded by Paul Biya, the current Prime Minister and a Christian southerner from the ethnic Bulu group. In January of 1984, Biya secured his occupancy of the Presidency by winning his first full term in a general election. Shortly thereafter, Biya began to act against the former President and to attempt a restructuring of the military in order to diminish the power of Ahidjo’s followers. In February, Ahidjo was convicted and sentenced to death in absentia by the Yaoundé military court for subversion and conspiracy to carry out revolution. Then, on April 5th, President Biya announced his decision to transfer certain northerners from the elite Republican Guard to other military units. The Republican Guard was, at the time, a force of 1000 soldiers outside the normal military command structure, charged with the protection and security of the president, and still dominated by northerners.

The very next day, on April 6th, 1984, a coup attempt was mounted against Biya by approximately one-half of the Republican Guard. The rebels took control of the radio station, attacked the presidential palace in Yaoundé with artillery, seized the airport, and severed communication links with the outside world. It took nearly four days of intense fighting for loyal troops to put down the rebellion. It was claimed, at the time, both by the Minister of State for the Armed Forces, Mr. Tsoungui, and by the Army Chief of Staff, General Semengue, that all of the rebels were northern Muslims. Subsequently, areas of the north were subjected to a six-month “military clampdown,” involving roadblocks and security checks. The Republican Guard was also immediately disbanded, its loyal members retained and placed under the command of the Chief of the National Gendarmerie.

65See BBC 1984 (March 1).
67Ibid.
Using the failed coup attempt to his advantage, Biya then moved forward with discriminatory hiring and promotion policies of his own, both within the civilian government apparatus and within the military. Over the course of his 25 year reign, southerners have come to dominate both politics and the military\textsuperscript{68}. In particular, members of Biya’s own southern Bulu group, as well as members of the closely related Beti group, disproportionately hold key positions in the military\textsuperscript{69}. Stability was thus re-achieved through renewed ethnic matching policies. Biya, however, is not a young man and the near future will bring another change of leadership in Cameroon. If a northerner returns to power, or perhaps even if a rival southern group claims the Presidency, then this next transition could be just as dangerous as the first—bringing with it the potential for widespread destabilization.

5.3 Conclusion

Both Sierra Leone and Cameroon achieved independence under leaders who decided to build military loyalty on the basis of ethnic identity: to create officer corps stacked with their own co-ethnics as a bulwark against potential challenges by other ethnic groups. Yet, despite the inherently exclusionary design of such policies and the threat they posed to ethnic groups left outside of the most important power structures of the state, this choice only had destabilizing consequences in Sierra Leone. While a series of ethnically motivated coups and counter-coups hardened ethnic sentiments and led to a Limba dominated state (which would later break down into further violence and eventually civil war), Cameroon has largely escaped from any civil-military instability in its post-independence history.

The key difference between these two cases lies in the officer corps they each inherited from their departing colonizers. In Sierra Leone, the British had constructed a diverse officer corps, inclusive of all the major ethnic groups competing

\textsuperscript{68}World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples 2010.
\textsuperscript{69}Minorities at Risk 2009.
for power in the pre- and post-independence elections. Thus, when Prime Minister Albert Margai began to ethnically restructure the military—to recruit his co-ethnic Mendes in disproportionate numbers—there existed a faction of threatened, non-Mende officers in the military to resist his plans. Then, when the Mende lost their hold over civilian power in the 1964 elections, and in all probability fearing that they would be treated as they had treated others, they used their foothold in the military to stage a coup attempt and spark a series of ethnic coups and counter-coups. In Cameroon, on the other hand, the French had neglected to build a native officer corps prior to Ahmadou Ahidjo’s rise to power, allowing him to implement discriminatory recruitment policies and construct an ethnic army without intra-military resistance.

I have claimed that each of these cases is representative of a particular post-independence path of either stability or instability. I have thus also tried to show that the historical experience of each country fits the theoretical predictions of its path: that Sierra Leone fell into an ethnic coup trap marked by reactive dynamics and backlash processes and that Cameroon achieved stability through self-reinforcing ethnic institutions. Moreover, I have attempted to demonstrate that the stability achieved via the construction of an ethnic army can break down in particular circumstances: when a leadership transition brings to power a new chief executive who does not share an identity with the ethnically stacked military.
Chapter 6

Civic-National Loyalty: Ghana and Senegal

This chapter compares two cases where military loyalty was built along civic-national rather than ethnic lines. Despite the insecurity of Africa’s early post-independence years, some leaders resisted the temptation to recruit only their own ethnic kinsmen into important military positions. Two such leaders were Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana and Léopold Sédar Senghor of Senegal. Both shared a tendency towards pan-Africanism and a vision for their countries of building nationalisms that would transcend ethnic and tribal identities. In the immediate post-independence period, both also recruited diversely into their armies—officers and rank-and-file soldiers alike. Yet, Ghana and Senegal experienced vastly different trajectories in their civil-military relations. While Senegal survived a single (and questionable), failed coup attempt in 1962 and has maintained stability and civilian governance ever since, Ghana was subjected to a series of military coups and counter-coups (10 in total) resulting in destabilization, years of military governance, chaos, and bloodshed.

Recall that where leaders chose to build military loyalty along civic-national lines, I argue that such a choice was only dangerous where ethnicity had already been strongly politicized in the pre-independence period. In this context, it would be difficult to convince officers that an adversarial ethnic political party would not capture power in the future and use their control over the state to restructure the
military. Existing ethnic factions within the officer corps thus have strong incentives to preempt this unfavorable future by halting diverse recruitment policies that allow opposing groups access to security institutions. Figure 6.1 summarizes this logic.

Figure 6.1: How Civic-National Military Loyalty Results in Stability or Instability

Thus, I argue that the critical difference between these two cases lies in the period of political party formation and whether or not ethnicity became central to party organization. In Senegal, the two primary political parties that competed for power in the pre-independence elections developed around a strong urban-rural divide—between the French assimilated communes and the unassimilated hinterlands—thereby eschewing ethnic considerations. This outcome was strongly influenced by the unique way in which the countryside had been tied to the colonial state via patronage: The Muslim brotherhoods, who controlled the rural vote through religious edicts, were co-opted by Senghor’s party through a continuation of colonial agricultural subsidies. In Ghana, on the other hand, a mix of parties contested pre-independence elections with varying ties to regional ethnic groups. While Nkrumah’s Convention People’s Party (CPP) transcended ethnic divisions, other parties—such as the Asante-backed National Liberation Movement, the Togoland Congress Party of the Ewe, and the Northern People’s Party—garnered support by appealing to ethnic interests and existing rivalries. Thus, while in Senegal ethnicity remained
non-politicized in the pre-independence period, in Ghana opposition parties purposefully organized along identity lines and politicized ethnicity. Indeed, in the 1954-56 elections, Asante ethnic politicization took a violent turn as party supporters attacked CPP supporters and refused to allow the nationalists to visit and compete fairly in their region. When Nkrumah later attempted to promote diversity and ethnic neutrality in the army, he faced factional resistance—including two assassination attempts by Ga military and police officers—causing him to abandon such policies and begin targeted ethnic recruiting. This, in turn, led to stiffened resistance within the military and a successful coup in 1966 by Ewe officers, which then engendered repeated purges of military officers, further ethnic manipulations of the army, and repeated counter-coups. The failed coup attempt against Senghor, on the other hand, was orchestrated by political adherents of the Prime Minister in order to block Parliament from passing a censure motion against him. It drew little support, failed to ignite ethnic tensions, and created no lasting instability.

Beyond demonstrating this key distinction in colonial experience (the politicization of ethnicity), the following discussion of each case study will also test the theorized components of the path dependence argument. Within each case, first, it will be shown that the historical experience of the country aligns with the necessary initial conditions for the theorized path. Then, process-tracing will be used to test the hypothesized mechanisms of path maintenance.

6.1 Ghana: A Coup Trap of Competing Visions

As in the case of the ethnic coup trap path, the struggle for power between nationalists and ethnic sectarians follows the logic of a reactive sequence within a path dependency framework. The conditions for path initiation (the critical juncture) unleash a backlash process of extreme reactivity, marked by tightly sequenced moves and counter-moves that undermine stability. Before discussing the mecha-
nisms of path maintenance, it will first be established that Ghana indeed fits the initial conditions of this path.

6.1.1 Path Initiation

Following the theory outlined in Chapter 3, path initiation for a nationalists versus ethnic sectarians coup trap begins with a choice by the newly independent government to build military loyalty on civic-national grounds. That is to say, instead of recruiting according to ethnic criteria, the civilian leadership opens the military—especially the officer corps—to all citizens. Rather than being based on identity, recruitment and promotion are grounded in a system of unbiased practices (ideally merit-based but could include non-identity based patronage). The constraints that then become important are (a) whether ethnic identity was politicized prior to this choice and (b) whether or not soldiers were engaged in a unifying armed struggle for independence. Where ethnic identity was already strongly politicized, opening the military to previously excluded groups, or expanding the representation of underrepresented groups, would threaten other factions—for they would be giving up relative power in an environment in which their ethnic political rivals could gain control of the government and use this combined civil-military power to secure dominance in the future. Thus disadvantaged ethnic sectarians, whether acting out of fear or aggression, would have strong incentives to fight the nationalist’s program of military restructuring in order to preserve their relative power within military institutions—and they would likely do this by using their existing access to these institutions to oust the government. Where soldiers fought together for independence, however, such fears could be allayed by a strong sense of unity that, at least within the military, would trump tense ethnic cleavages within the greater society.

Ghana fits the profile of a country predicted to travel down this unstable path given an initial choice of building military loyalty on the basis of an inclusive civic-nationalism: There was an advanced degree of ethnic politicization in the
pre-independence period and no unifying armed conflict. First, although trade
union movements and urban strikes played an important role in the road to inde-
pendence, no armed insurgency or guerrilla movement developed that would have
given combatants of different backgrounds a shared, unifying experience of war.
Second, although the 1954 and 1956 elections were contested by a nationalistic
party open to all ethnic groups, Kwame Nkrumah’s Convention People’s Party
(CPP), they were also marked by the competition of several political parties built
explicitly around ethnic identity—most notably the Asante-backed National Libera-
tion Movement (NLM), the Togoland Congress Party of the Ewe, and the Northern
People’s Party, which represented a number of smaller northern groups. Despite
this early politicization of identity, the CCP managed to win the pre-independence
elections and, upon independence, Nkrumah purposely enacted policies to “over-
come” tribalism and build a national identity. This vision infused his approach
to Africanizing the military and he sought to expand recruitment of traditionally
excluded groups while decreasing the historical predominance of the Ga and Ewe in
the officer corps. Finally, it should be noted that although the British maintained
influence over the Ghanaian military at independence—in 1960, 230 of 258 officers
were still seconded British personnel—Nkrumah precipitously expelled all foreign
officers in 1961, creating vulnerability where perhaps little had previously existed.
The following sections will discuss each of these factors in depth.

Lack of an Armed Insurgency

In Ghana, the movement for independence was spearheaded by the two main
political parties: the United Cold Coast Convention (UGCC, later the National
Liberation Movement or NLM) and the Convention People’s Party (CPP). The
leaders of both parties drew inspiration from West Africa’s own history of non-
vviolent colonial reform movements—notably the Aborigines Rights Protection
Society (founded in 1897) and the Congress of British West Africa (founded in
1920)—as well as from the successes of Mahatma Gandhi’s and Martin Luther King’s non-violent movements for independence and equality. Both parties openly pledged to work for independence only through constitutional means—which, of course, excluded violent opposition. No other armed group rose to challenge their constitutional approach.

**Politicization of Ethnicity**

Ghana is a remarkably diverse country with over 50 distinct identity groups, divided into four major ethno-linguistic groupings: the Akan of the central and southern regions (44.1% of the population) including the Ashante sub-group, the Mole-Dagbani of the north (15.9%), the Ewe of the southeast (13%), and the Ga-Adangbe of the southeast (8.3%). Despite this broad diversity, and the fact that no single group could achieve electoral domination on its own, early political parties did develop to some extent along ethno-regional lines. The first major Ghanaian political party, the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC), was formed in 1946 under the banner of independence in “the shortest time possible.” It was led by J.B. Danquah and Kofi Busia (Akan and Ashanti respectively) and dominated by Akan and Ashanti merchants, businessmen, and intellectuals. Party recruitment efforts were focused in the south-central cities of the Akan region, but also included rural Akan chiefs. By the time of the pre-independence elections in 1954-56, the UGCC had morphed into the National Liberation Movement (NLM). The second major Ghanaian political party, the Convention People’s Party (CPP), was founded in 1949 under the leadership of Kwame Nkrumah (from one of Ghana’s smallest ethnic groups, the Nzima of the southwest). Unlike the UGCC, the CPP opened its membership to all Ghanaians regardless of identity and purposefully sought to cut across ethnic lines.

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In the run-up to independence, a number of other political parties formed, mainly along ethno-regional lines. For example, the Northern People’s Party (NPP) represented an alliance of small, northern groups sharing linguistic and cultural traits (generally referred to as the Mole-Dagbani although to treat them as a single, unified ethnic group would betray the complexity of sub-group relations). The Togoland Congress, on the other hand, relied on Ewe support in southeastern Ghana and campaigned explicitly for the unification of Ewe peoples who were split across British-French colonial borders. Thus, by the time of the 1954 elections, of the four principal ethno-regional groupings in Ghana, three had political parties explicitly organized to represent their interests.

Moreover, during the pre-independence legislative and executive elections (1954-156) party competition turned violent. Considered “widespread” and “persistent,” the violence was concentrated in the Asante region and occurred primarily between CPP and NLM supporters. These conflicts resulted in several deaths, the destruction of many homes, and the inability of CPP leaders to visit the capital of the region, Kumasi, for fear of their personal safety. Asante ethnic politicization had thus taken a violent turn even before independence.

Civic-National Loyalty Choice

Despite this proliferation in ethnic parties, the CCP won both the 1956 legislative and presidential elections, thereby inheriting power upon independence (in 1957) with a clear majority in the Legislative Assembly (71 of 104 seats) and control over the Presidency, which Kwame Nkrumah assumed. Nkrumah abhorred tribalism as a cornerstone of politics, viewing ethnicity as “the canker-worm which, unless removed, may destroy the solidity of the body politic, the stability of the government, the efficiency of the bureaucracy and judiciary, and the effectiveness of the army.

\(^5\)Adekson 1976, 252; Mazrui and Tidy 1984, 87-88; Morrison 2004, 422-423.
\(^6\)Mazrui and Tidy 1984, 59 and 88.
and police.” At least initially, he thus saw no role for ethnic manipulations in the military. Moreover, he thought that the military could be used as a vehicle to overcome the ethnic divisions affecting Ghanaian society and influencing its political parties. Recruits of diverse backgrounds could be melded, through rigorous training and education, into a unified fighting force with a strong sense of national identity.

Consistent with this vision, in the first three years of his Presidency, Nkrumah designed inclusive policies to correct colonial recruitment patterns that had privileged certain groups. Throughout the colonial world, the British believed that some ethnic and racial groups were, by nature, superior candidates for military service (known as “Martial Race Doctrine”). These groups tended to be located on the edge of the colonial empire and to have less access to “softening” influences such as missionary education. In Ghana, colonial military recruiters had focused their efforts on the poorer ethnic groups of the north. The rank-and-file infantry thus came to be dominated by the mostly Muslim, Mole-Dagbani tribes of that region. Military necessities during World War II led to the first officer commissions granted to native Ghanaians. Progress in Africanizing the officer corps, however, was slow and by 1957 there were still only 29 native officers out of a total of 238. British officials drew most of this emergent officer corps, unlike the rank-and-file, from the far south of the country: 34.6% were Ga, 23.1% Ewe, and 15% Fante (comprising around 73% of the total). Northerners were largely excluded from the officer corps—only four northerners were commissioned by independence—and individuals of Akan/Ashanti background were underrepresented throughout the military, at all ranks.

