

The Political Economy of Nation Formation in Modern Tanzania:
Explaining Stability in the Face of Diversity

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Abstract: *Tanzania's success in nation formation and ethnic conflict prevention is a striking refutation of the prevalence of state failure across post-colonial Africa. However, the Tanzanian case has heretofore never been examined in comparative perspective. Here I review the existing set of literature claiming to explain Tanzanian exceptionalism – focusing in particular on ethnic diversity, nation-building and ethnic conflict management policies, and the Swahili language – and find it lacking. Instead I argue that Tanzania's low and equitable endowments of labour and capital have greatly aided her subsequent political stability and nation formation. In particular I show that such endowments have prevented the rise of large-scale inter-regional inequalities which have driven state failure elsewhere in Africa. I also examine the counterfactual case of Zanzibar, which adds further support to my argument. I conclude that processes of demographic change and economic development have played much more a role in ethnic conflict prevention in Tanzania than has been previously recognized.*

1. Introduction

Not surprisingly, ethnic conflict management has long been a focus for scholars of Africa given the continent's unusually large amount of ethnic diversity and high levels of violent conflict. While there have been voluminous attempts to explain Africa's most prominent ethnic conflicts such as in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, and Sudan, among many others, there have been remarkably few attempts to understand why some African states have failed to succumb to ethnic violence. These counterfactuals, or 'dogs who fail to bark' in Gellner (2006 [1983]: 42)'s phrase, allow us to examine in more detail the causal mechanisms behind the outbreak of ethnic conflict in some parts of Africa and not in others.

Here I examine the case of Tanzania, where both political stability and a strong and durable sense of national identity have developed since independence despite continued high levels of ethnic diversity and poverty. I show that Tanzania's strong sense of national identity has little to do with institutional factors but rather much more to do with its lack of interregional capital and labour inequalities. More specifically, I develop an analytical narrative of modern Tanzanian economic

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and political development which demonstrates the role of low and equitable population densities and capital endowments in Tanzanian nation formation. In other words, the Tanzanian case suggests that ethnic conflict management theory could benefit from greater attention to demographic factors as a major cause in the outbreak of civil violence.

This paper is organized as follows. First, I introduce the Tanzanian case study in an analytical narrative that traces nation formation from the 19th century to the present. Second, I develop a neo-Gellnerian theory of nationalism and demonstrate how it helps to explain political instability across various African conflicts. Third, I critique three alternative theories of Tanzanian exceptionalism, both of which I find lacking, and also examine the counterfactual case study of Zanzibar which provides further strength for my argument. Finally, I conclude.

2. An Analytical Narrative of Nation Formation in Modern Tanzania

Tanzania's political stability is legendary within Africa. It has never suffered any civil wars, coup d'états or violent national elections, and has had regular presidential and parliamentary elections every five years since independence. Tanzania has thus failed to succumb to the violent conflict that has affected five of its eight neighbours – namely Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, the DRC and Mozambique – with a six, Kenya, no stranger to electoral violence and ethnic riots.²

Perhaps more markedly, however, Tanzania also differs from most African states in the way it has arguably developed a coherent sense of national identity, perhaps uniquely in Africa. Already by 1976 Young (1976: 11, 216) could write of Tanzania's 'remarkable success in moulding from its diversity an integrative national culture' and 'the high order of affective attachment to the Tanzanian polity.' More recently Hastings (1997: 165) has argued that 'Tanzania may well present the best model for a healthy merging of small ethnicities into something fairly describable as a nation,' while Miguel (2004) has argued with micro-quantitative data that nation-building has been demonstrably more successful in bringing together ethnically diverse communities in Tanzania than in Kenya. Moreover, evidence suggests that the political and economic liberalization of the 1980s and 1990s has not disintegrated the Tanzanian nation-state as it has in other parts of Africa

² Among African states, only the DRC and Mali have had more neighbors (seven each) fall into civil war than Tanzania.

