

**Colonialism's Deadly Legacy:
Ethnic Conflict in Sub-Saharan Africa**
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Romeo Dallaire led a small UN peace keeping contingent based in Rwanda while, over a period of three months in the spring of 1994, a band of ethnic Hutus took to the streets and the countryside with all manner of makeshift weapons in order to slaughter nearly a million Tutsi— a group with whom they had shared land, tradition, and kinship for generations. Dallaire described with gruesome detail as “My force was standing knee-deep in mutilated bodies, surrounded by the guttural moans of dying people, looking into the eyes of children bleeding to death. . . I found myself walking through villages where. . . all the people were dead. . .”¹

The trickle of news in from the African continent has consistently recalled these far too familiar stories of ethnic conflict, with terms like “tribal warfare” and “genocide” dominating the headlines. Although many such conflicts never reach the level of the Rwandan incident, in terms of the body count or the level of international exposure, an unquestionably troubling pattern of ethnic violence has enveloped Sub-Saharan Africa since its various nations were pronounced independent, during the period of rapid decolonization after World War II. The myriad of complex issues faced by African states have a common cause in the pervasive ethnic conflicts that have racked the region, as “the quest for development, self-reliance, unity, stability, peace and progress in Africa has been consistently undermined by . . . the potency of ethnicity.”² But the emergence of conflicts labeled “ethnic” are troubling in their own right, as the millions of dead and tens of millions of displaced Africans clearly evidence. The hatred of another’s group severe enough to justify their mass murder cannot be dismissed as a random product of a few

variables, nor as an eternal condition of humanity. Rather, the answers to questions of modern African ethnic violence have very distinct and specific origins that can be traced to the period of colonial subjugation by European powers, and the legacies of colonial rule and decolonization.

The various studies of African ethnic identity up to this point can be loosely classified into three different subsets, based on their interpretation of the concept of ethnicity. The first represents the prevailing European opinion during the period of colonization, which is dominated by the belief that Africans represent a lower rung on the human racial hierarchy and are condemned to an eternal cycle of conflict and subjugation due to their underlying “primitiveness.” Such reasoning represents, at best, thinly veiled racism, and was used to justify the brutal oppression of African peoples before, during and after the colonial period. While this first category of work can be dismissed immediately as illegitimate, uninformed, and thoroughly disproved, the second body of work holds far more sway with modern audiences. The second viewpoint, often labeled ethnic “primordialism,” reasons that ethnicity is a relatively permanent undercurrent in the establishment of group identities, and the compositions, biases, traditions, and locations of ethnic groups are unlikely to evolve much over time.³ This view is discussed by Robert Jackson and Carl Rosberg, who assert that “It is probably impossible permanently to repress moralistic ethnicity by, for example, responding to all ethnic claims by instrumental policies and measures.”⁴ The third competing viewpoint, sometimes referred to as ethnic “instrumentalism,” argues for the existence of a more malleable concept of ethnicity that can evolve on its own, or be manipulated by outsiders, by such “instrumental policies and measures.”⁵ Bruce Berman counters the traditional

assumptions surrounding a static definition of ethnicity by arguing that “The differentiation between ethnic groups has no necessary connection with language, culture or political organization . . . groups may simultaneously become more similar in culture and more concerned with demarcating their distinctiveness.” The ethnic implications within the colonial framework are characterized by the belief that “Ethnic identities in such contexts can be consciously manipulated and invested in economic and political competition.”⁶ In regards to Sub-Saharan Africa, these authors argue that modern ethnic identities were largely shaped during the colonial period, with a particular emphasis on both the tactics used by the colonizer to subdue native populations, and the imposition of artificial political boundaries during decolonization, resulting in the conceptualization of the nation-state.