In the immediate post-independence years, Nkrumah used a rapid expansion of the armed services to reduce Ga and Ewe control of the officer corps. Between 1957-59, the army was doubled in size and both a Navy and Air Force were

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7 As quoted in Adekson 1976, 256.
8 Ibid, 257.
9 Ibid, 253 and 258.
10 Clayton 1989, 258.
11 Adekson 1976, 253.
12 Ibid.
established. This allowed Nkrumah to increase the proportional representation of previously excluded groups, such as the Ashanti, in both the officer corps and rank-and-file, without necessitating forced retirement, blocked promotions, or the temporary exclusion of other groups from recruitment drives. Indeed, one program attempted to reduce northern representation in the rank-and-file by targeting a retraining program at Mole-Dagbani soldiers to promote them into the officer corps (from which they had historically been excluded). Recruitment measures were thus specifically designed to diversify the military in as non-threatening a way as possible: Dominant groups were allowed some numerical increases while their overall proportional representation was decreased. Through these measures, President Nkrumah demonstrated a significant commitment to diversity and a civic-national vision of military loyalty.

*The British: Protectors?*

Nkrumah had good reasons to suspect potential disloyalty within the growing officer corps to this nationalistic vision. After all, admitting Ashante and Akan officers into the army posed a serious threat given the political rivalry between the CPP and the NLM—and especially given the rampant violence between the two parties during the 1956 elections. According to J. ’Bayo Adekson, concerns over the loyalty of Akan officers (and also potentially Mole-Dagbani officers) led Nkrumah, in the beginning, to lean on the remaining British officers for security and protection.

For the first three years following independence, 1957-1960, the Ghanaian military relied heavily on seconded British personnel to fill the high and middle ranking positions in its command structure (while the first significant classes of Ghanaian officers were being trained in Britain at Sandhurst and Eaton Hall). In fact, the number of British officers and NCOs serving in Ghana actually increased after in-

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15 Adekson 1976, 258.
dependence: from 220 in March of 1957, to 240 in 1959, and back down slightly to 230 in January of 1960. By comparison, in 1960, only 28 Ghanaian officers were currently serving (while another 48 were receiving training in Britain). Moreover, at this time, the top brass remained almost entirely British, including the Chief of Defense Staff (the head of all three military branches).\(^{16}\)

Africanization of the officer corps proceeded with purposeful caution until September 22, 1961—when, by executive order, Nkrumah precipitously dismissed all 230 remaining seconded British officers and NCOs at once.\(^{17}\) Until that time, concerns over security, the ability to train new officers to the same calibre as their British counterparts, and the potential for future promotion blockages had kept the pace of Africanization slow.\(^{18}\) The most likely explanation for Nkrumah’s sudden reversal in policy can be traced to events outside of Ghana’s borders. In August of 1960, a mass mutiny of the Congolese Armed Forces led to that country’s political collapse within days of its independence. The Congo mutiny began in the barracks of Kinshasha/Leopoldville after Belgian General Emile Janssens gathered the Congolese rank-and-file for a general meeting and wrote on the blackboard, “before independence = after independence”—an unveiled reference to the continued Belgian (white) monopoly over the officer corps. Fears of mass mutiny against still predominantly white officers spread across the continent, leading to intense pressures for rapid Africanization, which likely affected Nkrumah’s defense policy.\(^{19}\)

By 1962, virtually all officers in Ghana’s military were native Ghanaians, effectively ending any immediate British protection that Nkrumah could have benefitted from (since the British had no troops stationed in or near Ghana). At this time, moreover, Nkrumah was conscientiously diversifying his military support away from reliance on any one foreign power—accepting training and financial aid from Israel,


\(^{17}\) Adekson 1976, 260.

\(^{18}\) Hutchful 1979, 610.

\(^{19}\) Aboagye 1999, 15-116.
India, and the Soviet Union as well as from the British. Such diversification formed part of a larger strategy to prevent the formation of internal factions powerful enough to subvert civilian power. The logic was that if cadets in the same training year were sent through a variety of training programs with sharp differences in traditions and institutional cultures, then they would not form the usual bonds of cohort solidarity. Additionally, to compensate for the withdrawal of the British, Nkrumah created a Presidential Guard Regiment directly responsible to his own person and inserted political commissars into military units.\footnote{Adekson 1976, 247, 252-254, 263; Boahen 1988, 218-219.}

After the dismissal of the British officers, Ghana was thus ripe for political instability. A nationalistic civilian government was pushing policies of inclusive military recruitment in a context where ethnicity was highly politicized. Ethnic factions that had traditionally dominated the officer corps, primarily the Ga and Ewe, had little incentive to allow access to the historically underrepresented Akan and Asante. While they may have had little to fear from Nkrumah and the CCP, the prospect of an NLM victory in the next round of elections did pose a serious threat. Were an ethno-regional party such as the NLM to gain civilian power and simultaneously control a major faction of the officer corps, they could easily advance a discriminatory and even violent agenda against other ethnic groups.

\subsection{Path Maintenance}

The historical conditions in Ghana at the time of the critical juncture—civic-national loyalty choice, politicization of ethnicity, and no armed struggle for independence—thus predict an unstable path wherein nationalists and sectarians struggle for power and control over the military. Before moving forward with the case study analysis, let me briefly review the mechanisms of the path, a reactive sequence marked by backlash processes that sustain instability, and the observable implications my theory leads us to expect.
We should observe, first, rapid destabilization following an initial attempt to restructure the military. Indeed, even the mere announcement of such restructuring could trigger a reaction by threatened officers. Similar to cases where ethnic loyalty was chosen, this destabilization could be delayed by foreign military protection. Here, however, restructuring efforts do not eliminate any groups from the military (quite the opposite) and thus cannot remove any source of potential threat. Thus, foreign protection cannot “solve” the tensions and problems faced by the civilian government by granting it time to complete the restructuring (as it can for those constructing an ethnic army). Once the foreign protection departs, the underlying problem will quickly surface, leading to the eruption of conflict, and the initiation of the coup trap.

Once instability is unleashed via a first coup attempt, we should then expect to see a series of reactions and counter-reactions. As conflict develops, intra-military factions will crystallize around the government (the nationalistic leader and their political party) and one or more ethnic groups. We should then observe counter-coups wherein these groups attempt to seize power from one another. As in the ethnic coup trap path, we expect that the successful seizure of power by an ethnic faction will lead to the implementation of exclusive ethnic recruitment and the purging of out-groups from the military. A failed coup against such an ethnic regime will lead to further purges of out-group officers. Indeed, this path is likely to turn into a purely ethnic coup trap if (a) the nationalists are defeated outright and two or more ethnic groups remain in the competition for power, or (b) the nationalists give up on their vision in the face of staunch sectarianism and convert to an ethnic vision that excludes those they have been struggling against.

Such instability, though devastating, cannot last forever. It is still important, however, to theorize how the path ends. My theory predicts that stability can be achieved through the victory of an ethnic group, which would mean the destruction of a civic-national vision for the military and the emergence of an ethnic army. In
other words, one ethnic group (and possibly its allies) would succeed in purging all rivals from the officer corps. Nationalist versus sectarian instability would thus be replaced by ethnic stability.

The following analysis of Ghana’s history will parallel these three important parts of the path’s maintenance: the first coup attempt that initiates the trap, the sequence of counter-coups that sustain instability, and, finally, stabilization. First, after the British departure, sectarian pressures quickly led Nkrumah to partially abandon his nationalist vision. After two assassination attempts which he viewed as part of an “ethnic” plot against him, Nkrumah ethnically manipulated the military—which, in turn, motivated Ewe officers to overthrow the civilian government. The reactions of both ethnic sectarians and nationalists to those who seized power and governed before them then led to repeated assaults on, and ethnic manipulations of, the officer corps—resulting in chaos, the near collapse of military institutions, and escalating violence. By the mid-1980s, over 25 years after independence, the violence finally ceased and Flight Lieutenant Jerry Rawlings was able to re-stabilize the military and, eventually, step down from power and hand the reigns over to an elected, civilian government in 2000. Yet, he seemed to achieve this without creating an ethnic army—thus falling outside of the explanatory power of the theory.

Emergence of the Coup Trap

After the departure of the British officers, President Nkrumah, at first, continued to restructure the military in ways that promoted diversity and ethnic neutrality. Two assassination attempts in 1962 and 1964, however, led to a shift in security policy toward ethnic manipulation. Both assassination attempts were rumored to have been orchestrated by Ga military and police officers—leading Nkrumah to develop suspicions of an “ethnic plot” against him and to reverse many of his earlier policies aimed at promoting nationalism within the military. Instead, from 1963 to 1966, he tried to develop a complex system of institutional controls, based in
ethnic manipulations, to guard against attacks launched against him from within the military. First, Nkrumah reverted to some earlier colonial practices and recruited certain military units from particular ethnic groups. For example, by 1966, the Counter-Intelligence Unit was comprised mainly of officers from Nkrumah’s own group, the Nzima. Second, units whose rank-and-file soldiers were recruited from the north of the country would be placed under the command of southern officers and vice versa. Third, two or more officers from different ethnic backgrounds would be appointed to similar command positions with overlapping responsibilities. A given field unit, in other words, could fall under the command of multiple officers with different ethnic ties and loyalties such that suspicious movements by that unit, presumably motivated by an “ethnic plot,” could be monitored and reported by the officers of other ethnicities who shared in its command responsibility. Finally, competing security agencies were sometimes stacked with rival ethnic groups in order to further encourage intelligence gathering and reporting on “ethnic plots.”

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In 1966, a successful coup attempt by Ewe officers against Nkrumah unseated what was left of the nationalizing agenda of the CCP and initiated a cycle of instability and violence—in the subsequent 18 years there would be nine additional attempted coups by the military (three of them successful) as well as numerous other plots. Tensions between the supporters of Nkrumah’s nationalistic legacy and ethnic extremists, as well as a growing schism between Ewe and Akan officers, explains most of this instability.

The 1966 coup that overthrew Nkrumah relied on ethnic ties in its planning and execution and also resulted in a clear ethnic divide amongst officers in the ensuing struggle for power. Although, in the final stages of preparations, a few non-Ewe officers were recruited into the plan, the inner circle of leaders was entirely comprised of Ewe officers—General Emmanuel Kotoko, Lieutenant General Ankra, and Police

22 Due to the 20 year cut-off imposed on the cross-national data, most of these attempts are not counted there.
Inspector-General Harlley. General Kotoko, in particular, was widely believed to have drawn support and assistance from other soldiers sharing his identity. Despite widespread disaffection in the army with Nkrumah’s regime and the last minute co-optation of non-Ewe officers, the coup attempt did not succeed without difficulties. Fighting broke out between loyalists and coupists, especially around the capital city. This violence fell along tribal lines, with Nzimi soldiers and small northern groups supporting Nkrumah against an alliance of Akan, Ga, and Ewe factions.

With their eventual success, the coupists established a military government called the National Liberation Council (NLC) that was dominated by individuals of Ewe and Ga heritage and that, moreover, was perceived as promoting Ewe and Ga dominance of the military. Five of the eight members of the NLC were either Ewe or Ga, with the remaining three representing, each, the Ashanti, Fanti, and northern tribes. Given relative proportions of the Ewe and Ga in the overall population—13% and 8% respectively, it is hardly surprising that this arrangement was interpreted skeptically by many. Additionally, after the coup, Inspector-General Harlley and General Kotoka fully controlled appointments in the police and military. By April of 1967, five out of six of the top posts in the police force were held by Ewe officers, seven out of 20 Colonels were Ewe (compared to two Akans), and Ewe’s and Ga’s together held 65% of senior posts in the military (ranks above Colonel). Moreover, “most of the army and police officers on the NLC tended to draw their closest allies and advisers, both civilian and military, from their own ethnic group...” It was thus widely believed that the Ewe officers who had staged the 1966 coup—those very officers who had relied on ethnic ties in orchestrating their seizure of power—were attempting to establish an Ewe dominant regime.

To be fair, not all of this over-representation should be attributed to NLC policies. Early British recruitment practices combined with rapid Africanization under Nkrumah had created a preexisting ethnic hierarchy within the military that already

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24 Hutchful 1979, 615.
favored Ewe and Ga officers (despite Nkrumah’s efforts at diversification)—the first officer recruits into the system, who were largely from these two groups, benefitted the most (in that they reached the top of the hierarchy) from the mass promotions that occurred later. Indeed, almost half of those promoted to senior rank during NLC rule were Akans (17 of 35 promotions). Although, given the relatively small number of promotions, the previous imbalance, and the large share in the total population of the Akan ethnic group (44%), this did little to correct their under-representation at the top. Thus, although there is some evidence that the NLC was more fair minded then they often get credit for, Ewe and Ga dominance of the military persisted. More importantly, they were perceived by others as maintaining and promoting that dominance.

On April 17th, 1967, an abortive counter-coup was launched against the NLC, leading to the death of General Kotoka. Rumors abounded that the insurrection was aimed directly against the Ewe officers of the regime and had been motivated by its perceived Ewe dominance. The NLC quickly issued an announcement, however, denying that the disloyal army officers were acting on an ethnic basis—that Ashanti and Fanti officers had conspired to overthrow Ga and Ewe factions. The motivations of the involved officers could also be reasonably explained through pure corporate interests. The gluttony of young officers at the top of the military hierarchy—the result of two rounds of mass promotions, one under Nkrumah and the other occurring immediately after the first coup—created a promotion blockage likely to last quite some time. This meant that junior officers would certainly not experience the rapid rise of their immediate superiors, who were very close in age to them, and also faced the real possibility of unending career stagnation. The coup attempt was, in point of fact, led by junior officers who admitted that their primary goal was to dismiss or execute all officers above the rank of colonel.

Yet, this purely corporate interest-based interpretation of the coup attempt neglects to account for how ethnicity overlaid the command hierarchy. Junior officers—who were mainly Akan—feared not only that they may not rise through the ranks because few promotions were to be granted in general, but that they would also be excluded from those limited opportunities because of their ethnic identity. Indeed, the only three officers successfully killed in the coup attempt were Ewe; and many officers in the army, during the attempt, perceived it as a move against Ewe domination and supported it for that reason. After the incident, and despite its own statements underscoring the non-ethnic character of the failed coup, the NLC’s behavior further supports an ethnic interpretation of events (that the NLC leadership did, at least partially, read the officer’s motivations as stemming from ethnic grievances over the composition of the government and military). In the next two years, the NLC took measures to decrease perceptions of its Ewe domination, restructured itself toward greater ethnic balance, and initiated a return to civilian rule.26

Descent into Chaos

Civilian rule, however, failed to solve the underlying problems and tensions underscoring this initial instability. The elections that brought Dr. Kofi Busia to power were marked by ethnic politicization and his resulting government sought to displace former Ewe dominance in favor of Akan dominance in both the civilian government and the military. This ethnic restructuring of the armed forces, while understandably a reaction to past events, served only to perpetuate the instability trap that the Ghanaian military had fallen into.

First, voting in the 1969 elections that preceded the transfer to civilian power fell along ethnic lines that, moreover, extended into the military. Two primary political parties contested the elections: The Akan-Asante supported Progress Party (PP) of

Dr. Kofi Busia and the Ewe backed National Alliance of Liberals (NAL).\(^{27}\) In Akan dominated districts, the PP won 68 of 72 total seats while in Ewe territory, the NAL won 14 of 16 total seats.\(^{28}\) Reflecting these broader social divisions, the majority of Akan military officers also supported the PP while the Majority of Ewe officers supported the NAL.\(^{29}\) Due to their relative power in terms of population share, and their ability to gain the sympathies of non-Akan, non-Ewe groups, the PP won the election by a comfortable margin: gaining 105 out of 140 total seats in Parliament.