(Bates, 2008; Boone, 2007). Indeed, when asked the survey question of 'which specific group do you feel you belong to first and foremost' by the Afrobarometer group in 2001, only 3% of Tanzanians answered with their ethnic group, compared to 31% in Nigeria, 40% in Mali, 42% in South Africa and 62% in Namibia (Eifert et al., 2010: 508).

There has been a good deal of debate about why Tanzania has been so exceptional, with many explanations centred on ethnicity, ideology and language (to which we return below). In the rest of this section I thus provide a brief analytical narrative of Tanzanian national development before interpreting it in the following section.

2.1. Colonial Tanzania³

Tanzania on the eve of colonization was marked by low levels of capital and labour. As in the rest of Africa, population density and capital investment were very low (Austin, 2008), with the two certainly linked inasmuch as farmers would practice extensive rather than intensive agriculture and thus generally avoid creating fixed capital. Capital in the form of natural capital or mineral wealth existed in the form of iron and gold, but was in both cases dispersed throughout Tanzania and not present in unusually large quantities (Iliffe, 1978).

As regards population density, even within Africa Tanzania had one of the lowest population densities per square kilometre of potentially arable or cultivable land in 1900, as can be seen in Table 1. Indeed, according to one British colonial official in 1888, 'the dearth of native labour, which must prove a serious difficulty in developing Eastern Tropical Africa, exists universally both among its pastoral and agricultural tribes' (Partridge, 1995: 163), with 'a want of population existing almost throughout the fertile and healthy upland regions between the coast and the great lakes of Central Africa' (Partridge, 1995: 165). Another British official similarly claimed in 1899 that 'labourers, as a matter of fact, are so very scarce on the Tanganyikan Plateau that the greatest difficulty is found in forwarding from [Lake] Nyasa to [Lake] Tanganyika the large amount of material which now passes' (Partridge, 1995: 123).

The origins of this unusually low population density are most likely due to three factors, namely slavery, disease prevalence and violence. As regards slavery, Tanzania lost more than

³ For the sake of simplicity I refer here to colonial Tanganyika as Tanzania.

500,000 inhabitants to the Indian Ocean slave trade in the 19th century, or more than twice as much as any other country (Nunn, 2008: 152). Following the slave traders were the European colonialists, who helped spread cholera, smallpox, sleeping sickness and other diseases in the inland areas which had previously had no contact with non-Africans. In particular the German colonialists who established the colony of German East Africa in 1885 directly contributed to a declining population by disrupting patronage and trade patterns that led to population dispersion and by killing off some one-third of the local population in suppressing the Maji-Maji uprising in southern Tanzania in 1905 (Iliffe, 1978). Venereal disease, several major famines and other similar events meant that colonial Tanzania probably reached a population nadir around 1930, and possibly even later (Berry, 1994).

[Insert Table 1 here]

Within Tanzania there was also an unusually even population dispersion compared to other large African states. This even spread of population was probably due in part to geographical factors such as a relatively even spread of cultivable land throughout the territory. Historical factors also played a role, particularly local efforts to avoid both slave traders in the pre-colonial period and German taxes and labour demands in the colonial period by dispersing away from villages and towns, despite German efforts to establish minimum population sizes per village (Iliffe, 1978: 166). Perhaps the most important factor, however, was the profound impact of Germany's loss in World War I and the subsequent division of German East Africa between Belgium, which received Rwanda and Burundi, and the UK, which received the rest of the territory. Table 2 makes clear Tanzania's unusually even population dispersion by examining the sub-national variation in population density across other large African states; a large standard deviation in sub-national population densities (SDPD) thus indicates an uneven population dispersion.⁴ It also lists a reconstituted hypothetical state of German East Africa, which would have had an unusually large concentration of population in its north-west and thus a higher SDPD than most other states.

⁴ This table thus replicates numerically the computer-generated maps of sub-national African population densities in Herbst (2000), Chapter 5.