This paper diverges from these prominent theories, as it will argue that not only is the “primordialist” viewpoint entirely inapplicable to African societies, but that subscribers to the “instrumentalist” theory are prone to incorrectly identify the features of colonial rule which are truly responsible for modern ethnic conflicts. More precisely, there are significant flaws to be found in the prevalent discourse arguing that artificially imposed borders from the colonial period are the sole cause of ethnic conflict. The truly harmful legacies of colonialism are characterized by the false assumptions made by Europeans concerning African tribalism, their purposeful manipulation of ethnic ties with the intention of maintaining and legitimizing colonial networks of governance, and the African response to, and dependence on, these networks. This paper will begin by describing the pre-colonial African condition, which should dissolve the ground claimed by academics in favor of a “primordialist” description of ethnic histories. Next, I will

discuss the specific colonial beliefs and practices responsible for the formation and crystallization of ethnicity as a concept interlaced with attitudes of violence and power. At the same time, this evidence will be used to refute some of the more prevalent, yet often misinformed, interpretations of ethnic conflict and colonialism stemming from the “instrumentalist” view. In other words, I will identify those elements of ethnic violence commonly attributed to a certain aspect of the colonial condition that are largely misrepresented. And finally, I will trace these colonial practices to their present conclusions, and show why post-colonial Africa has become bogged down in some of the worst ethnic violence the world has ever witnessed.

Nigeria represents the preeminent example of the divisive, multi-ethnic African state, highlighted by the attempted secession of the Ibo group in Biafra Province, on the grounds that they possessed irrevocable ethnic differences from the two largest Nigerian ethnic groups, the Hausa and Fulani. Death tolls approached one million during the years from 1967-1970, as a population that had no established identity or title prior to their exposure to colonial rule was willing to accept an enormous rate of death and displacement in defense of a common Ibo identity.⁷ The remainder of this paper will attempt to answer the question posed by the Ibo, and countless other African societies. That is, what factors motivated and pressured a population to evolve from a lifestyle characterized by the absence of an overarching ethnic definition, to one where the name “Ibo” came to be identified with pride, destruction, power, and war?

Despite the prevailing viewpoint shared by the vast majority of Western observers, African conflicts do not necessarily have ancient “tribal” causes, and cannot simply be dismissed as the products of inevitable disputes between “uncivilized” cultures

and communities. The very concept of ethnicity was described and acted upon far differently in pre-colonial Africa than it is today – differences which will highlight the painful changes wrought by the colonial period. While violent conflict was undoubtedly present, if not highly prevalent, in pre-colonial African societies, the idea of a group of culturally similar peoples attempting to establish a unique identity, or crush the identity of another, was almost completely foreign. The persistent declarations of their innate differences today cannot obscure the fact that Ibo, Kalenjin, Kikuyu, Sukuma, and Luba are just a few of the labels that were either non-existent, or only applicable to a loosely bound group of people, prior to European contact. To the extent that they were present, “Tribal confederations often fought each other as much as they did other people.”⁸ This can largely be explained by the fact that “Among people living in segmentary, stateless societies, collective identities were quite fragmented along age or lineage lines and did not lead to the crystallization of larger ethnic groups.”⁹ This is not to imply that Africans embraced a sort of primitively peaceful communal lifestyle akin to the “noble savage” represented in Western literature, but simply to argue that the conceptualization of ethnicity that is behind so many modern African conflicts was relatively unformed and unimportant in the minds of most Africans prior to colonization. The same generalization can be made about tribal identification, as the term “tribe” has evolved into a mere synonym for ethnicity that carries an implication of primitiveness. The word itself was never even used in political or cultural discourse prior to the early colonial era, when it was applied by Europeans as a means to segregate and control different groups of people they deemed as “racially” distinct.¹⁰

The evolution of terminology applied to African peoples is merely a

representation of the more tangible effects of colonial rule as it differentiated, cemented, and even created the conflicting ethnic identities that characterize modern Africa. Since colonization was prefaced by the use of force, that is the invasion, subjugation, and control of a previously autonomous region, the beliefs of the group applying the force generally dictated the social patterns present in the subservient colonies. Without exception, Europeans presupposed that Africans were a tribal people who identified with a single chieftain, usually local to the village unit. Regardless of their motives, and in spite of the diverse types of social organization that confronted regional colonial administrators, the same template of a homogenous tribal unit under the control of an autocratic chieftain was assumed and forcibly applied. According to David Welsh, even in instances “Where colonized societies had known no indigenous chieftainship, such as the Kikuyu, the British, believing that all African people *must* have chiefs, created chiefs and endowed them with minor bureaucratic functions.”¹¹ In some instances, this intervention may have been the product of humane, yet extremely naive, colonial administrators, military commanders, or even missionaries who genuinely believed they were helping the indigenous populations to preserve their traditional lifestyle by rounding them up into tribes and communicating with them through an appointed chieftain. But on a larger, and eventually more permanent scale, the tribal structure became the primary apparatus for extending oppressive colonial rule into the interior rural sections of the continent.