Ethnic manipulation of the military, geared favorably toward Akan officers, began almost immediately—even before the official hand-over to the PP and Dr. Busia—and continued throughout his rule. During the transition period, Lieutenant General A.A. Afrifa (an Akan and serving chairman of the NLC after the 1967 reforms) began replacing Ewes in key strategic army commands with Akan officers.\(^{30}\) Upon assuming office, Busia continued this restructuring toward Akan dominance: Ewe officers were “promoted out” (a practice wherein an incompetent or potentially threatening officer is removed without losing face by promoting them to an ambassadorial position abroad or another important, non-tactical assignment), retired, or passed over for key command posts including Army Commander, Air Force Commander, Chief of Defense Staff, the Command of the First Brigade, as well as several battalion-level commands.\(^{31}\) This allowed Akan officers to be moved into these positions, thereby transferring control of the military hierarchy from one ethnic group to another. Indeed, Baynham notes in his study of the Busia regime that the “...documentation points to a concerted effort to achieve ethnic symmetry between régime and ranking cohorts of the military in a burgeoning system of clientalism...”\(^{32}\) Moreover, just as the police had once been dominated by Ewe officers under the NLC, so too did top commands there also pass into Akan hands. Notably as well, Ewe’s were also

\(^{27}\) Lumsden 1980, 472.
\(^{28}\) Twumasi 1975, 143.
\(^{29}\) Hutchful 1979, 615.
\(^{30}\) Baynham 1985, 629.
\(^{31}\) Ibid, 630.
\(^{32}\) Ibid, 631.
excluded from the civilian side of government; only one of around 40 ministerial
posts was held by an Ewe during this time. 33

Another coup attempt soon followed. Yet, despite their relatively favorable treat-
ment under Busia, it was actually Akan officers who seized power in 1972 (although
the Ewe officers being threatened and marginalized by the Busia regime did support
the coup). And, perhaps even more surprisingly, the military junta established af-
ter the coup initially moved to reinstitute a civic-national vision of society and the
military. Here then, was a brief reemergence of the nationalists marked by Akan
officers acting to terminate their own privileged position within the government and
the military. When support for this regime began to ebb, however, it once again suc-
cumbed to sectarian pressures, abandoned a truly nationalistic program, and turned
against the Ewe officers.

The bloodless 1972 coup was led by Lieutenant-Colonel Ignatius Acheampong
(an Ashanti), launched from bases in Ashante territory, and largely backed by mid-
ranking Ashanti officers with the help of several important Ewe officers (primarily
Selormey and Agbo). 34 Many grievances were listed by the putchists as motivating
their actions, 35 the most compelling of which concerned internal military factional-
ism, budget cutbacks, and the economic malaise that, although countrywide, was
having particularly pernicious effects in Asante land.

First, according to Acheampong himself, the ethnic manipulations of the Busia
regime were aggravating tribal factionalism within military institutions, with poten-
tially devastating consequences: “I watched the seed of tribal conflict being slowly
sown by the actions of the Busia regime and with the blood of millions of our Nige-
rian brothers to warn us I acted to nip the threat in the bud.” 36 Acheampong is
here referring to the ethnic civil war that broke out in Nigeria after northern Hausa-
Fulani officers had seized power in July of 1966 and initiated a program of ethnic

33Ibid, 632.
34Goldsworthy 1973, 14; Minority Rights Group 2010.
35For a more extensive list see Aboagye 1999, 100-101.
36As quoted in Smock and Smock 1975, 249.
restructuring in the army. The lesson that Acheampong seems to have drawn from this neighboring conflict is that recruitment and promotion policies that divide the military into privileged and non-privileged ethnic categories set a country on the road to civil war. He thus explains his actions as a measure to prevent such widespread and terrible violence by ending ethnically-manipulative policies within the military.

Second, the pro-Ewe policies of the Busia regime took place in a context of general economic decline rooted in falling cocoa prices that led to both extreme hardship for cocoa growers and government austerity measures that included military budget cuts. Since prior to independence, cocoa had been Ghana’s principal export commodity, accounting for 70% of export earnings by 1970. Between 1970 and 1972, world cocoa prices fell from $790 per ton to $360 per ton—a 45.5% decline. Due to significant overlap between Akan territory and land suitable to cocoa farming, these falling prices (combined with corruption in the Cocoa Marketing Board) created severe hardships that disproportionately affected rural Akan families. Moreover, since cocoa earnings accounted for 30% of government revenues at this time, and were also being used extensively by the early 1970s to service foreign debt, this had a sharp impact on Ghana’s yearly budget and its ability to pay back previous loans. As a result, the financial basis of Ghana’s patronage politics broke down, leading to a massive dismissal of civil servants in early 1970, the introduction of an austerity budget later that year, and cutbacks in military funding beginning in 1971. In turn, tightening military budgets led to widespread disaffection of officers and soldiers who saw their standard of living declining—even if they were relatively privileged in terms of promotion opportunities (as Akan officers were). Thus, most

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37 See Luckham 1971, Chapters 1-2.
38 Goldsworthy 1973, 10.
39 Bennett 1973, 666.
40 Goldsworthy 1973, 15.
41 Ibid, 665; Goldsworthy 1973, 10.
43 Baynham 1985, 632.
Akan officers had good reason to be disaffected with the Busia regime despite its pro-Akan promotion and recruitment policies—which given the general promotion blockages that still persisted could only benefit a minority of Akan officers.

Indeed, there is perhaps a lesson here about the interaction of economic forces, ethnic politics, and instability. Under conditions of widespread economic decline, when the competency of a regime is challenged and it becomes likely that it will fall from power, the temptation to search for support by mobilizing an ethnic constituency is high. When a regime succumbs to this pressure, as the Busia regime did, however, the very act of privileging one group over others can lead to further destabilization. Where such policies are brought into the military—where recruitment, promotion, and purges take on an ethnic character—a destabilization of civil-military relations is likely to result and the offending regime runs a high risk of losing power in any case (but via a military coup rather than through an electoral loss or social revolution). This lends some support to the alternative explanation that economic growth, and particularly sharp declines in growth, matter to the timing of coup events. Yet, Ghana’s experience also qualifies that claim by suggesting that the larger political context in which the growth decline occurred influenced whether or not the military took action. Here, whom the growth decline affected—the Akan, who were preferentially represented in the military—in combination with the ethnic character of the electoral system seems key to understanding why this downturn (and not others) led to a coup.

Upon taking power, Acheampong and his fellow conspirators established a military junta called the National Redemption Council (NRC) that, at first, purposely sought to curtail both ethnically manipulative government policies as well as overt manifestations of ethnic identity itself. They thus returned to the original anti-tribalism and pro-nationalism of Nkrumah and the CCP. An ethnically balanced council was constructed with four places each given to Akan and Ewe representatives. Government spending was reallocated to correct the recent neglect of the
Volta region (homeland of the Ewe). In more extreme measures, references to tribe or ethnic origins were banned in government documents and an end to tribe-specific surnames and tribally distinctive facial markings was advocated.

By 1975, however, the NRC government had turned inward (now calling itself the Supreme Military Council), excluded civilians, become more coercive, and begun singling out “Ewe tribalism” as a distinct threat to national unity in order to mobilize general support for the regime in the face of continued economic decline. In 1972 a movement had arisen, the National Liberation Movement of Western Togoland, that at first sought merely greater regional autonomy for Ewes and the end to border restrictions that were hampering trade with Togo. The movement was, in fact, quite small and eyed with skepticism and suspicion even by the Ewe population which it tried to represent. The government reacted to the movement by labeling it as subversive and denouncing it, repeatedly, as a “tribalist threat.” Afterwards, the movement began to speak more in terms of secession which, in turn, led to greater reactions by the Acheampong regime, culminating in accusations of coup plots. In 1975, as a part of the general government restructuring, Acheampong significantly reduced Ewe representation on the governing military council, purged Ewes from the armed forces, and then put several of these Ewe ex-officers and NCOs on trial for a dubious ethnically-motivated coup plot.

Opposition to the new Supreme Military Council was widespread. Continued economic decline marked by high inflation—despite record high world cocoa prices—combined with the new exclusion of civilians from the government (including its patronage) was unpalatable to almost everyone. Extreme scarcity of commodity staples was exacerbated by government corruption, poor distribution, and profiteering—deepening already intense anti-government sentiment. With criticism and pressure

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46 Inflation rates were averaging around 100% per year by this time (Hansen and Collins 1980, 12).
47 Harris 1980, 226.
emanating from all sides, Acheampong decided in mid-1977 to return the country to civilian rule and planned a referendum to gain popular support for his particular transition plan—which excluded political parties and rather involved the creation of a “union government” of police, military, and civilian representatives. Instead of easing dissent, however, the referendum provided a focal point for its expression, especially since it was interpreted by many as merely a means to prolong military rule.\(^\text{48}\) From early 1977 to the spring of 1978, dissent and violence erupted across the country, with student riots and ethnic conflicts breaking out in urban areas. The results of the referendum also revealed renewed political divisions between ethnic groups, with the Ashanti and a coalition of small ethnic groups backing the government’s proposal while the Ewe, Ga, and non-Ashanti Akans opposed it.\(^\text{49}\) “Unigov,” as it was called, won by a narrow margin in a vote marked by low turnout and credible accusations of fraud, leading to renewed mass strikes.\(^\text{50}\)

Within this context of increasing disorder, the military government underwent a series of internal convulsions, all the while continuing in its plan to shed power and retreat to the barracks. First, the unpopular Acheampong was “encouraged to resign” in July of 1978 by his fellow members of the Supreme Military Council—a bloodless coup thought to have been largely orchestrated by Major-General Odartey-Wellington, the current Army Commander.\(^\text{51}\) He was replaced with Major General F.W.K. Akuffo who then, in a bid to restore stability, immediately released all political detainees, nullified the engineered results of the referendum, lifted the ban on political activity, and began to prosecute select officials for corruption and profiteering, including the military directors of the Cocoa Marketing Board.\(^\text{52}\) Yet, Akuffo still maintained the ban on political parties, resisting widespread demands for the government to allow their reformation. One of his publicly stated reasons for up-

\(^{48}\)Lumsden 1980, 472.
\(^{49}\)Chazan 1982, 465-471.
\(^{50}\)Lumsden 1980, 472.
\(^{51}\)Ibid, 472.
\(^{52}\)Hansen and Collins 1980, 12; Harris 1980, 227.
holding the ban was his fear that parties would once again form along ethnic lines and exacerbate the social tensions that had already turned violent in many places. After months of continued strikes, however, he folded: in December of 1978, political parties were allowed to operate once again and campaign for the upcoming elections of June of 1979—with many indeed forming along ethnic lines.

With civilian rule seemingly imminent and unimpressed with the Akuffo reforms—particularly the lackluster prosecution of the highest ranks of the military—Flight Lieutenant Jerry Rawlings staged two coup attempts in mid-1979 (the first failed while the second succeeded) with the expressed aim of “cleaning house” prior to the civilian transition. On May 15th, Rawlings conducted a tour of army bases, accompanied with a few supporters from the Air Force, in an attempt to rally support for a coup. Failing to gather sufficient support, he arrested a number of senior officers, which in turn led to his own arrest. During his court martial, Rawlings defended his actions and proclaimed the need for an “Ethiopian-type purge” of the army’s senior ranks for their alleged corruption—an unveiled reference to the bloody purges that followed the Ethiopian monarchy’s end at the hands of its own military. Then, on June 4th, Ewe junior officers and NCOs from the 5th Army Infantry Battalion freed Rawlings from his Military Intelligence prison and, with support from sympathetic Air Force units and the “Boy’s Company” (regarded as the best troops in the Army), staged another coup attempt. Although loyal units resisted, they were quickly overcome by the rebels, ending the rule of the Supreme Military Council.

The Rawlings government, like those that preceded it, formulated reactionary policies (replete with new ethnic manipulations) to undo what they saw as the sins of prior governments. Yet, they took their policies further than any past regime and

53Lumsden 1980, 473.  
54Harris 1980, 228.  
55See The Economist (June 19).  
56Harris 1980, 229; Hutchful 1997(a), 254; and see The Economist 1979 (June 19).
attacked the officer corps to such an extent that it lost its organizational coherence and descended into mass violence.

Rawlings and his co-conspirators established another military government, which they named the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), and immediately embarked on their project of bloody “house-cleaning.” Executions, trials, asset seizures, long prison sentences, and public whippings were doled out with gusto.\footnote{Baynham 1985, 634.} Almost immediately, seven senior military officers were executed including three former heads of state: Afrifa, Acheampong, and Akuffo.\footnote{Austin 1985, 94; Lumsden 1980, 471.} By the time power was handed over to civilians, a mere 112 days after the Rawlings coup, dozens of senior military and police officers had been purged and hundreds of other officers and civilians imprisoned.\footnote{Baynham 1985, 636; Hansen and Collins 1980, 3.} Furthermore, all senior military posts were redistributed to previously junior officers—none of which had held a rank above colonel—and NCOs and rank-and-file privates were allowed to verbally and physically assault their superiors. With not-so-tacit approval from the top, insubordination and disorder quickly became rampant. Combined with the executions, imprisonment, and flight of many other officers, the command system soon collapsed, leading to near anarchy in the barracks, seemingly controllable only by Rawlings himself.\footnote{Baynham 1985, 636; Hansen and Collins 1980, 3; Harris 1980, 229; Hutchful 1997(b), 538.}

To many, this destruction of the old officer corps carried with it an ethnic dimension. In addition to the support of Ewe officers and NCOs that had allowed Rawlings (himself half Ewe and half Scottish) to seize power, the AFRC was perceived to be disproportionately ruled by Ewe and Ga officers—concordant with their traditional alliance against the Akan/Ashanti—and to promote a disproportionate number of Ewe’s into positions of power.\footnote{Chazan 1982, 475; Minority Rights Group 2010} And because the previous military regime had moved Ewe officers out of senior officer positions near the end of its tenure (and Akan officers into them), the purging of the senior ranks looked suspiciously like an
attack against Akans—which mirrored the worst predictions of the anti-Ewe pro-
paganda with which the Supreme Military Council had flooded the barracks and
universities. Thus, the newly elected civilian government inherited a military that
was both near anarchy and perceived to be dominated by Ewe officers who had
targeted Akans in their bloody revolution.

The AFRC had never intended to interfere with elections or the transfer of power
to a civilian government. Their intentions had always remained focused on rectifying
what they deemed the sins of past governments through extensive violence in the
brief time that they held power. Thus, almost oddly, while purges, arrests, and
executions were taking place on a mass scale, free and fair elections were concurrently
being organized.

Five major political parties emerged to contest the July elections and, as in the
pre-independence elections and as the military leaders had feared, many came to
represent specific ethnic groups. The Popular Front Party (PFP) was supported by
the Brong and Ashanti, the United National Convention (UNC) by the Ga and Ewe,
the Social Democratic Front by a coalition of smaller northern tribes, and the Action
Congress by the coastal Fanti. Support for the People’s National Party (PNP)—a
resurrected CCP—and its Presidential Candidate, Dr. Hilla Limann (a northern
Sissala), on the other hand, cut across ethnic lines. Once again, despite the revival
of ethnic parties and the communal violence that had emerged under the military
regime, the nationalist party proved victorious at the polls: the PNP won a slight
majority in Parliament (71 of 140 seats) and Dr. Limann carried the Presidential
election with 62% of the vote.

These electoral results and the impending transfer of power (to be completed by
late September) unleashed both hopes and concerns within the military. The defeat
of the PFP inspired hopes of increased access to power and patronage amongst non-
Akan officers and soldiers, as well as amongst civilian elites—who had been excluded

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63 Harris 1980, 231.
under both the Busia Regime (1969-72) and the Supreme Military Council (1975-79). It was also hoped that the new regime would continue the prosecution and punishment of the old guard Brong and Ashanti elites for their past corruption and profiteering. On the other hand, these same soldiers feared their own prosecution for the violence and disorder of the AFRC interregnum. To allay these fears, Rawlings thus negotiated for several provisions to be inserted into the new constitution, granting immunity to all participants of prior coups as well as explicitly prohibiting any proceedings that would question the AFRC’s actions during its mere 112 days of rule. He also made sure that his own position within the military was secure.

Dr. Hilla Limann and the PNP thus came to power burdened with a fragmented and undisciplined military force—whose non-Akan soldiers and officers expected the continuation of their “bloody housekeeping” while remaining immune to punishment themselves. And while this force was in desperate need of reform and restructuring, the new government was denied much realistic chance of so doing by the very terms of the negotiated transition. In particular, the retention of Rawlings within the military—who commanded the loyalty of the soldiers and who jealously guarded what he saw as the “gains of his revolution”—made military reform nigh impossible.

Yet, almost immediately, Limann and the PNP decided to move against the former AFRC soldiers anyway. Perhaps they failed to foresee the danger. Or perhaps they reasoned that such a move was inevitable to secure civilian rule in the long-run and that their odds of success were best in the immediate post-transfer period, when their international and civilian support were high and before they could do much to undermine their own legitimacy (such as provoke an economic crisis). In any case, the Special Branch (police intelligence division) and Military Intelligence were reorganized and given broad powers to conduct covert propaganda and intelligence.