[Insert Table 2 here]

The loss of more than 1/3 of Tanzania's population to the Belgians obviously only made an already scarce labour supply even scarcer.⁵ As noted by Buell (1928: 429) at the time, 'probably the most important international effect of the establishment of the Belgian mandate over the territory is that the British settlers and planters in Tanganyika are unable to recruit from what otherwise might prove to be a great reservoir of labour.' This was a particular problem for the sisal industry, which was introduced by the Germans in 1893 in and around the coastal city of Tanga and was the world's largest producer from the 1920s until the rise of synthetic fibres in the 1960s. However, throughout this entire period the industry was hampered by labour shortages: in Tanga alone in the 1920s the industry had 25,000 labourers but needed 400,000, with the Labour Commissioner noting that 'demand is, and is likely to remain, in excess of the supply' (Buell, 1928: 506). Yet efforts to get additional labour from Rwanda and Burundi were stymied by Belgium's limits on labour recruitment in Tanzania due to its efforts to encourage migration to the Belgian Congo.⁶ In fact, other infant industries like gold mining and the post-World War II groundnut scheme in south-eastern Tanzania also had problems in recruiting workers, with the Labour Commissioner writing in 1947 that 'the system of supply and distribution of labour hitherto in force is in danger of breaking down and there is a real risk of direct competition developing between the various labour employing industries' (East African Sisal Industry, 1948: 29). In the end, the presence of large amounts of cultivable land gave little incentive for Tanzanians to leave their farms for wage employment, except during periods of famines and food crises.

The colonial partition also only accentuated a lack of capital investment in Tanzania, for two reasons. First, the League of Nations established Tanzania as a League of Nations Mandate Territory rather than a colony, which meant that the UK did not have as free a hand as it did in its other colonies. Specifically, the mandate was clear that the job of the trustee was to prepare its

⁵ Censuses in the 1930s record a combined population of 2.9 million people in Rwanda and Burundi and 5.0 million in Tanzania.

⁶ This migration to the Belgian Congo would later have a very significant impact on the development of post-colonial tensions between migrants and natives in the DRC (Baker, 1970; Green, 2010).

territory for self-government, thus preventing the UK from developing the territory along Kenyan lines. Secondly, Tanzania's late entry into the British Empire meant that it was doomed in its attempts to attract capital investment from London. Indeed, not only had the UK already invested a good deal of fixed capital into Kenya and its other African colonies, but expenditure on World War I left it with very little capital for any of its colonies. Moreover, unlike other formerly deprived colonies like Angola and the Belgian Congo which received large amounts of colonial investment during the post-World War II boom period, Tanzania remained starved of capital through her entire colonial period (Brett, 1973).

The result of both a lack of capital and labour and a relatively even dispersion of what capital and labour did exist was evident in the particular nature of the anti-colonial movement in Tanzania after World War II. In colonies with unequally distributed capital and labour the late colonial period foreshadowed Africa's future conflicts by pitting those areas with more capital investment against other areas. Insipient anti-colonial political parties like ABAKO (in the Belgian Congo), NCNC (Nigeria), NUP (Sudan), PDCI (Côte d'Ivoire) and UNC (Uganda), among others, coalesced around high-human capital populations, leading other political parties to form in opposition to the previous ones. Divisions over centralism vs. federalism, industrial/urban vs. agricultural/rural investment, and nationalization vs. privatization of land ownership all grew out of the differing sources of support for these parties. However, Tanzania, with its relatively even dispersal of labour and capital, saw no such divisions, and the common threat of European settler appropriation alongside constant British efforts to improve agricultural productivity united Tanzanian farmers in support of the colony's first political party, the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU), and its leader, Julius Nyerere. Indeed, Tanzania's lack of 'regional separatist movements and only rudimentary class and political divisions... permitted a rather unusually cohesive and integrated leadership to come to the fore' (Hoskyns, 1968: 449).