To paranoid white settlers and profit seeking colonial bureaucrats, tribal demarcations became the chosen method of dividing and controlling millions of people across a vast expanse of land, since regional chiefs could be manipulated by European

colonizers to maintain order and subservience on a localized basis. To the European, the question most central to the colonial dilemma was how a small contingent of foreigners could possibly hope to maintain an authoritarian grip on millions of native citizens and their resources. Nowhere was this issue more readily apparent than in Sub-Saharan Africa, where, with the exception of few white dominions like South Africa, direct European domination was limited to a handful of urban centers with barely a few thousand permanent white residents in each colony. Bill Berkeley describes the European mechanism for coping with this disparity: “Tribalism solved the colonial dilemma of how to dominate and exploit vast numbers of indigenous inhabitants with a limited number of colonial agents, by mobilizing groups on the basis of linguistic and cultural similarities that formerly had been irrelevant.”¹² In well defined instances such as Kenya, a strict form of segregation was imposed on native Africans, granting each tribe a territorial region, and strictly forbidding inter-tribal contact.¹³ In local cultural leaders and kinship elders, colonial administrators found the ideal mechanism for establishing their presence and enabling their rapid rise to power on a grassroots level. By enlisting existing chiefs, or bestowing that title upon a selected individual, and awarding them with regional control, the colonizer effectively extended foreign rule into distant rural areas.

Critics will likely argue that an alliance between colonial bureaucrats and a few African “Big Men”¹⁴ are unable to permanently mold contentious ethnic identities among the vast majority of African citizens, who lacked consistent and direct contact with white settlers. Though initially an instrument of the colonizer, tribalism rapidly evolved into a tool of the masses, and thus reinforced the initial tendency toward the solidification of ethnic divides. Because, at its most fundamental level, colonialism was instituted to

monopolize the economic resources of a given area, local citizens became dependent on colonial authorities to grant them even the most basic means of subsistence. In other words, the tribal chieftain and his territorially defined system of ethnicity gained instant legitimacy, since he alone had the power to petition the state and distribute basic resources on any meaningful level. Bruce Berman reasons that this is why “Peasant rights to land and other resources increasingly came to depend on their ability to sustain claims to kin, client and ethnic affiliations . . . that led to competition and conflict between ethnic communities for access to the benefits of colonialism and to patronage resources.”¹⁵ Additionally, the system of “Big Men” was highly effective because it channeled harshly foreign demands through locally familiar rhetoric. Through manipulating regional politics and drawing on cultural and spiritual leaders to serve as local chieftains “The imperatives of control . . . derive[d] a degree of legitimacy from association with ‘traditional’ social forces.”¹⁶ So as a result of creative European policies, and a small contingent of Africans eager for power and approval, ethnicity rapidly rose to prominence as the defining form of identification within African societies.

Beyond the establishment of ethnic identities, the fermentation of ethnic hostilities also served an important role in establishing and furthering the modes of colonial control. As the pressure of being outnumbered on foreign soil mounted, white settlers needed to temper and redirect growing hostilities among subjugated natives. By highlighting and manipulating their ethnic differences, Europeans were able to preempt the formation of African nationalism, and isolate any potentially revolutionary ideas.¹⁷ The “divide and rule” tactic was by no means exclusive to Sub-Saharan Africa, but its impacts were undoubtedly deeper and more permanent than in other regions subjected to

colonization. Due to the lack of modern development, urbanization, and effective means of communication across rural areas that characterized colonial Africa, it became particularly feasible to restrict cross-cultural contact, while generating ethnic divides and restraining unifying tendencies.