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64 Brown 1982, 65.
65 Baynham 1985, 635.
66 Ibid, 638.
operations against former AFRC members. Such efforts to discredit Rawlings and his followers included the distribution of anti-Ewe pamphlets to both universities and military barracks. The pamphlets accused Rawlings and the AFRC of being motivated by Ewe tribalist sentiments and of currently plotting to overthrow the civilian regime. They had “titles such as ‘The Conspiracy,’ ‘The Ewes Again,’ and ‘Retire Service Commanders or Else.’”

Eight weeks after the transfer of power, on November 27th, 1979, the government then forcibly retired Rawlings along with the rest of the AFRC officers in both the military and police forces (including the chief of Defence Staff, Brigadier J. Nunoo-Mensah, and the Army Commander, Brigadier A. Quainoo). The openings these forced retirements created—especially those for sensitive tactical commands—were filled with non-Ewes.

On New Years Day of 1981, junior officers of the Recce Regiment initiated a coup attempt in the military barracks of Accra that once again ended in the abolishment of civilian rule and the reinstatement of Jerry Rawlings as head of the new Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC). Around 10 a.m., Rawlings’ voice came over the airwaves and announced a revolution: “Fellow Ghanaians, as you will notice, we are not playing the national anthem. In other words, this is not a coup. I ask for nothing less than a Revolution—something that will transform the social and economic order of this country.”

In the aftermath of the coup, intense opposition arose to Rawlings’ regime from both Akans and northern Moslems. Dr. Limann was Ghana’s first head of state to come from the north of the country and his removal was greatly resented by northerners. Moreover, at first, the PNDC contained no northern members (although this was quickly rectified in an attempt to gain northern backing). The earlier assassinations of prominent Akans by the AFRC, particularly that of General Afrifa

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67 Ibid, 639.
69 Baynham 1985, 638-639.
70 Ibid, 641.
72 Jerry Rawlings, as quoted in Schilling 1992, 80.
(a former head of state), had contributed to resentment amongst that group. And despite ethnic balance on the ruling council, resentment continued to grow amongst the Ashanti over perceived domination by Ewes. Whatever Rawlings true intentions were towards Akans and northerns, his prior actions had seemed to violently target them and thus his renewed grasp on power was perceived as another plot by Ewe officers to seize the state for themselves.  

This ethnically-based resistance to Rawlings soon manifested itself in a series of counter-coup attempts by northern officers and their rank-and-file followers—three serious (but failed) attempts were conducted by the same soldiers over two years. On November 23rd, 1982, middle-ranking northern officers tried but failed to seize the army barracks on the outskirts of Accra. Although they were defeated, many managed to escape capture and slip across the border into either Togo or Côte d’Ivoire. The rest were killed or imprisoned and put on trial for treason. On June 19, 1983, these exiled soldiers (with rumored CIA assistance) snuck back across the border, attacked three military prisons, and managed to free many of their former collaborators. The leader of the rebels (Sargeant Malik) had been tried and convicted in absentia for participation in the 1982 coup attempt and there was heavy overlap in trial sentences from the two attempts. Most soldiers, however, remained loyal to the PNDC and this second attempt to wrest power away from Rawlings also failed. The last coup attempt occurred on March 25, 1984 when exiled former soldiers based in Togo and Ivory Coast once again crossed the border and initiated a failed attempt to seize power. At least 11 of the soldiers captured in this final coup attempt had already been sentenced to death for their participation in the June 19th coup of the previous year. All three attempts can thus be linked to the same core of disgruntled northern officers and their supporters who tried

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75 Shillington 1992, 113; also see *BBC* 1983 (June 22, June 30, and August 6).
76 See *Globe and Mail* (Canada) 1984 (March 26); *Christian Science Monitor* 1984 (March 30).
repeatedly, until they had largely all been captured and executed or imprisoned, to
oust Rawlings.

**Stabilization**

Jerry Rawlings both survived the turmoil of these repeated coup attempts, man-
aged to stabilize the Ghanaian armed forces, and held onto power for nearly two
decades—finally allowing for competitive elections and a successful transfer of exec-
utive power to a new, civilian leader in 2000. Since 1984, Ghana has not experienced
a single attempted coup. After so much intra-military violence, after so many actions
and reactions across regimes that increased ethnic tensions and resentments between
soldiers and across society, his feat is quite impressive and difficult to explain.

Indeed, there is relatively little persuasive evidence on which to base a convincing
analysis. Rather than attempt to make such a theoretically compelling case, I will
outline the kind of evidence that would support my theoretical framework—and
that which would count against it. As more information becomes available, future
scholars will then be able to judge accordingly. My theoretical framework predicts
that coup traps will come to end if, through the chaos and violence, homogenization
of the officer corps is achieved such that it now matches the civilian regime. In
other words, the violence itself creates an ethnic army loyal to the state by virtue of
shared identity. Thus, if Rawlings, through repeated purges, successfully narrowed
the ethnic base of the military to his own co-ethnics, the Ewe, then the case would
support my theory. If, however, the military remained diverse under Rawlings and
the instability still came to an end (which we know it did), then factors outside
of the scope of my theory are at work. Such possibilities include exceptionally
strong military leadership capabilities, deployment of the army abroad (through
involvement in peacekeeping), and personal loyalty networks not grounded in ethnic
identity (i.e., training cohorts), among other possibilities.
There is some evidence to suggest that, at least at the beginning of his rule, Rawlings did rely heavily (but not exclusively) on Ewe officers. There were initial purges and assassinations directed at both Akan and northern officers that accompanied an utter breakdown in the command hierarchy. Then, between 1984-1987, massive structural reorganization was combined with reliance on Ewe officers at the highest levels of command. Officers were rotated rapidly between command posts, rebellious units purged or even disbanded, new militias created, parallel security organs developed, and both the Military Intelligence and Special Branch (police intelligence) were dissolved and replaced by a new Bureau of National Investigation. Yet, at the same time, some diversity was maintained, new merit-based promotion policies were created, and political interference in promotion decisions ended. The evidence thus suggests that at least some important factors were at work that lie outside the scope of my theory.

Nkrumah’s nationalism could thus not save Ghana from a post-colonial history of communal violence and military coups. Despite his early commitment to a civic-national vision of society and government, and his early diversification of the officer corps, when confronted by strong ethnic politicization culminating in two assassination attempts, he abandoned ethnic neutrality in the military and began manipulating recruitment and promotion procedures. This led to further antipathy from Ewe and Ga officers, who then successfully staged a coup, initiating a strong pattern of civil-military violence. The 1966-1979 period thus saw a extended chain reaction of instability, wherein both military and civilians governments alike reacted to what they perceived to be the unfair and pernicious policies of the regimes that they had overthrown or succeeded. Their reactions almost always involved an attempt to restructure the military by implementing (or undoing) ethnic manipulations—which led to a counter-reaction by another group and further instability.

\[^{77}\text{Hansen 1991, 40; Hutchful 1997(b), 256-258; Hutchful 2003, 86-87.}\]
The only alternative choice that Nkrumah could have made was to build an ethnic army from the start—to abandon the nationalist project and choose ethnicity as the basis for military loyalty. Yet, there is no reason to suspect that Ghana would have fared better given this counterfactual. Ghana inherited a diverse officer corps from British colonialism and faced serious domestic political pressures to Africanize rapidly and expel the remaining British officers shortly after independence. My theory predicts that, under these constraints, Ghana would have ended up much like Sierra Leone did—still facing an ethnic coup trap. This highlights an important dilemma that I will reemphasize in the conclusion, when discussing the implications of these findings for security sector reform after ethnic conflict: Where ethnicity has been strongly politicized, it becomes extremely difficult for struggling civilian regimes to maintain stability without some form of outside protection. It is even more difficult for them to build a diverse military in these circumstances.

6.2 Senegal: Stability in Diversity

Rather than following a reactive logic, as in the case of Ghana, cases of path dependent stability (as I will argue Senegal is) are marked by a logic of self-reinforcement or positive feedback. Once established, the institution creates incentives for individuals to uphold it. In the case of ethnic stacking induced stability, discussed in the previous chapter, these positive incentives were created by the capture of the state (both the chief executive and the military) by a single identity group. Able to control all of the power and resources of the state, members of that ethnic group (and their allies) then had little incentive to overturn the institutions they had created and share their bounty with others. Meanwhile, excluded groups had no access to the military—either its command hierarchy or its armaments—which they could otherwise use to undermine the stability of these institutions. Their only recourse lay outside of the intra-military processes of violence examined
here—in rebellion. Where military loyalty was built on the basis of a broad notion of civic-nationalism, however, the dynamics of stability are different. Here, military recruitment and promotion are based either on merit or on a patronage system independent from identity. In each case, soldiers know that under the current system what they have and what they can achieve do not depend on their ethnic identity. Given the deep uncertainty of who would prevail in a struggle to uproot this kind of system and replace it with something else (probably an ethnic one), in the absence of a direct threat to themselves, officers are unlikely to find it in their interest to actively revolt. Thus, while we may see an isolated coup attempt for historically contingent reasons, countries on this path are unlikely to experience destabilizing patterns of repeated coups and counter-coups.

### 6.2.1 Path Initiation

Again, following the theory outlined in Chapter 3, to embark on this particular path of stability, a leader must first have chosen to build military loyalty on civic-national grounds. Like in the Ghana case, we should thus find evidence that early post-independence recruitment and promotion policies were inclusive and broadly representative of society—particularly within the officer corps and elite units such as a presidential guard. The same constraints remain important: (a) whether or not ethnicity was politicized in the pre-independence period and (b) whether or not an armed struggle was fought for independence. For stability to result, we should see either a unifying armed struggle or the absence of ethnic politicization.

Indeed, Senegal generally fits these conditions for a predicted path of stability: Under the leadership of Léopold Sédar Senghor in both the pre-independence and

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78 Indeed, there is strong evidence that exclusion from state institutions causes ethnic minorities to rebel (see Adekanye 1997; Cederman, Wimmer, and Min 2010; Fearon, Kasara, and Laitin 2007; and Wimmer, Cederman, and Min 2009).
post-independence periods, Senegal both avoided ethnic politicization and built a military on the basis of civic-national loyalty.

**Non-Politicization of Ethnicity**

Unlike in Ghana and many other African countries, early Senegalese political leaders chose not to build their followings by appealing to ethnic interests and identities. As a result, the political parties that contested pre-independence elections did not reflect the ethnic cleavages of Senegalese society. This cannot be attributed to something unique or atypical about Senegal’s ethnic composition. Like many other African countries, Senegal is comprised of multiple ethnic groups, none of which constitute a majority of the total population. According to a census conducted in 1960, this was the ethnic breakdown of Senegal’s population at independence: Wolof (36%), Serer (19%), Toucouleur (14%), Peul (7.5%), Diola (7%), Manding (5%), Sara-kolé (2%), Bambara (1.5%), Lébou (1.5%), and Other (6.5%).

Rather than develop according to these ethnic cleavages, politics coalesced around a strong urban-rural divide created by stark contrasts in French colonial policy. While the assimilated urban communes had long been allowed limited forms of self-government, including civic associations and political parties, the rural peasantry had been governed in a more standard colonial autocratic fashion. In the run-up to independence, the Bloc Démocratique Sénégalais (BDS) split from the French Socialist Party (which had long monopolized politics in the communes) and turned to the newly enfranchised countryside for votes. The loyalties of rural peasants, however, were directly controlled by the powerful leaders (marabouts) of the Sufi Islamic Brotherhoods, who had long acted as mediators between the colonial administration and their followers. In trade for promises of continued agricultural subsidies, infrastructure improvements, and other forms of patronage, the marabouts would issue religious edicts commanding their followers to vote in

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79Dresch et al. 1977.
a particular way—obviating the need for the BDS to appeal directly to voters and thus also eliminating the need for any mass mobilization strategy such as campaigning on an “ethnic” platform.

In Senegal, French colonial policy followed two quite distinct tracks. First, French administrators created four communes in the urban areas—Saint-Louis, Dakar, Gorée, and Rufisque—to serve as ideal laboratories for cultural assimilation. Senegalese members of these communes were expected to give up their own heritage and traditions and become, culturally and educationally, French. In return, they were granted privileges denied to almost all of colonized Africa outside of the white settler communities. Africans born within the communes were considered citizens of France and granted equivalent legal status as Frenchmen. The communes were also allowed limited forms of democratic self-government, political parties, and civic associations as far back as the early 1800s. By 1914, local politics was firmly in the hands of Senegalese politicians and, under France’s Third Republic (1870-1940), the communes could elect one representative to the (lower) Chamber of Deputies.\footnote{Barry 1988, 272-273; Galvan 2001, 57; Morgenthau 1964, 127.} In contrast, the rest of the territory was governed like any other French colony—autocratically via French-appointed chiefs and administrators. The rural areas were also subject to military law and the labor corvée (forced, unpaid manual labor duty). Thus, a strong political, cultural, and educational divide developed between the urban communes and the rural hinterlands.\footnote{Galvan 2001, 57.}

Naturally, given this policy, the first political parties formed in the communes. The French Socialist Party (SFIO), based in Paris, established a branch in Senegal in the 1930s. By the end of World War II, under the leadership of Lamine Gueye, the SFIO had come to monopolize local elective offices. Although personalistic loyalties led to the formation of what has been termed “clans” within the communes—cliques that allied and realigned themselves around successful politicians—these had no hereditary basis and were not often (although they could be) comprised of mem-

\[80\]Barry 1988, 272-273; Galvan 2001, 57; Morgenthau 1964, 127.

\[81\]Galvan 2001, 57.
bers sharing an ethnic identity.\textsuperscript{82} In 1948, SFIO party members disaffected with the subordination of African deputies to the French metropolitan center split and formed a new party, the Bloc Démocratique Sénégalais (BDS)—later renamed the Bloc Populaire Sénégalais (BPS), then the Union Progressiste Sénégalais (UPS) and finally the Parti Socialiste du Sénégal (PS). As the SFIO was firmly entrenched in the communes, the BDS, led by Léopold Sédar Senghor, turned to the newly enfranchised rural masses to garner support during the pre-independence elections.\textsuperscript{83} Thus, the two parties came to reflect the primary divide in French colonial policy—with the SFIO continuing to represent the interests and aspirations of an educated and assimilated elite and the BDS searching for a following amongst the traditionally subjugated peasantry.

In the countryside, where ethnic and tribal categories were more salient than within the assimilationist communes, the BDS still built a political following without becoming an exclusionary or “ethnic” party. Rather, they tapped into existing patronage networks between the state and the Sufi brotherhoods (led by the marabouts) in order to mobilize mass support. By the time of the pre-independence elections, Senegal’s population was over 80% Muslim\textsuperscript{84} and growing (today the figure is closer to 90-95\%).\textsuperscript{85} Around 90% of these Senegalese Muslims belonged to one of the two dominant Sufi brotherhoods—50% to the Tijaniyya and 40% to the Mourides—with the rest belonging to smaller brotherhoods.\textsuperscript{86} Thus, influence over the marabouts carried with it the potential to gain large voting blocks.

Yet, to fully understand why gaining the support of the marabouts was such a compelling and successful electoral strategy—one that would preclude the use of other mass mobilization strategies—we must analyze the evolution of the brotherhoods both as religious orders able to control the behavior of their followers and as

\textsuperscript{82}Morgenthau 1964, 126. 
\textsuperscript{83}Foltz 1965, 58-59. 
\textsuperscript{84}Ibid, 114. 
\textsuperscript{85}Fatton 1986, 65; Loimeier 1996, 183. 
\textsuperscript{86}Clark 1999, 160.
agricultural producers and recipients of state patronage. Although Islam had made peaceful inroads into West Africa as early as the 10th century, and Sufi religious mystics were often included in the royal courts, it touched the lives of few Senegalese until the middle of the 19th century. In 1854, the jihads raging further north reached the upper Senegal valley (today near the northern border with Mauritania) when Al-Hajj Umar Tal of the Sufi Tijaniyya brotherhood launched an attack against the French-supported, non-Muslim Fulbe tribes of that region. In 1886, as the Tijaniyya were gaining influence and gathering supporters in the north and east of the colony, a second brotherhood—the Muridiyya (or the Mourides)—was founded by Amadu Mamba in the heart of Wolof territory toward the west.87

Unlike earlier Islamic influences, the Tijaniyya and Muridiyya brotherhoods represented reform movements that sought a direct relationship with their adepts. Before, the marabouts had confined themselves to giving spiritual guidance only to the princely families. Both brotherhoods now sought to directly convert the peasantry and achieved great success in their proselytizing efforts. The spread of Islam in Senegal coincided with the French conquest of the interior (territories outside of the communes) and the consequent destruction of traditional states and their customary ways of ordering political and religious life. The brotherhoods welcomed the refugees of this destruction, serving a critical role in the rebuilding of society under the new colonial regime while rapidly converting followers.88

The relationship between these adepts (talibés) and the marabouts was grounded in a strong, theologically-motivated exchange. The talibés believed that entrance to paradise could be gained only through the direct intervention of the marabout through his prayers—which were secured by working for the marabout, following his religious edicts, and paying one’s tithes. Disobeying an edict was thus tantamount to sacrificing one’s afterlife.89 Through this religious relationship, the marabouts

89Foltz 1965, 115; Markovitz 1970, 86.
thus gained a significant degree of control over the personal and political choices of the vast majority of Senegal’s rural population.

At the same time as the Sufi brotherhoods were developing as religious communities, they were also evolving as agricultural producers, important mediators between the colonial state and the peasantry, and recipients of colonial patronage. Initially, both the brotherhoods and the French were engaged in violent conquests of the same territories, producing early clashes. But with different end goals—the French aspired to political domination and the brotherhoods to cultural and spiritual domination—they were able to develop a mutually supportive coexistence. Colonial administrators helped the marabouts to transform their religious schools into productive peanut plantations. In exchange for market access, transportation infrastructure, internal security, and seed, the marabouts collected taxes and ensured the population’s adherence to colonial laws through religious edicts. By the time of decolonization, the marabouts dominated peanut cultivation: the Mourides alone controlled over half of all production (which accounted for approximately 80% of Senegal’s GDP). The marabouts were thus transformed into an agrarian elite, dependent on the colonial state for continued access to resources, but remarkably powerful in their ability to control the rural population and economy.

As the French prepared Senegal for independence, increasing powers of self-governance and extending elections into the countryside (enfranchised in 1946), this preexisting social order structured by the Sufi brotherhoods allowed the BDS to gain an electoral advantage without itself directly mobilizing the population. Rather, as early as the 1951 French National Assembly elections, Senghor and the BDS began approaching influential marabouts for their support—which helped them to win both Senegalese seats over the previously dominant SFIO. As the French devolved control over the agricultural sector, Senghor and the BDS-controlled government

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90 Amadu Mamba himself issued a fatwa in 1910 justifying obedience to French rule (Clark 1999, 156).
carefully maintained the existing patronage structures, substituting themselves as the principal source of financial support for the brotherhoods and their peanut plantations. By the pre-independence elections, the BDS (now the UPS after a merger with the SFIO in 195893) were thus perfectly positioned to offer the marabouts continued state patronage in exchange for their intercession with the peasantry: The marabouts would issue religious edicts commanding their followers to vote for the UPS and, once in power, the UPS would continue to support the marabouts’ control over peanut production94. This strategy was so effective that in the 1959 Legislative Assembly Elections the UPS won roughly 83% of the vote—gaining an overwhelming majority in Parliament and allowing Senghor to assume the Presidency after the short-lived Mali Federation had failed95.

This ability to garner such a commanding victory at the polls, by working through existing patronage structures, allowed the BDS/UPS to bypass expensive and time-consuming mass mobilization strategies. Furthermore, it was a superior strategy to ethnic mobilization. Senegal’s largest ethnic group, the Wolof, constituted roughly 36%96 of the population at the time of independence (growing to 44% today97). While this is comparatively much greater than any other group (the next largest groups, the Serer and Toucouleur, had a 19% and 14% share in the total population respectively), it still fell well short of the 50% mark. Thus, a mobilization strategy organized around Wolof interests would have failed to gain the

93Gueye 2006, 271.
95Nunley 2011; Indeed, this arrangement continued for over 25 years—ensuring continued UPS/PS rule—until the first IMF mandated structural adjustment program (1985) necessitated a significant decrease in agricultural funding and credits. This, in turn, diminished the patronage provided to the marabouts, who then stopped issuing voting edicts and adopted a stance of political neutrality (Galvan 2001, 59). Thereafter, the vote share of the PS steadily declined—from 80-83% in the 1983 elections to 71-73% in 1988 to 56-58% in 1993—until they were finally beaten by the opposition in the 2000 Presidential elections and 2001 Legislative elections (Nunley, 2011).
96Dresch et al. 1977.
97Minority Rights Group, 2010.
votes necessary for a Parliamentary majority\textsuperscript{98}—while the marabout-based strategy resulted in an overwhelming victory.

\textit{Lack of an Armed Insurgency}

Neither of Senegal’s two primary political movements (the SFIO and BDS, both official political parties) turned to violence as a tactic toward achieving independence. The Senegalese SFIO was a branch of a major metropolitan political party and thus disinclined to promote radical pushes towards independence. And, under Léopold Senghor’s leadership, the BDS/UPS promoted a gradual approach to political development and eventual independence within a French constitutional framework. Neither major political movement advocated for armed insurrection.

Senegal’s SFIO was a local branch of a major metropolitan French political party—one that routinely controlled 14-15\% of parliamentary seats and participated in coalition governments.\textsuperscript{99} French assimilationist policies in the colonies firmly rested on the assumption of eventual incorporation. In due time, and when proper political and cultural maturity had been attained, colonial possessions would be fully integrated into France—subject to the same laws and political structures as Paris.\textsuperscript{100} Congruent with this policy, the constitution of France’s 4th Republic (adopted after World War II) contained provisions for colonial representation, with full voting privileges, in the National Assembly. In the 1st Legislature of the 4th Republic (1946-1951), 73 of 618 deputies (11.8\%) were drawn from overseas territories—30 from sub-Saharan Africa and 30 from Algeria (half of whose seats were elected by the colonial settler population and the other half by enfranchised Muslim Algerians). This constituted a significant proportion of the Assembly considering the fragmentary nature of France’s multi-party parliamentary system: at no point during the 4th Republic (1946-1958) did any single party control more than

\textsuperscript{98}An unlikely strategy in any case since Senghor descended from the Serer.

\textsuperscript{99}Archives of the French National Assembly (available at www.assemblee-nationale.fr/histoire); Smith 1978, 81.

\textsuperscript{100}Smith 1978, 74.
28.6% of seats. Colonial elections and deputies were thus important to the major French political parties—particularly to the Socialists and the Communists to whom almost all colonial representatives eventually became affiliated—incentivizing the establishment and maintenance of party branches in the territories, such as Senegal’s SFIO.

Yet, while metropolitan SFIO leaders may have valued and sympathized with colonial interests, their primary objectives and loyalties were always understood in terms of European-French interests. As a key player in Paris, fending off challenges from both the right and the left (the Communist Party regularly commanded the largest minority faction in government), the SFIO could hardly support radical changes in colonial policy that would have alienated both French voters and their moderate coalition partners. Indeed, it was a Socialist (SFIO) led government in 1946-47 that decided to fight insurgent nationalist forces in Indochina and hold up the principle of empire rather than begin decolonization. The Senegalese branch of the SFIO was thus not going to condone a strong push for full independence, let alone violent resistance. Moreover, the traditional membership of Senegal’s branch of the SFIO were highly educated “citizens”—those born in the communes who enjoyed privileged status at the behest of the French government—who had historically favored working within the system rather than risk their privilege through radicalness.

As noted previously, it was this continual subordination of Senegalese deputies and interests to those of the metropole that led Senghor and others to split from the SFIO and found a new political party—one responsible solely to Senegalese voters. Yet, neither did the BDS/UPS ever organize, or even encourage, violence. Leopold Senghor, the party’s strong and widely respected leader, believed in interdependence,

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101 Compiled from the archives of the French National Assembly (available at www.assemblee-nationale.fr/histoire).
102 Lewis 1998, 281.
103 Smith 1978, 81.
104 Morgenthau 1964, 130.
gradualism, and constitutionalism—beliefs that largely precluded a turn towards violence.

First, Senghor developed a notion of independence through interdependence: since the modern state could not be economically self-sufficient, it was always to some degree dependent on others. Independence had to be achieved through alliances and coalitions, both with other African states as well as with France. Thus, Senghor promoted a West African federation (or federations) within the larger framework of a French Community. Pursuing a path that would divorce Senegal from France, such as violent resistance or rejecting the French Community as Guinea did in the 1958 referendum, was thus counterproductive in his view.105

Second, Senghor advocated for the gradual evolution of Senegalese political institutions towards autonomy and eventual independence from within the French constitutional framework. Gradualism was preferred to radicalism because it avoided the dangers of rapid change—of progress towards democratic socialism being abandoned for destruction and dictatorship in the name of independence: “I prefer small successes to a Pyrrhic victory.”106 Just as importantly, Senghor believed that, given growth and maturity in Senegalese institutions, France would actually grant independence:

“As we develop economically and socially, as we train the cadres necessary for the state, and as we raise the standard of living along with the level of education, we shall amicably negotiate with the Community the transfer of authority... In the end, we shall possess all the outward indications of sovereignty, of nominal independence. If we prove our capacity for autonomous organization and administration, it is inconceivable that France will refuse to grant us our nominal independence. Let us seek real independence, and the rest will be given to us.”107

Violence was thus both unnecessary and counterproductive since real independence, understood as interdependence, was best achieved through gradual institutional de-

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105 Young 2001, 270.
106 Senghor as quoted in Markovitz 1969, 104.
107 Ibid, 105.
velopment within a French constitutional framework that would surely one day grant that independence.

These beliefs in gradualism and working within the French constitutional framework are best evidenced in Senghor’s and the BDS/UPS’s policies. Immediately following World War II, Senghor proposed a constitution for the 4th Republic that would have kept the French empire intact but, unlike in the 3rd Republic, would be based on the principle of consent, with provisions allowing for voluntary dissolution. After the rejection of this constitution, in favor of the continuation of past colonial policy, Senghor became a representative in the French National Assembly and a leading figure within the Indépendants d’Outre Mer (IOM)—a coordinating body for colonial representatives who refused to join the then communist-affiliated, inter-territorial Rassemblement Démocratique Africain (RDA) party. There he advocated for a reformed French federal union: one that would maintain an integrated federal Parliament and Chief Executive in Paris, but would also allow for the formation of local parliaments and executives with increasing powers over their own affairs. Indeed, in the late 1950s, Senghor and the UPS were still advocating for inter-territorial cooperation and unity within a French framework. In 1958, a Grand Council of West African political parties met in Dakar to develop a unified strategy—and expelled the only party (Senegal’s non-influential Parti Africain de l’Indépendence (PAI)) who had adopted a position of unconditional, immediate independence. Later that the same year, the French Army in Algeria revolted, leading to the collapse of the 4th Republic and the return of Charles de Gaulle to power—who quickly called for a constitutional referendum. Each territory held a popular yes or no vote on the new constitution, in effect offering them a choice between continued subordination to France within a federation (still with no right to secession once

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108 While the Constitution Senghor gained the initial support of the socialist and communist parties, it was defeated by moderate and conservative forces, who backed constitutional principles that precluded rights to self-determination for the colonies (Lewis 1998, 282-284).

109 At first, Senghor envisioned two federated West African territories: one with a capital in Dakar (Senegal) and the other with its capital in Abidjan (Côte d’Ivoire) (Foltz 1965, 65-66).

110 Ibid, 83.
adopted) or full and immediate independence (and threatened expulsion from the
French community\textsuperscript{111}). After careful consideration, the UPS executive committee
decided to support the new constitution and rallied Senegal’s voters to vote no on
independence\textsuperscript{112} Thus, at no time, even when given a peaceful option, did Senghor
and the BDS/UPS pursue tactics that would have severed them from the French
community.

By 1958, the only parties left in Senegal that opposed Senghor and the UPS
were the Senegalese branch of the inter-territorial RDA and the PAI (a small,
Marxist-Leninist party). While, as discussed above, the PAI did demand imme-
diate, unconditional independence, the RDA chose rather to negotiate (like the
BDS/UPS) for some form of inter-territorial cooperation and unity within an over-
arching French community. Neither party garnered much popular support within
Senegal and neither promoted violence as a means of change\textsuperscript{113}

\textit{Civic-National Loyalty Choice}

After the short-lived Mali Federation collapsed a few months after independence
from France (1960), Senghor became the President of Senegal and the architect of
its new, national military. Reflecting his belief in a nationalism that would tran-
scend, but not end, ethnic and tribal identities, Senghor continued French military
recruitment practices that had always reflected Senegal’s diversity.

Senghor envisioned a type of nationalism for Senegal that would develop, how-
ever slowly, by protecting communities within federal institutions and winning their
loyalty over time. To Senghor, the nation was an artificial, rather than natural,
construction that had to be built through the unification of what he termed the
“fatherlands” (tribes and ethnic groups). This nation would not, however, replace
prior identities but unify their loyalties within a political community. Such a vision,

\textsuperscript{111}Which is what happened to Sekou Touré’s Guinea.
\textsuperscript{112}Foltz 1965, 91-94; Smith 1978, 89.
\textsuperscript{113}Foltz 1965, 83.
unlike that of ethno-nationalism, views the state as belonging to everyone and thus did not entail a project of seizing and then homogenizing state institutions along identity lines. Rather, Senghor’s nation-building endeavors could both tolerate the continued existence of local and regional identities and share power with them. Indeed, part of the reason that Senghor pushed so hard for some kind of West African federation was that he believed federalism would protect Senegal from many of the worst depredations of the centralized nation-state:

“...we shall take care not to succumb to one of the temptations of the nation-state: the uniformization of people within the fatherland... Wealth springs from the diversities of countries and persons, from the fact that they complement each other. We shall always remember a truth often expressed by Father Teilhard de Chardin: Races are not equal but complementary, which is a superior form of equality. Whence the superiority of the federal over the unitary state. I shall go even further. There is but one way to reduce the tyranny of the state, to ward off its diseases, as the socialist Proudhon said, and that way is through federalism—in other words, the decentralization and deconcentration of its economic and political institutions.”

Protecting Senegal’s diverse ethnic and tribal communities was thus central to Senghor’s nationalism—a nationalism built from federal institutions that would garner the loyalties of all citizens and thus could not belong to any particular ethnic group.

Consistent with these beliefs, under Senghor’s leadership, the Senegalese military continued to recruit broadly from across Senegal’s ethnic and tribal communities. French colonial recruitment practices in West Africa differed significantly from those of the British: Instead of targeting select “martial races,” the French practiced near universal male conscription from 1912 to 1960 (both in times of war and peace). France’s West African troops, known as the Tirailleurs Sénégalais, were recruited from across the various West African colonies and integrated into a single fighting force that was deployed wherever needed (including to Europe in World War

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114 Markovitz 1969, 113.
115 Senghor as quoted in Markovitz 1969, 111.
I, to North Africa in World War II, and to Indochina and Algeria during those anti-colonial insurgencies). Although some West African groups were excluded for political and economic reasons—for example, nomadic Saharan and Sahelian tribes were often exempted due to the costs of sending draft boards that far into the interior and because of concerns that racially Arab tribesmen would resist obeying the orders of black NCOs—in Senegal, essentially all groups were subject to the draft.\textsuperscript{117} Based on the total number of recruits Senegal was to contribute towards the inter-territorial force, each of Senegal’s administrative units (cercles) was allotted a yearly quota reflecting its relative population density. Because Senegal’s ethnic groups are relatively territorially concentrated, this resulted in recruitment patterns that generally reflected the territory’s underlying ethnic diversity (see Figure 6.1).\textsuperscript{118} Although the records are incomplete, in the decade prior to independence, military recruitment continued to draw broadly from across these regions.\textsuperscript{119}

As with the rest of Africa, however, Senegal faced a dearth of African officers as independence approached. Although France had begun promoting African soldiers to officer rank as early as the 1910s (usually for valor during battle), a serious Africanization program for the officer corps was not launched until after World War II—and then failed to realize any substantial success until the mid-1950s. In 1956, there were still only 85 African officers in all of French West Africa.\textsuperscript{120} After independence (and under Senghor’s guidance), Africanization of the officer corps proceeded gradually but consistently: by the mid-1960s most field command positions were held by Senegalese officers, and by the end of 1974 French officers were restricted entirely to advisory positions.\textsuperscript{121} While the exact numbers of recruits

\textsuperscript{117}Ibid, 48.
\textsuperscript{118}See Echenberg 1991, 47-57.
\textsuperscript{119}I was unable to locate the draft board lists from the sparsely populated east (Matam, Bakel, Kédougou, and Tambacounda) and from Djoloff. The rest of the old cercles (now subdivided) have records archived in the Senegalese National Archives, Fonds Sénégal Colonial: Baol (11D1/0106, 11D1/0130), Bass-Sénégal (11D1/0707), Casamance (11D1/0172, 11D1/0225, 11D1/0256, 11D1/0331, 11D1/0386), Louga (11D1/1265), Thiès (11D1/1305, 11D1/1426, 11D1/1436, 11D1/1443), Sine-Saloum (11D1/1024, 11D1/1088, 11D1/1186).
\textsuperscript{120}Echenberg 1991, 118.
\textsuperscript{121}Nelson 1974, 334-336.
Figure 6.2: Colonial Military Recruitment in Senegal

by ethnic group are unavailable, we do know that recruitment operated first by random draw during this time and then by voluntary enlistment. Historical sources also agree that the military was of heterogeneous ethnic composition, that no ethnic group was reported to be in a position of advantage over others, and that intra-military tensions were focused on non-ethnic criteria such as technical training, foreign educational opportunities, and cohorts.\textsuperscript{122} Given these seemingly unbiased recruitment practices and Senghor’s known beliefs on the value of diversity, it is reasonable to assume that he was intentionally building the military in a manner consistent with his vision of civic-national loyalty.