The perception that Africans were exclusively a tribal people was deeply couched in the racist undertones of European colonialism, which uniformly viewed native subjects as “primitive.” But within the European system of tribal classifications, there were enormous preferences for one “tribe” over another, leading to the construction of a hierarchical social structure on a level that most Africans had not previously experienced. Physical attributes, as well as hastily drawn generalizations about language, culture, and tradition, became the most common criteria for labeling groups, and deciding which tribe should be given the spoils of colonial rule, and which should bear the brunt of colonial oppression. The disturbing violence in Rwanda has prompted several authors to examine the deep ethnic inequalities established by the hierarchical politics of the colonial period, regarding what the Belgian colonizers viewed as the different “races” of the Rwandan region. Koigi Wa Wamwere recounts several typical descriptions from the colonial period:

A Mutwa had ‘a monkey-like flat face and a huge nose . . . quite similar to the apes who he chases in the forest,’ while the Hutu were ‘generally short and thick-set with a big head, a jovial expression, a wide nose and enormous lips . . . extroverts who like to laugh and lead a simple life.’ At the top of the ladder, the ethnic superiority of the Tutsi was confirmed . . . ‘His features are very fine: a high brow, thin nose, and fine lips framing beautiful shining teeth. Batutsi women are usually lighter skinned . . . Gifted with a vivacious intelligence, the Tutsi displays a refinement of feelings which is rare among primitive people. He is a natural-born leader.’¹⁸

As a result of these starkly racist convictions, the Tutsi were exclusively granted bureaucratic positions, land, and educational opportunities, and continued to hold political sway over far larger populations of Hutu and Twa – at least until these “jovial

extroverts” retaliated against the colonial legacy of Tutsi power in 1994. Mahmood Mamdani discusses how policy decisions during the colonial period converted this rhetoric from inflammatory language into ethnic differentiation, as the Belgians “Issued official identities confirming every individual as Hutu or Tutsi, thereby seeking to naturalize a constructed political difference between Hutu and Tutsi as a legislated racial difference. After the 1933 census. . .for the first time in the history of the state of Rwanda, the identities ‘Hutu’ and ‘Tutsi’ held permanently.”¹⁹

Due to similar mindsets and policies propagated by colonialists across the continent, ethnic rifts gradually developed into the defining feature of African social, political, economic and military interactions. However, this is not to imply that every feature of colonialism has a modern ramification in terms of ethnic conflict. It is also highly important to recognize the nuances of the argument in order to avoid many of the generalizations that have pervaded Western views toward African conflicts. Proponents of the broadly drawn “instrumentalist” theory tend to assume that every facet of the colonial lifestyle has a direct correlation with the ethnically divisive behavior defining the modern history of the continent. Even among authors who do not deal with the ethnic question directly, there is currently an overwhelming trend to blame Africa’s problems on political boundaries that were hastily imposed by colonial powers, with no real regard for the ethnic composition of a given area. Emmanuel Amadife and James Warhola typify the prevailing assumption that “Conflicts are likely to arise over a number of matters, among which the most significant is the manner in which the African nation-states’ boundaries were established in the first place.”²⁰ Proponents of this theory are prone to support the rapidly expanding movement in favor of reconstituting political boundaries

based on ethnic territorial divisions. But while the methods of colonial rule irrevocably altered ethnic realities across Sub-Saharan Africa, improvised artificial borders are not a primary cause of ethnic turmoil, as is so commonly suggested.

This argument is most effectively refuted on an empirical level, since it can be assumed that if an irresponsible and impersonal European pen on the African map is to blame for conflict, then states able to retain their pre-colonial boundaries, as well as seemingly homogenous states, should be relatively free from conflict. From the dozens of African nations conceived during the process of decolonization, only four of them coincided with pre-colonial kingdoms or states.²¹ Two of these, Rwanda and Burundi, have become international symbols of the destructive power of ethnicity in the region. Despite the fact that neither country experienced meaningful ethnic migration or border alteration during the colonial period, the Hutu were guilty of slaughtering nearly a million Tutsi on ethnic grounds in an event unprecedented in the history of the area. This instance of genocide strongly implies some sort of radically meaningful change to ethnic mentalities in the area during the colonial period, but just as clearly denies any substantive link between imperially imposed borders and ethnically inspired killings. Even in states that are apparently ethnically homogenous, the pattern of seemingly minor ethnic differences translating into large scale disputes has become evident. For example, the Tswana compose the vast majority of Botswana's population, and have dominated its government since independence, but the nation's seemingly solid foundations have started to crack as the Ngwaketse sub-group has taken issue with the dominant position of the Ngwato sub-group in national politics.²² This evidence clearly points to other factors in the colonial experience, such as the establishment of tribally based patronage networks