\textit{French Protection?}

It is also important to recognize that the French maintained a strong military position in Senegal—not just during the early independence years, but consistently up until the present day. Between independence and 1974, in addition to seconding many officers to the Senegalese military and providing extensive military aid and training, France maintained a garrison of about 2250 men near Dakar. Although this base was transferred to Senegal in 1974, and the French presence reduced, to this day they have retained a strategic presence near Dakar with a battalion of marines.\textsuperscript{123} As Diop and Paye note, this “strategically placed French military unit at the Dakar support base, and French oversight of the Senegalese army, brought a presumption that any coup d’
\textsuperscript{124}’état would fail.”\textsuperscript{124} Such protection may have aided Senghor in avoiding potential conflicts with the military. The French were, however, highly inconsistent in their willingness to intervene on behalf of the ruling governments of their former colonies when faced with military coups—despite defense pacts and security guarantees specifying otherwise. For example, in the 1960s alone, the French government allowed successful coups to stand in Benin, Burkina Faso, the Central

\textsuperscript{123}Keegan 1983, 514-515; McCoy 1994, 42; Nelson 1974, 337.
\textsuperscript{124}Diop and Paye 1998, 329.
African Republic, Congo-Brazzaville, and Mali. This potential deterrent also failed, as discussed later, to prevent military intervention during the constitutional crisis of 1962.

6.2.2 Path Maintenance

The conditions at the time of Senghor’s choice to build military loyalty on the basis of a broad vision of civic-nationalism—most importantly, the lack of ethnic politicization in the pre-independence period—thus predict a stable path for Senegal, a path marked by its lack of civil-military conflict. We should thus not observe ethnically motivated coups and counter-coups (as in the two unstable paths), but rather a general absence of intra-military violence. Senegal’s historical experience largely matches this expectation. Although there was a single, questionable (failed) coup attempt closely following independence, it was not ethnically motivated and did not lead to further coups or other forms of instability. In fact, the purported coup was able to attract little support amongst officers—the vast majority of whom acted to defend Senghor and the Presidency—and resulted in neither purges nor changes in recruitment policy. Instead, Senegal slowly opened political competition to opposition parties, peacefully transferred executive leadership between leaders of different ethnic backgrounds, and, in 2000-2001, managed its first transition of both executive and legislative power to an opposition party—all without provoking a military response as is common throughout much of Africa (see Chapter 4).

Despite a general pattern of military respect for civilian rule, Senegal’s armed forces did intervene in domestic political struggles during the constitutional crisis of 1962. Considered by most as a coup attempt, there is actually little evidence that any military faction desired power or thought they were doing anything other than their constitutional duty. Nonetheless, the army did intervene decisively on the side of President Senghor and his parliamentary allies (and against the Prime Minister and his allies) leading to a shift in the balance of domestic power and the further
consolidation of one party rule under Senghor. This was the only coup attempt in Senegal’s history and, as an exception, helps to illustrate the differences between this experience and the more patterned instability of Ghana and Sierra Leone.

The roots of the 1962 constitutional crisis lay in the collapse of the Mali Federation mere months after independence. To deal with this sudden change in governing structures, Senegal’s territorial Prime Minister, Mamadou Dia, declared a state of emergency—thereby evoking emergency powers and allowing Senegal’s leaders to alter constitutional arrangements that had been oriented toward the larger federation. They then adopted a hybrid Parliamentary-Presidential system with shared power between Prime Minister Dia (head of the National Assembly, Minister of Defense, and charged with running the day-to-day affairs of the administration) and the newly established office of the President, to be held by Léopold Senghor (charged primarily with foreign affairs). These arrangements created shared executive authority, under one political party (the UPS), that was nevertheless split between conservative and radical economic interests. While Senghor continued to hold the support of the marabouts, and thus represented traditional forms of peanut production, Dia envisioned a complete transformation of colonial social and economic structures.

A crisis then developed because Prime Minister Dia failed to lift the state of emergency for nearly two and a half years—and used his emergency powers to begin implementing a radical program of agricultural reform. The crisis then escalated to the point of military involvement because executive authority over the armed forces was split between Dia and Senghor.

Using his broad emergency powers, in 1961-1962, Prime Minister Dia began implementing a reform program that aimed to undercut the marabouts’ power, diversify the rural economy, and (eventually) nationalize peanut production. First, Dia proposed the creation of a Supreme Islamic Council, which threatened to disrupt the direct control that the marabouts exercised over their followers’ behavior.

125 Barry 1988, 280; Fink 2007, 24-25, 34.
Then, Dia reduced the state funds and loans available to the marabouts for agricultural production and stated his intention to place all agriculture under the direction of educated state bureaucrats. Finally, he began a program of seizing land traditionally cultivated by marabouts and establishing farmer’s cooperatives on those lands. These measures, combined with the extended use of emergency powers, severely alienated the brotherhoods, their political allies, and the legislature in general, leading over 40 deputies in the National Assembly to sign a motion of censure and attempt to bring it before the full assembly for a vote in December of 1962.

Yet, under the Constitution, such a motion of censure was technically illegal during a state of emergency—which allowed Dia to deny the motion a vote and kicked off the crisis. Senghor then decided to back the petitioners and advocated for a parliamentary vote despite its illegality, adding his authority and weight to their claims. The executive committee of the UPS—to whom Dia, Senghor, and the vast majority of National Assembly representatives belonged, after all—was unable to broker a compromise satisfactory to both sides. Prime Minister Dia, using his prerogatives as the Minister of Defense, then drastically escalated the crisis by ordering the gendarmerie (a rural military police force) and the Dakar police to evacuate and seal off the National Assembly building in order to prevent any vote on the censure motion. They also occupied the radio station and cut the telephone lines to the Presidential Palace (where Senghor and his supporters had gathered). Seeing this, Colonel Jean Alfred Diallo intervened directly on Senghor’s behalf and involved army units in the crisis—sending parachute troops to surround the Presidential Palace and protect Senghor and ordering other units to face off against Dia’s in front of the Administration Building. Many emergency meetings were called, including amongst military officers and with powerful marabouts (who threw their support behind Senghor), and the crisis passed without violence in the small hours of the night when the top military brass decided to fully back Senghor.

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The following morning, Prime Minister Dia and several of his closest followers were arrested, the censure motion was finally voted on and passed, and the office of Prime Minister was subsequently abolished—consolidating power further under Senghor’s presidency. The Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, General Fall, was also dismissed and placed under house arrest. There was no interruption in civilian rule and the military retreated to the barracks as soon as the crisis had passed. There were no further arrests or purges of military officers.  

Following this single, questionable coup attempt, Senegal slowly traveled down a path of increasing political competition and democratization—without further incidents of military involvement in civilian politics. Although one party rule under Senghor and the UPS was legally established in 1966, in 1976 political competition was reopened to multiple parties—albeit constrained within a predetermined ideological range with Senghor’s renamed Parti Socialist (PS) representing the moderate socialists, the Senegalese Democratic Party representing a more centrist but still liberal alternative, and the African Independence Party representing a radical (but not communist) left. In 1980, Senghor became the first African head-of-state to retire voluntarily from politics, relinquishing power to his handpicked successor, Abdou Diouf, who then lifted the remaining restrictions on opposition parties in 1981. In 1985, the first IMF structural adjustment program led to major, mandated cuts in agricultural subsidies and credits—directly undercutting the patronage system which had tied the marabouts to the UPS for decades. The marabouts then stopped issued religious edicts commanding their supporters to vote in a particular way and instead adopted a stance of political neutrality. By the 1990s, opposition politicians began to be regularly included in the socialist government and, in 2000-2001, the socialist party was defeated at the polls in the both the executive and legislative elections—leading to Senegal’s very first President, Abdoulaye Wade, and government to be freely and fairly elected from an opposition party.

6.3 Conclusion

Despite having leaders with similar nationalistic visions lead them to independence, Senegal and Ghana experienced markedly different trajectories in their civil-military relations. While Ghana was subject to a cycle of coups and counter-coups—resulting in decades of military governance, heightened ethnic tensions, and both social and intra-military communal violence—Senegal witnessed a single, and even questionable, failed coup attempt with no lasting negative repercussions. In this chapter, I have attempted to show that the key difference between these two cases lies in their immediate pre-independence history—in the early formation of political parties and the relative ethnicization of politics.

In Ghana, fear of “ethnic plots” in the context of competing ethnic parties drove Nkrumah toward policies he had initially despised. Only a few years after independence, he abandoned military recruitment and promotion policies aimed at diversifying the military and making it a truly national institution and began instead to ethnically manipulate the office corps to ensure his political survival. This movement toward entrenching ethnicity as central to control over the state, and the resulting discrimination against Ga and Ewe officers, directly motivated those officers into rebelling and seizing control of the state for themselves. Then, when they tried to consolidate their ethnic hold over the state, Akan officers reacted by staging a counter-coup—jump-starting a cycle of violence that culminated in Flight Lieutenant Jerry Rawling’s decimation of the officer corps via repeated purges and the breakdown of military discipline.

In late colonial Senegal, on the other hand, politics remained largely free from ethnic considerations. Instead of developing along ethnic lines, political parties (before their merger into a single, dominant party) grew at first to represent the urban-rural divide created by French assimilationist policy in the communes. Even in rural areas, where tribal affiliations remained strong, the BDS/UPS refrained from mobi-
lizing support along ethnic lines because such a strategy made little sense when the countryside had already been tied to the colonial state via strong patronage structures controlled by the Muslim brotherhoods who, in turn, could control the voting behavior of the rural populace. Senghor was then able to implement a nationalistic agenda without intervention by ethnic factions within the officer corps—who, given the dominance and stability of the Socialist Party and the complete lack of ethnic political parties, could comfortably assume that future electoral politics would not lead to ethnic manipulations of the military. Even when an early constitutional crisis did lead to some degree of military intervention, Senegal’s soldiers did not attempt to seize power for themselves and returned promptly to the barracks without serious, negative ramifications.

I have also argued that each of these countries is representative of a broader pattern of post-independence experiences, marked by divergent military proclivities to intervene in domestic politics. Ghana fell into a severe coup trap of competing visions: one in which multiple ethnic factions within the military fought both with each other and with the nationalists for control of the state. Senegal, on the other hand, found stability in diversity.
Chapter 7

Conclusion

On April 12th, 2012, rebellious soldiers seized power in Guinea-Bissau. They quickly established control over the small capital city, captured the TV and radio stations, and detained both the interim President, Raimundo Pereira, and the front-runner in the upcoming April 29th Presidential elections, Carlos Gomes. A week later, gun and mortar fire could still be heard in Bissau, although power seemed to rest firmly in the hands of the new military junta. The international community responded quickly with condemnation: The African Union suspended Guinea-Bissau and both the World Bank and African Development Bank halted their disbursement of millions of dollars in aid. By April 20th, the junta had announced a transition plan back to civilian rule—proclaiming their intention to govern for two years, under the interim Presidency of Manuel Serifo Nhamadjo, while overseeing new elections.

This is a familiar story for the citizens of Guinea-Bissau. The country held its first democratic election in 1994, which continued the rule of João Bernardo Vieira, who had come to power via a military coup in 1980. He was, in turn, deposed by a coup in 1999. Elections were quickly held, this time bringing an actual transition in executive power. The new President, Kumba Yala, survived a failed coup attempt immediately after taking office in 2000—only to be successfully overthrown by the

[1]See Aljazeera 2012 (April 20); BBC 2012 (April 12) and 2009 (March 2); CBS News 2012 (April 16); The Economist 2012 (April 17); and Voice of America 2012 (April 20).
military in 2003. Elections were held again. The winner, former President Vieira, was assassinated four years later in a revenge killing by mutinous military officers. He was blamed for the assassination of the army chief-of-staff which had occurred mere hours beforehand. An acting (civilian) interim President was appointed, following constitutional procedures, and new elections were scheduled for later that same year (2009). The winner, Malam Bacai Sanhá, died of natural causes in January of 2012, leading to the controversial elections that sparked the current coup. Time and again, Guinea-Bissau’s military has overthrown their own government and then retreated to the barracks by holding elections—only to repeat the cycle. Indeed, since independence, no President has managed to serve out his full term.

The theory I have developed throughout this dissertation can help to shed some light on these events—on how Guinea-Bissau got stuck in a cycle of military intervention and the underlying dynamics that sustain it. I have argued that choosing civic-nationalism as the basis for military loyalty could be destabilizing in contexts where ethnicity was already politicized in the pre-independence period. I have also argued that ethnic armies pose a substantial threat to electoral politics—where new leaders will no longer share in the identity of military officers and will strongly desire to undo systems of ethnic patronage and power within security institutions. Guinea Bissau is an interesting and complex case, which both of these arguments can help us to understand.

Following independence, Guinea-Bissau was encumbered with an ethnic army, but generally led by nationalist leaders (or, at the least, leaders who did not share the same ethnic identity as the majority of the military). The struggle for independence had split Guinea-Bissau’s ethnic groups into opposing camps, with the rebel army recruiting primarily from the Balanta, while the Fula and Mandinga joined the Portuguese colonial army. This led to a Balanta-dominated military upon independence. Both the first and second administrations, led by Presidents Luis Cabral

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(a Mestizo with ties to Cabo Verde) and João Bernardo Vieira (of the Papel), excluded Balanta from top government posts and attempted military restructuring to reduce Balanta dominance. Vieira went so far as to execute the Vice-President as well as the head of the armed forces—both of whom were of Balanta ethnicity and widely respected within the military. Both Presidents faced coup attempts, some of which failed, and both were eventually deposed by their militaries. Indeed President Vieira’s attempted removal of the military chief-of-staff in 1998, led to a fracturing of the armed forces into somewhat imbalanced camps (2000 rebels and 1500 loyalists) who fought intensely against each other—resulting in Senegalese military intervention and the eventual victory of the (largely Balanta) rebel forces.

In the midst of this instability, Guinea-Bissau has been attempting to develop electoral institutions, in a highly multi-ethnic society, and given a resilient ethnic army resistant to reform. A closer examination of the most recent coup attempt underscores this tension. The first round of the Presidential elections had narrowed the field to two candidates—Carlos Gomes and Kumba Yala—with a run-off election (which had been) scheduled for April 29th, 2012. Yala, an ethnic Balanta, commanded substantial support amongst Balanta voters and maintained strong ties with the Balanta-dominated military. Gomes, however, was reported to be the strong front-runner, having captured 49% of the vote in the first round. Yala, in fact, had already threatened to boycott the next round of voting, making a Gomes victory nearly certain. Importantly, Gomes had publicly expressed his intentions of reforming the armed forces. Indeed, the junior officers who seized power—preventing the election and thus a Gomes Presidency—claimed that they had found a “secret” document signed by Gomes and the interim President Pereira authorizing foreign intervention to reform the military. This was their justification for detaining the two politicians.

While the evidence is still circumstantial, it appears that the army

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3 Chabal 2002, 251-258.
4 See Aljazeera 2012 (April 20); BBC 2012 (April 12) and 2009 (March 2); CBS News 2012 (April 16); The Economist 2012 (April 17); and Voice of America 2012 (April 20).
acted to block a democratic process that would have led to military restructuring—
reforms that would have undermined the entrenched position of power and privilege
long enjoyed by Balanta soldiers, who have fought vigorously in the past to protect
that position.