and the prevalence of ethnic favoritism, which are responsible for current ethnic conflicts in a manner far more significant and complex than those who point to artificially imposed borders tend to realize.

Those who do advocate reversing the damage wrought by colonialism by piecing together pre-colonial boundaries, or instating uni-ethnic nations, have far too often found themselves in direct contradiction with uniform historical trends. Not only would a repartition of Africa fail to ameliorate ongoing ethnic disputes, it would only serve to further entrench underlying ethnic hatred. The practice of dividing peoples based on ethnic affiliation would mimic the processes responsible for the formation of “tribal” networks during the colonial era, which we have seen to be the primary cause of modern ethnic disturbances. Such an alteration to the African geographical landscape would likely result in horrific wars between two or more ethnically homogenous states, in lieu of the current trend of intra-national conflict involving multiple ethnic groups within a country, or across porous international borders. This scenario would add an explosive measure of nationalistic pride to already heated ethnic tensions, without an experienced or legitimized leadership to prevent international ethnic warfare. While recognizing the national sovereignty of an ethnic minority has brokered peace talks in the Balkans, and seems necessary in the Caucasus and the Middle East, the distinct set of circumstances stemming from Africa’s colonial history must be considered in devising solutions to ongoing conflicts. The assumption that ethnic wars are always liberation movements must be reconsidered, as “Africa, unlike Europe, has bred only one state through secession since colonial days: Eritrea, which divorced from Ethiopia . . . but had been a separate state, under Italian rule, before the second world war.”²³ The only instance

where Africa's political boundaries were reconstituted occurred "Not from a redrawing of colonial boundaries, but from a return to them" leading to the conclusion that "Partition, were it even desirable, would be the messiest and bloodiest of affairs."²⁴

Now with a more precise understanding of the aspects of colonial rule that have fostered modern ethnic conflicts, and a refutation of the misconceptions that pervade mainstream Western opinion, as well as much topic specific literature, we can examine the implications of ethnic politics from decolonization up to the present. While the formal means of colonial control began to wither away in the second half of the 20th century, African ethnic consolidation only intensified, spawning a deadly trend of "tribal" conflict in Sub-Saharan Africa. Europeans had a tendency to abandon their power even more quickly than they had constructed it, which meant that Africans had to find a way to adapt to the nation-state model of governance, while trying to cope with social and economic structures that were remnants of the colonial era. After independence, the ethnic identities that had been constructed and crystallized during the past century came into direct conflict as "Parallel to the struggle between the Africans and the European colonial power, another struggle was conducted among the Africans themselves on which group, or coalition of groups, would achieve control."²⁵ In these clashes between Africans during, and just after, their various independence movements, ethnicity became the primary rallying point from both a conceptual and a practical standpoint. Since the entire concept of ethnicity has been shown to be fairly theoretical and easily imposed, it is not at all surprising that ethnic labels from the colonial period took root even after the previous rulers had fled the continent. In the same way that the great-grandchild of an Italian immigrant to the United States may consider herself ethnically American, and

demonstrate a willingness to fight and die for traditional American values, most Africans had become fairly entrenched in their relatively new ethnic identities. On a more practical level, ethnicity continued to be the only institution linking the people to the state, and the only point of access to basic resources, as the patronage networks built around regional “Big Men” continued unimpeded.²⁶ This caused groups to fragment on a regionally divided ethnic basis in their respective efforts to fill the vacuum of power left by fleeing colonial nations, and to compete over scarce resources in a subsistence economy with a strong recent history of top-down patronage networks.

The men who became most prominent in post-colonial African regimes were, not surprisingly, the natives who had been active in the colonial administration as regional administrators, usually under the auspices of a tribal “chieftain.” With the vast majority of Africans destitute, landless, and uneducated, it was highly unlikely that any sort of populist candidate would emerge from the masses to replace the seasoned and well established “Big Men.” As Africa was exposed to the nation-state and some semblance of Western democracy for the first time, a struggle for national power took place that “Required a rapid mobilization of support, especially of voting power that could most effectively be delivered by traditional authorities along ethnic lines.”²⁷ With this, the vicious cycle of African power politics, and its enduring connection with ethnicity ensued. The leader of the group in a dominant position in national politics relied on his ethnic base as the most reliable means of political support; a base which he carefully cultivated by distributing a disproportionate number of resources and bureaucratic positions to his home area. Opposition groups were severely marginalized from positions of power, motivating additional appeals to ethnic unity among downtrodden and minority

groups, and a resort to ethnically motivated violence with startling frequency.

The reliance on ethnic rhetoric is maintained by the individuals and groups who benefited the most from the European conception of tribalism— the same individuals and groups who inherited dominant positions in the post-colonial state. In many regions, certain groups were vaunted into positions of dominance because white settlers labeled them as “racially” superior, just as select families were given a tremendous amount of power through land, bureaucratic appointments, and a Western education. Bruce Berman articulates the processes behind continuity in the ethnic dynamics of post-colonial

African politics:

The dominant discourses of ethnicity came from those groups who gained the most from colonialism. . .and interpreted tradition to justify their gains and maintain control. . .the colonial power structure of bureaucratic authoritarianism and clientelism has continued essentially unchanged, especially the structures of rural control and collaboration between the state apparatus and local strong men. The nationalist regimes that came to power at independence. . .chose not only to rely upon the existing apparatus, including the prefectural field administration immediately over the tribal authorities, but also to extend and intensify colonial modes of domination and surplus administration.²⁸

The political turmoil that has engulfed African states since their independence has only served to further strengthen ethnic linkages and tightly bound patronage networks. Ineffective leaders have felt both internal and international scrutiny, prompting them to withdraw even deeper into tribal kinship ties, as the only relationships they can trust personally or politically. With ethnic conflict present on some level in nearly every African nation, dominant power-holding groups resort to authoritarian measures to quash ethnic dissent, and disband coalition or multi-ethnic government’s for fear that a rival group is plotting a violent political maneuver. Bill Berkeley emphasizes the international pressures involved in further solidifying ethnic ties when “the predatory nature of postcolonial or ‘neocolonial’ states provoke self-defense by means of kinship ties and

their bureaucratic equivalents.”²⁹ This is the challenge particular to ethnic conflicts, since not only are they deeply entrenched in traditional disputes, and personally relevant to entire populations, but they are also self-reinforcing because they tend to benefit the powerful elites furthering the conflict, while forcing the same elites to appeal to regional and ethnic bonds in order to maintain their position.

At this point, there can be little doubt that the construction of ethnically fragmented societies during the colonial period has had a significant impact on modern African ethnic conflicts – an impact that has been profoundly negative, and at least partly responsible for the multitude of difficulties experienced by post-colonial African states. As time passes, Africa continues to pose even more troubling and complex questions. Why did Romeo Dallaire’s UN peacekeeping force suddenly find itself wandering through Rwandan villages where every single person had been indiscriminately murdered? Why did a group of people with no history of ethnic solidarity and identification wage a four year war where as many as a million lives were lost in the name of Ibo unity and independence? This essay has attempted to provide the short answers to these questions, by examining their roots in the colonial period, and their ramifications in the post-colonial world. The long answers, of course, are much more complex and multi-dimensional whenever the questions are directed toward the enigmatic African continent. Yet the answers provided lead only to the conclusion that European colonialists thought in strict tribal terms, and sought to impose ethnically divisive policies on diverse African groups in order to establish and maintain the colonial structure of absolute control. This condition has only solidified since independence, making the cycle of ethnic violence enveloping Africa no less horrific, but certainly not altogether

unexpected. In light of the overwhelming negativity which has been cast upon ethnicity as it was conceptualized by European colonialism, perhaps it is best to end on a more positive note— with an African perspective on how ethnicity can be embraced as a means toward a hopeful future, rather than merely the legacy of a violent past. This idea is articulated by Koigi Wa Wamwere, who concludes, “Africa’s different languages, cultures, songs, and histories are politically neutral heritages and assets, not liabilities, to be preserved, developed, and applied to the fight against negative ethnicity, as they are currently used to promote the disease.”³⁰