This recent coup underscores the threat that many African militaries continue
to pose to civilian governance and political stability. It is just one of many: Since
2008, officers in Guinea, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger have likewise
attempted to overthrow their own governments, often with success. Beyond their
often devastating effects on internal stability, these coups can also initiate lasting
cycles of intra-military violence and rigidify boundaries between ethnic groups—
deepening antagonisms and making future political violence all the more likely. Nor
are coups isolated phenomenon disconnected from other forms of political violence.
They have ignited insurgencies, sometimes escalating into civil war. Coups, even
when they are successful, weaken the military power of the central government,
opening opportunities for other groups to rebel. After the coup on March 21st,
2012, which ended 20 years of democratic rule in Mali, for example, Taureg rebels
in the north declared independence and seized the cities of Timbuktu and Gao—
cities that had never before fallen in previous rebellions.⁵ Beyond weakening the
state, coups can themselves spiral out of control—fracturing the armed forces as
in Guinea Bissau in 1998-1999 and drawing increasingly large portions of society
into their violence as officer factions search for allies and support outside of military
institutions. Military coups are thus a substantively important type of political
violence—destabilizing in their own right, but also intertwined with other types of
destructive violence.

The Guinea-Bissau case further highlights the importance of considering ethnic
politics in explaining these events. The ethnic tensions and cleavages created within
security institutions—often by leadership choices over how to structure military

⁵See Reuters 2012 (April 21).
loyalty, particularly the creation of ethnic armies—play a considerable role in the
dynamics of many coup attempts. Democratization and elections can also interact
in destabilizing ways with ethnic armies. The unraveling of the ethnic base of the
state that inherently accompanies electoral politics in highly multi-ethnic societies
directly threatens these ethnic military institutions. To neglect ethnic politics, to
treat it as epiphenomenal or secondary to structural factors, is thus to miss the most
crucial components of the causal story.

I have made two related arguments, both grounded in such an understanding
of ethnic politics, to explain the relative propensity of African militaries to seize
state power. The first argument concentrates on the immediate post-colonial pe-
riod and explains the development of coup traps in certain countries based on how
early African leaders chose to build military loyalty in combination with the con-
straints they faced. The second argument explores how the historical legacy of ethnic
armies—a path that often led to stability in the earlier period of analysis—has af-
fected more recent efforts at democratization.

At the time of independence, military institutions were in a state of deep trans-
formation and new African leaders faced an important choice over how they would
tie soldiers to the state. This critical juncture set countries on different paths of insti-
tutional development—some stable and reinforced through self-perpetuating mech-
anism and others unstable, prone to extreme backlash processes. Where leaders
chose to build military loyalty on ethnic foundations—where they conditioned re-
cruitment, promotion, and access to patronage on shared identity—they tended to
set their countries on dangerous paths of violence. Regardless of other dynamics,
restricting access to such an important state institution as the military on the basis
of ethnic identity would increase the salience of ethnicity, exacerbate tensions, and
increase the risks of multiple types of violence. Nonetheless, each choice could re-
result in either a stable or unstable path, depending on the particular constellation of
constraints present. Indeed, even those leaders who, for various reasons—including
personal abhorrence to ‘tribalism’—chose to build military loyalty on the basis of an inclusive vision of civic-nationalism, still faced the possibility of a severe coup trap.

If a leader chose to build military loyalty along ethnic lines, then they necessarily had to recruit their own co-ethnics into the officer corps—and potentially purge officers of other ethnic groups from it. Such actions would naturally inspire resistance from those officers being threatened, if any existed. Previous colonial recruitment practices determined what type of officer corps new leaders inherited and thus whether or not a military reaction was possible. Where the colonial power had failed to construct an officer corps, or where they had built one that already “matched” the civilian regime that was to inherit power upon independence, there would be no officers threatened by co-ethnic recruitment. On the other hand, where an ethnically diverse officer corps was inherited, this ethnic restructuring would gravely threaten at least some existing military officers—who would have strong incentives to protect themselves from dismissal by deposing the civilian regime (perhaps even prior to any concrete actions taken against them). Yet, even if there was an ethnic mismatch between the leadership and the officer corps, the presence of a shielding foreign military power could free the government to restructure their military along the lines of ethnicity.

Thus, we would expect rapid destabilization—initiating a coup trap of repeated seizures of power by ethnic factions—given a choice for ethnic loyalty, a “mismatched” officer corps, and no foreign military protection, and stability otherwise. Indeed, once established, an ethnically-based military loyal to a co-ethnic leader would be a highly stable institutional arrangement—for it would be in the military’s interests to defend their preferential access to power and patronage.

Although a choice for civic-national loyalty should result in greater stability—since inclusive promotion and recruitment practices should not inherently threaten the corporate interests of any particular faction of the officer corps—it could still be destabilizing where ethnicity had already become politicized under late colonialism.
Where political parties or independence movements organized themselves along ethnic lines, it would be difficult to convince soldiers that civic-national policies would last. In other words, even if the current administration was committed to non-ethnic recruitment and promotion criteria, the next election could usher in an ethnic party that would reverse those policies—recruiting their own co-ethnics into the officer corps and displacing individuals of other identity groups. Moreover, there may already exist ethnic factions in the officer corps convinced that they should “own” the state; and who could use their existing position in the military to seize power if their group lost elections. In a highly ethnically politicized society, therefore, nationalists must wage an uphill battle against organized identity groups who believe that state power should belong to them (or perhaps merely fear that it will belong to another). A shared, armed struggle against colonialism, however, could create an overriding sense of common destiny and perception of national unity within the armed forces, even where ethnic politicization was high. Fighting and dying together can forge a sense of shared identity that transcends other divisions.

We would thus expect destabilization where ethnicity had been politicized in the pre-independence period and where no armed resistance had been fought. An initial coup attempt would then push these states into another type of coup trap—similar in its dynamics to an ethnic coup trap, but with a nationalist faction also engaged in the struggle for power. Where there was no history of ethnic politicization, or where an unified armed resistance movement overcame this history, however, we would not expect the same sectarian opposition to emerge against the vision of the nationalists. Rather, in these cases, we would expect robust stability and an inclusive and diverse military.

Results from the cross-national analysis support these hypotheses. Countries predicted to travel stable paths survive longer coup free following independence (9.4-12.4 years longer) and experience less coup attempts overall (2.7-3.5 fewer in the 20 years following decolonization). Moreover, the choice to build loyalty along ethnic
lines is consistently more destabilizing than a choice of civic-nationalism across statistical tests. These results are highly significant and robust, regardless of model specification.

Paired comparisons were also selected to further test the key theoretical differences between paths, as well as to trace the causal mechanisms of each path. The leaders of Sierra Leone and Cameroon both chose to construct ethnic armies, and yet the two countries experienced vastly different outcomes. On the one hand, Sierra Leone rapidly succumbed to a destabilizing series of coups and counter-coups. On the other hand, Cameroon remained highly stable until its first attempted leadership transition over 20 years after independence. The comparison demonstrates that the critical difference explaining this divergence in outcomes lies in the diversity of their colonial armies. While Sierra Leone tried to restructure an already diverse officer corps along ethnic lines, inciting revolt, Cameroon was able to build an ethnic army from the ground up while still under French colonialism.

Alternatively, the leaders of both Ghana and Senegal attempted to create diverse security institutions along civic-national lines—again, though, with highly divergent outcomes. Ghana succumbed to 10 coups and counter-coups, beginning with the overthrow of Kwame Nkrumah, while Senegal has, arguably, escaped any military intervention in civilian politics. In the paired comparison, I argued that politicization of ethnicity in the pre-independence period is critical to understanding the different paths they traveled. In Ghana, many political parties organized along ethnic lines and competition between them turned violent. Thus, an environment of ethnic politicization was created that undermined Kwame Nkrumah’s attempts to build national institutions, and led to ethnic competition within the military, despite his best efforts to prevent such an outcome. In Senegal, on the other hand, early political parties remained non-ethnic, organizing instead around the Islamic brotherhoods. This allowed Léopold Senghor the space to recruit broadly into the military without officers fearing the future rise of an ethnic state through elections.
In the remainder of this conclusion, I hope to push my arguments further by considering their implications in three different lights. First, and perhaps most intuitively, my argument contributes to ongoing debates over democratization and democratic consolidation. Cross-national work on these processes has largely neglected civil-military relations and the threat posed by military actors, focusing instead on the importance of wealth and development. My work thus serves as an important corrective in understanding one significant source of instability during electoral processes. Second, my argument has important implications for the burgeoning literature on ethnic conflict and peace processes. In particular, my work emphasizes how difficult and risky it can be to build broadly inclusive military institutions in ethnically politicized contexts. Processes of rebel-military integration in post-ethnic conflict environments, which aim to achieve inclusiveness under the toughest of circumstances, may thus also lead to military interventions. Finally, I will make the case for constructing merit-based military institutions despite the difficulty and the risks involved. Not only are they normatively desirable in multi-ethnic societies, but, in the long-term, they may be the only way to move beyond the dynamics of instability that, I argue, derive from the creation of ethnic armies.

7.1 Democratization and Democratic Consolidation

My work significantly contributes to the growing literature on democratization. My findings demonstrate that the tendency of African leaders to construct ethnic armies in the past directly threatens contemporary efforts to democratize. With few exceptions, the existing literature on democratization and democratic consolidation has largely ignored military coups as a substantial threat to democratic processes.

John F. Clark’s 2007 article, “The Decline of the African Military Coup,” is an important exception. He argues that political liberalization diminishes military intervention in African domestic politics since democratization increases government legitimacy. His case study evidence, however,
Paralleling past statistical studies on military coups, as described in Chapter 2, cross-national, econometric studies on democratization have also failed to move beyond ethnic diversity and fractionalization measures. These scholars thereby also discount the explanatory potential of ethnic politics and find that development, and the wealth it generates, is “what makes democracies endure.”

My data, however, demonstrate that military coups pose a substantial threat to democratic consolidation in Africa: Nearly 40% of electoral transfers of executive power have been overthrown by their own militaries. Even more power transitions have been blocked by militaries either before elections could be held, as in Guinea-Bissau, or after their results were in, but prior to any meaningful transition (see discussion below on Bratton and van de Walle’s work).

My argument suggests that the history of civil-military relations, and particularly of the propensity for African leaders to build “ethnic armies” is behind this danger to democratization. Where the former leader ensured military loyalty by tying soldiers to the state through shared identity and ethnically-based patronage, leadership transitions become particularly dangerous. Electoral politics in highly diverse, multi-ethnic societies will often bring a new leader to power who does not share the same identity as the past leader (the one who created the ethnic army). When this occurs, the ethnically stacked officer corps has every reason to fear restructuring and the loss of their power and privilege. At the very least, the new leader will wish to create more balanced security institutions; at the worst, they will attempt to construct a new ethnic army from their own co-ethnics. Either way, restructuring (or even its mere potential) poses a threat to the officers of these “ethnic armies”—who fear the coming reforms that will displace them. They often react by either blocking the power transition or attempting to seize power once the new leadership begins (or even just threatens) military restructuring.

points to the fact that many liberalizing African states (nine of 21 by his count) still struggle deeply with (often repetitive) coup attempts.

7See especially Londregan and Poole 1996; and Przeworski et al. 1996.

8For data, see Chapter 4.
Both statistical and case study evidence support this argument. When the ethnic identity of the chief executive changed via electoral means, the risk of a coup attempt increased substantially—by an average of 50.3 percentage points. This translates into a coup risk of under 10% when power changes hands between leaders of the same ethnic group, as opposed to a coup risk of roughly 60% when those leaders come from different groups. In Cameroon, a country that had achieved stability through ethnic matching of civil and military authority, a coup was attempted when the independence leader retired and elections confirmed the appointment of a new, ethnically different, President. Moreover, the perpetrators of that coup were co-ethnics of the first President and wished to restore him to power.

Evidence from Kenya also supports the theory that past ethnic stacking leads to military reactivity after leadership transitions. Post-independence political power in Kenya fell into the hands of Jomo Kenyatta (a Kikuyu) and the Kikuyu and Luo dominated KANU party. They inherited an ethnically fractured society with a military dominated by politically marginalized ethnic groups, particularly the Kamba and Kalenjin. Recruitment into the colonial forces, the King’s African Rifles, had followed British “Martial Race Doctrine”—a belief that certain ethnic groups were more suited to military discipline and armed combat than other groups. In Kenya, this led to extensive, selective recruitment along ethnic lines, with most soldiers being drawn from the Kamba and Kalenjin tribes. The Kikuyu were considered too politically unreliable, too educated, and too non-martial to serve and were actively discouraged from enlistment (although the exigencies of World War II allowed some to enter the service as rank-and-file soldiers). Even as the British were beginning to prepare the army for eventual transfer to an independent Kenyan government, they barred the Kikuyu wholesale from officer training.

That the military establishment was dominated by a hostile ethnic group and its allies was, undoubtedly, disturbing to the new government. Indeed, the Kikuyu-

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9Keegan 1983, 336-337.
10Parsons 1999, 110.
Kalenjin cleavage was already extremely tense with a recognizable potential for violence. Even prior to independence, disputes between the two groups over land and the potential resettlement of the “White Highlands” in the Rift Valley had already led to the stockpiling of armaments by both sides.\textsuperscript{11}

Kenyatta thus sought, quite immediately, to alter this situation, a choice that very well could have been disastrous. Kenyatta was, however, very clever in his restructuring of the military and took full advantage of the British protection afforded to him: In the first few years of independence, British homeland units remained stationed in the country and seconded British personnel continued to officer the highest military ranks of the new Kenyan Rifles.\textsuperscript{12} First, Kenyatta refrained from immediately purging other groups from the army. Instead, he built up the paramilitary General Service Unit, which operated under the police command structure, as a counterweight to the regular army while at the same time turning it into an all-Kikuyu force (all non-Kikuyu officers were effectively purged by 1966).\textsuperscript{13} Kenyatta then stacked the newly established air force with Luo and Kikuyu soldiers and officers, territorially dispersed the still relatively small army, and made army rapid deployments dependent on the ethnically stacked air force.\textsuperscript{14} Only after these steps had been taken, and beginning in earnest in the early 1970s, did Kenyatta start stacking the army officer corps with Kikuyus, making sure co-ethnics were in key command positions.\textsuperscript{15} Thus, by the mid-1970s, Kenyatta had turned the Kenyan military from an institution with barely any Kikuyu representation to one that was thoroughly Kikuyu dominated.

In 1978, Kenyatta passed away while still occupying the presidency. He was replaced according to procedures outlined in the constitution by his vice-president Daniel arap Moi (a Kalenjin). Almost immediately, Moi began dislodging Kikuyu...
officers from both the police and the military on charges of corruption. Yet, despite his efforts, Moi’s overall transformation of the military establishment remained slow and limited and he was unable to sack many of Kenyatta’s men from top posts. Thus, while certainly threatened by Moi, the Kikuyu officers in the military remained in positions from which they could orchestrate a response even years after his succession to power. Four years after Moi took office, ethnically-based factions in the military finally moved against him. A military coup attempt was made on August 1st, 1982 and was spearheaded by Luo and Kikuyu junior officers and NCOs of the air force and the General Service Unit. The rebels seized the Nairobi Airport, the Voice of Kenya radio station, the telecommunications station, and the post-office. Within a matter of hours, they were put down by loyal sections of the Army and the General Service Unit. Moi was unharmed in the attempt.