Notes:

1. Samantha Power, “Bystanders to Genocide,” *The Atlantic Monthly*, September 2001; Available from <http://www.ess.uwe.ac.uk/rwanda/rwanda1.htm>; Internet; Accessed 30 November 2004. The cited portion is from an interview the author conducted with Col. Dallaire, and published as a first-hand account within the article.
2. Julius O. Ihonvbere, “The ‘Irrelevant’ State, Ethnicity, and the Quest for Nationhood in Africa,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 17, no. 1 (1994): p.50. (Database citation available on works cited page).
3. The work of Clifford Geertz is often cited as the standard for this body of literature.
4. Robert H. Jackson and Carl G. Rosberg, “Popular Legitimacy in African Multi-Ethnic States,” *Journal of Modern African Studies*, vol. 22, no. 2 (1984): p.178. (Database citation available on works cited page).
5. Two of the more notably innovative and influential authors that fall under this label are Crawford Young and Leroy Vail.
6. Bruce J. Berman, “Ethnicity, Patronage and the African State: The Politics of Uncivil Nationalism,” *African Affairs*, vol. 97, no. 388 (1998): p. 328. (Database citation available on works cited page).
7. (No Author Given), “Redrawing Africa’s Borders,” *The Economist*, vol. 332, no. 7880 (1994):p. 16. (Database citation available on works cited page); David Welsh, “Ethnicity in Sub-Saharan Africa,” *International Affairs*, vol. 72, no. 3 (1996): p. 481. (Database citation available on works cited page).
8. Victor Azarya, “Ethnicity and Conflict Management in Post-Colonial Africa,” *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, vol. 9, no. 3 (2003): p.10. (Database citation available on works cited page).
9. *Ibid.*, 10.
10. Bill Berkeley, “Race, Tribe, and Power in the Heart of Africa,” *World Policy Journal*, vol. 18, no. 1 (2001): p.83. (Database citation available on works cited page). For an interesting commentary on the discursive implications of tribal rhetoric, see Koigi Wa Wamwere, *Negative Ethnicity* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2003), 20-21.

11. Welsh, 479.
12. Berkeley, 83.
13. Berman, 321
14. The term “Big Man” has become highly prevalent in modern discussions of African politics. Perhaps it is best understood as a modern adaptation of what Western readers affiliate with the term “chieftain” in a discussion of African tribalism— a dominant and militant patriarchal figure with unquestionable power. These rulers garner authority from their affiliation with traditional ethnic politics, and usually govern states characterized by corruption, nepotism, a powerful military, and little regard for democratic institutions, economic stability or the rule of law.
15. Berman, 317, 329.
16. *Ibid.*, 315.
17. *Ibid.*, 315, 317-318.
18. Wa Wamwere, 57-58.
19. Mahmood Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 2001), 101.
20. Emmanuel N. Amadife and James M. Warhola, “Africa’s Political Boundaries: Colonial Cartography, the OAU, and the Advisability of Ethno-Nationalist Adjustment,” *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society*, vol. 6, no. 4 (1993), p. 534. (Database citation available on works cited page).
21. *The Economist* (1994), 17; Welsh, 477.
22. Welsh, 488.
23. *The Economist* (1994), 17.
24. *Ibid.*, 17
25. Azarya, 12.
26. Berman, 324.
27. Azarya, 12.
28. Berman, 327, 333.
29. Berkeley, 84. For additional information on why the weakening of the African state has reinforced ethnic politics, see Azarya, 14-15.
30. Wa Wamwere, 24.

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