These findings on the role that ethnic armies play in destabilizing electoral and other constitutional transfers of executive power build on the observations of Bratton and van de Walle, who begin to explore military dynamics as a threat to electoral processes in a small section of their important 1997 book, Democratic Experiments in Africa. In this section, Bratton and van de Walle analyze why some militaries have intervened during democratic transitions and to what ends—to push democratization forward or to restore autocratic rule. While their sample size is small, and generalizations must be made with caution, the patterns Bratton and van de Walle observe are worthy of note. First, they find military organizations crucial to the ultimate success or failure of liberalization: Where soldiers stepped in to support democratic processes, democracy prevailed; where soldiers moved against democratization, autocracy was restored. Second, they observe that their six cases of anti-democratic military interventions were largely driven by the perceived need

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17 See The East Africa Standard 2004 (March 25).
19 See Bratton and van de Walle 1997, 211-216.
20 Ibid, 211.
to defend the existing patronage system. Third, Bratton and van de Walle find
that a legacy of military interventionism in politics predisposed security forces to
intervene in democratization efforts (whether for or against). Fourth and finally,
they note that a democratic transition was least likely to happen in countries where
the incumbent political leader was the military’s ethnic patron. For example, in
Nigeria, where northern Islamic Hausa-Fulani elites had long dominated the officer
corps, General Abacha (of the same background) refused to step down from power
and allow the democratically elected Abiola (a southern Yoruba) to accede to the
presidency.\footnote{Ibid, 216.}

Taken together, Bratton and van de Walle’s and my work on military inter-
ventionism compel us to think critically about the role that military institutions
play during processes of democratic transition and consolidation. They suggest that
intra-military dynamics—such as the defense of patronage networks and the ten-
sions produced by ethnic factionalism—are critical to understanding when and why
militaries intervene against constitutional governance. Indeed, my work suggests
that many African countries are, in a sense, trapped by their history—that democ-
ratization efforts and movements toward constitutional governance will continue to
be undermined by African militaries so long as such efforts fail to account for the
ethnic dynamics that have long infused civil-military relations.

Yet, these findings also raise unanswered questions: How important is the ethnic
basis of a patronage network to these dynamics? In what circumstances might non-
ethnic patronage structures threaten democratization? What are the relative causal
weights of ethnic tensions (of past violence or ethnic politicization) versus ethnic
patronage to explaining when militaries intervene?
7.2 Ethnic Conflict and Peace-Building

This dissertation contributes to the field of ethnic conflict and peace-building in two significant ways. First, it helps explain the circumstances under which elite in-fighting can lead to political instability and violence, a new direction in the ethnic conflict literature. Second, my work suggests that rebel-military integration, which attempts to construct inclusive national militaries in the aftermath of conflict, will be difficult and potentially destabilizing after ethnic wars.

There is a growing literature on ethnic conflict that understands state institutions, and particularly how they treat identity groups, as central to the “propensity for political identities to become violent.”\(^\text{22}\) Although these works are primarily concerned with insurgency, and not intra-military violence or coups, they often point to the military as a key institution of state power—and that patterns of inclusion in, and exclusion from, the military may have ramifications for different types of political violence. Adekanye as well as Cederman, Wimmer, and Min, for example, argue that exclusion from executive power (including the military) significantly increases the probability of ethnic rebellion.\(^\text{23}\) Work by the latter set of authors also begins to examine elite in-fighting as an important avenue to broader social violence.

My work, which centrally aims to understand patterns of ethnic factionalism within the military and the elite in-fighting it produces, thus contributes to this new direction in the ethnic conflict literature. By more thoroughly understanding intra-military ethnic dynamics, we can then begin to theorize how different contexts produce distinct types of political violence, and how one form of violence may transform into another. Consider the process of constructing an ethnic army from a diverse office corps—what I argue, throughout this project, led in many cases to the development of ethnic coup traps. To push the argument further, initial endeavors

\(^{22}\)Daley 2006, 663. See also Adekanye 1996; Cederman and Girardin 2007; Cederman, Wimmer, and Min 2010; Mamdani 2001; and Wimmer, Cederman and Min 2009.

\(^{23}\)See also Adekanye 1996; Cederman, Wimmer, and Min 2010; and Wimmer, Cederman and Min 2009.
to build an ethnic army may well have increased the short- to medium-term expectation of coups and counter-coups, as ethnic factions within the military vied for power. These struggles over the state and the purges conducted in their aftermath, however, could succeed in narrowing the ethnic basis of the state—if one group was able, through the violence, to obtain both executive power and dominance of the officer corps. In the long run, then, we might then see a decline in intra-military violence and civil-military instability because homogeneity had been achieved. Yet, if the authors cited above are correct, this form of stability would be accompanied by a concurrent rise in the risk of insurgency, as more groups are excluded from state power. Here, then, temporal dynamics transform both the nature and location of ethnic violence—from elite in-fighting within state institutions to an ethnic insurgency fought against an exclusionary state.

Both research agendas, those analyzing military coups and those studying insurgencies, would thus be advanced by such an integration of their underlying logics. We should think more deeply about how the relationships between ethnic groups and important state institutions, such as the chief executive and the military, vary over time and space and how those dynamics generate and transform political violence.

My findings also carry with them grave implications for post-ethnic conflict peace-building. By their very nature, ethnic civil wars intensify the salience of ethnicity and deepen cleavages between groups. In the immediate post-independence era, I have argued that where ethnicity had previously been politicized, building inclusive military institutions led to paths of civic-national instability. Since establishing truly national militaries proved difficult for leaders like Kwame Nkrumah—who were faced with ethnically politicized societies but minimal previous inter-ethnic violence—then doing so after an ethnically divisive civil war should be a monumentally challenging and dangerous task. Particularly where government and insurgent armies committed atrocities by targeting each other on the basis of ethnic identity, soldiers will find it all the more difficult to cooperate within national military in-
stitutions. Security dilemma dynamics will lead officers to fear future domination of the state and army by an opposing ethnic group, who could then use these instruments of power for purposes of discrimination and further violence. In these circumstances, civilian leaders in charge of the executive branch have strong incentives to consolidate their own power, and improve their security, by restructuring military institutions along ethnic lines. This, in turn, creates incentives for out-group officers to abandon the peace process and seize power in order to prevent their future undoing.

Consider the following brief, illustrative example. A Hutu rebellion broke out in Burundi in 1993 against a Tutsi dominated state and army. Over the next seven years, an estimated 200,000 Burundians lost their lives to military battles, reprisals against civilians, and inter-communal violence. Peace talks finally proved fruitful in 2000, resulting in the Arusha Accords, which were signed by the government and the majority of the rebel groups. The most contentious component of the agreement was its stipulation for the integration of Hutu rebel soldiers into the national military (from which Hutus had long been excluded). The rank-and-file were to be split 50-50, and the officer corps 60-40, between Tutsis and Hutus. Officer integration, however, proved unacceptable to military hard-liners—who initially blocked the incorporation of Hutus into their ranks and then, when the civilian government tried to push the policy forward, staged two failed coup attempts. It took the intervention of a U.N. mission, as well as seconded foreign officers from Belgium and the Netherlands, to restore political stability and resume implementation of the peace accords. Burundi’s experience emphasizes that understanding how an existing officer corps may react to the construction of a new, nationally representative army should be a vital consideration in designing peace processes.

My findings throughout this project also suggest that the civil-military dynamics that can undermine post-conflict stability ought to be even more severe when

\[24\text{Daley 2006, 658 and 675; Ngaruko and Nkurunziza 2000, 376-380; Uvin 1999, 259.}\]
democratization is central to the peace-building process. Elections in post-conflict environments—as opposed to less democratic power-sharing mechanisms such as rotating presidencies or equal division of ministries—usually involve the transformation of rebel groups into political parties. Where violence fell along ethnic cleavages, these political parties will also likely fall along ethnic lines. This, in turn, increases the probability that elections will turn into ethnic censuses—allowing one faction to capture the state through internationally legitimized means. An ethnic group who could not win militarily may thus succeed in “winning the peace,” providing them an opportunity to purge state institutions of other groups as if they had prevailed during the war. This possibility, both during and after elections, would only heighten the fears and insecurities of soldiers.

Such considerations are particularly relevant given the international communities’ growing interest in bringing civil wars to a negotiated end by drawing up settlements that include both military integration and democratization. Indeed, since 2000, 53% of peace agreements (20 of 38) have included provisions for the integration of rebel soldiers into national armies.\footnote{Derived from Table 1 in Derouen et al. 2009, 373-379.} Frequently, military assistance missions or peace keepers are deployed to assist with this integration process, which may allay fears in the short-term and avoid destabilization (as foreign military protection did in many countries upon decolonization). Such missions should be aware, however, that their departure removes an important buffer and that, to prevent subsequent destabilization, safeguards must be created to prevent an ethnic group from capturing executive power and using it to restructure the military.
7.3 The Case For Merit-Based Military Institutions

Given the highly multi-ethnic character of African societies, we can and should strive toward the normative ideal of constitutional politics that allow for the rotation of power between individuals and groups of different identities. The alternative is an ethnic state that indefinitely excludes large proportions of the population from power. Ethnic armies are anathema to this vision. By their very nature, they support an exclusionary, ethnic state. Stability achieved upon these grounds thus fails to meet other important standards of justice and equity. A different principle of military loyalty and organization is necessary to achieve a normatively desirable system of governance. An inclusionary vision of the military, one based on principles of civic-nationalism and grounded in merit-based recruitment and promotion policies, rather than on identity, is required.

Such inclusionary principles may also best ensure long-term political stability and peace. As previously discussed, scholarly work on ethnic rebellion and violence has found compelling evidence that exclusion from important state institutions motivates ethnic groups to rebel. A corollary argument is that inclusion may also be necessary to bring these insurgencies to an end: If ethnic groups have rebelled due to exclusion, then redressing this grievance during peace processes may be required to convince rebels to lay down their arms and rejoin the state. My work also finds that leaders who chose civic-nationalism as a basis for military loyalty, even in difficult contexts where ethnicity was highly salient and already politicized, faced a lower risk of military coups than those who chose to recruit their co-ethnics into the officer corps. Entrenched merit systems may convince officers that their livelihoods and security, both now and in the distant future, are determined by criteria other than their identity. Merit systems may thus overcome officers’ fears of political change (the possibility of other ethnic groups capturing the state) as well as diminish their incentives to seize power on behalf of their own group. There are thus several reasons
to think that, even if dangerous in the short-term, the restructuring of ethnic armies serves to promote long-term peace and stability.

Given that inclusive and diverse military institutions are normatively desirable and arguably necessary to support democratic institutions, what can be done to help them take root and flourish? The greatest hurdle exists in countries where ethnic armies are already entrenched—where restructuring onto a different principle of military loyalty is necessary but destabilizing. Indeed, my work should, if anything, emphasize the difficulty and danger involved in transforming an ethnically stacked military into a broadly inclusive institution where rank, privileges, and compensation are based on merit rather than identity. Dismantling ethnic patronage networks directly threatens officers with the capability to put a violent halt to reform efforts.

The international community has the capacity to play a pivotal role in helping countries to make the initial conversion to merit-based security institutions. In the short-term, as states transition from authoritarian rule, ethnically stacked armies, or war, direct protection from peacekeeping forces or monitoring teams shield struggling civilian governments, while they restructure their militaries and extricate themselves from historic systems of ethnic patronage. Outside forces can act as neutral arbiters—and early warning systems—as previously excluded ethnic groups are integrated into the national military, isolating and discouraging hard-liners who would otherwise seize power. The initial phases of integration, when new groups have entered the military in small numbers that can still easily be sidelined or purged by the remaining majority, is arguably the most dangerous phase of integration. Direct protection can help countries successfully overcome this first obstacle.

Of course, this strategy of assistance relies on the willingness of host governments to accept protective foreign forces, as well as on the resources and political will of the international community to deploy them. Sovereignty norms and domestic politics may prohibit international military assistance in many countries. Limits to international resources may also prevent deployment to those who request help. But
where we have already agreed to send peacekeepers or monitoring teams, particularly in the aftermath of ethnic conflict, incorporating the concerns I have outlined here into (now routine) security sector reform programs can only help.

Second, just as in the civil service, merit-based promotion and recruitment systems require training and resources. Military academies must be bolstered, their curriculums often overhauled, performance indicators developed, entrance and advancement tests designed and administered, promotion boards funded, and adequate pay scales implemented. How to create these various systems that reinforce merit-based advancement is not intuitive to institutions that have long operated by other norms. Foreign military training and education teams, which are currently routinely deployed by the U.S., Britain, and others around the world to teach short courses or help with reform, could assist further in this domain.

Establishing such merit-based military institutions is a necessary first step, but only by entrenching them—such that future governments who may have an interest in recreating ethnic armies cannot so tamper with the military—will the security dilemma dynamics that often prompt military intervention realistically dissipate. Entrenchment will also reduce the incentives for officers to seize power, aggressively, on behalf of an ethnic faction. There would be no point to the power grab if they could not then restructure the state to privilege themselves and build powerful co-ethnic military units to protect that system of privilege.

Yet, entrenchment may prove exceedingly difficult in countries without long-established political systems that promote the rule of law and checks on executive power. The inability of politicians to tamper at-will with promotion and recruitment policies lies at the heart of true entrenchment. And where neither judges nor a more socially representative legislature can stop the executive branch from infringing on current law, a merit-based system could easily be undone.

Unfortunately, the international community has limited abilities to protect merit-based systems over time and to influence their entrenchment. As cases from the
immediate post-independence period show, foreign protection must usually depart before sufficient time has passed for officers to feel confident in the permanency of diverse military institutions. Particularly in ethnically tense environments, and where political competition has a markedly ethnic character, fears of the future may still dominate when peacekeepers leave. And without a physical presence in the country, the international community can only have an impact insofar as they can influence the rational calculus of actors through normative persuasion or, more realistically, financial incentives. By making it more costly to tamper with military recruitment and promotion policies, they may be able to discourage governments from doing so.

One possibility is to tie military aid, training, and equipment to the protection and maintenance of merit-based institutions. Leaders now and in the future might then think more carefully before undermining those institutions. Another possibility is to suspend military aid in the aftermath of a coup attempt, as is currently being tried with development aid in Africa. Such actions may exert a mitigating effect on the strategic calculations of domestic military actors—giving them a reason to stay out of politics.

There are several reasons, however, to think that conditioning aid will fail to be feasible or effective. First, conditioning military aid on the character of promotion and recruitment policies may run counter to other strategic interests. For the Western governments that both have an interest in promoting stable democracy, and the ability to condition their existing aid, the importance of key alliances and anti-terrorism cooperation may, in some cases, trump political stabilization and the promotion of inclusive democracy. Many of the African countries most in need of this type of help, however, are marginal to great power security concerns. Second, conditioning military and other types of aid is likely to become increasingly ineffective as sources of aid diversify. If China or Russia are willing to compensate for
the loss of Western aid (say, in order to access natural resources), without imposing conditions, then the West loses its leverage.

Finally, the international community is currently suspending development aid after coup attempts with apparently little effect. Fear of such consequences did not stop the recent coups in either Guinea-Bissau or Niger despite the credibility of the threat (aid was halted in both cases). The following pattern seems to have emerged: The military seizes power; millions of dollars in aid are suspended; the coupists then appoint a transitional civilian leader, schedule elections, and retreat to the barracks; the aid ban is lifted. The way the development community conditions aid may be diminishing the incentives for militaries to govern without having a substantial effect on the initial decision to depose a regime. When the civilian government threatens an ethnic patronage network in the military, the cost of seizing power (the short-term loss of aid) may simply not be great enough to outweigh the benefits of ridding themselves of a threatening regime (or preventing it from coming to power in the first place). Moreover, officers can minimize the costs of intervention by quickly handing over power to civilians (prompting the restoration of aid) and allowing elections to potentially bring in a friendly regime—all the while preserving their ability to stage another coup in the event of an undesirable outcome. There are thus formidable limitations to what international actors can do, particularly from afar, to protect merit-based security institutions and prevent military intervention.

Inclusive, merit-based military institutions are normatively desirable, supportive of multi-ethnic democracy, and potentially necessary for lasting peace and stability. They are also difficult and dangerous to construct in the aftermath of civil war and where past leaders have built powerful ethnic armies. The international community can do much to help willing governments to reform security institutions in the short-term, particularly where peacekeepers or monitors have already been deployed. They can serve as neutral arbiters and protect civilian governments as they dismantle ethnic patronage networks. They can also offer training and educational assistance in
the mechanics of running a merit-based army. There are severe limitations, however, to what outsiders can do to help entrench merit-based security institutions over the long-run. This is an ordeal that must be grappled with domestically. And, as with most valuable endeavors, military restructuring will be difficult and full of set-backs. It is, however, an integral part of the process of democratic transformation. It should accompany, and will be reinforced by, reforms that establish the rule of law and place checks on executive power. Despite the dangers, an inclusive military is worth the struggle.
## Appendix I: Data on Military Loyalty Choices and Constraints

<table>
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<th>Coup Attempts (20yrs)</th>
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245