2.2. Independent Tanzania

TANU and its leader, Julius Nyerere, therefore emerged as the dominant political party by the time of independence in 1961, with very little electoral competition; as a result there was

considerably little protest upon Nyerere's decision to make Tanzania a one-party state in 1963. This lack of opposition allowed Nyerere to implement such policies as the abolition of tribal chieftainships and the nationalization of land ownership, before the political union with Zanzibar in 1965 drove Nyerere and TANU even further to the left ideologically. In 1967 Nyerere released his Arusha Declaration of 1967, which announced a new focus on *ujamaa* (Swahili for 'familyhood') and 'African socialism.' Concretely this shift meant the nationalization of property, including foreign corporations, and the creation of collective villages along Soviet lines. As regards the former, the result of a lack of capital investment over the colonial and immediate post-colonial periods meant that 'there was not that much foreign capital to nationalize in the first place (Hydén, 1980: 97). The latter was essentially an effort to improve the low levels of agricultural productivity that were a result of Tanzania's low population density. Yet even forced villagization in the mid-1970s failed to 'capture' the peasantry in the new *ujamaa* villages, in large part because there remained enough cultivable land to which farmers could escape. Indeed, as Hydén (1980: 25) wrote at the time, 'as long as labour rather than land is the real scarce resource, officials will have difficulty in exercising power over the peasants.'

The failures of villagization to increase or even maintain agricultural production along with a serious drought in 1974, increases in global oil prices and a brief war with Uganda sent Tanzania into dire economic straits by the early 1980s. In response Nyerere thus abandoned his socialist development policies by liberalizing trade, cutting food subsidies, lifting import restrictions and either privatizing or liquidating wasteful parastatals. The effect of these reforms was to bring in a large increase in foreign investment and a slight decrease in the percentage of people living in poverty, but they failed to halt an increase in the absolute number of poor households as well as a decline in Tanzania's absolute and relative position in the Human Development Index (HDI) since 1990, when the HDI was first compiled.⁷

Yet, unlike other African countries where economic crisis has led to violence and conflict, responses in Tanzania have been muted. Despite encouragement from Nyerere to open up political space, the strong presence of the CCM in rural areas led 80% of Tanzanian Mainlanders

⁷ In 1990 Tanzania was ranked 95th out of 130 states (73rd percentile), while in 2010 it was 148th out of 169 states (88th percentile).

to voice support for the one-party system in the late 1980s (Presidential Commission on Single-Party or Multi-Party System in Tanzania, 1992: 8), and the subsequent return to multi-party rule in 1995 has seen no change in CCM dominance on the mainland. One of the main reasons for this stability is the continued abundance of land despite high population growth rates until the 1990s. Indeed, with only 5.2% of its potentially arable land in use (FAO, 2000: 101), Tanzania still has considerable amounts of potentially arable land. Thus, inasmuch as population growth and migration have led to conflicts over land in such areas as Darfur and the eastern DRC (Green, 2010), Tanzania's land abundance has meant that her politics have been much more peaceful than elsewhere.

3. Interpretation

As is clear from this narrative one of the striking facts about modern Tanzania is its continued low population density and even dispersion of its population. The theoretical mechanism linking this Tanzania's demography to its nation formation and political stability, however, remains obscure. Here we introduce a revised version of Gellner's famous account of the origins of nationalism before examining alternative explanations for Tanzanian nation formation, all of which I find wanting.

3.1. A Neo-Gellnerian Theory of Nation Formation

Ernest Gellner's famous theory of nationalism not only describes the formation of new national identities but the destruction of old states, in particular through secession. It is best illustrated with his model of the peasant society of Ruritania, a poor constituent part of the Empire of Megalomania whose inhabitants spoke a number of mutually intelligible dialects unrelated to the imperial court language. Gellner's story begins when 'a population explosion occurred at the same time as certain other areas of the Empire of Megalomania – but not Ruritania – rapidly industrialized' (Gellner 2006 [1983]: 58). Due to the needs of industrial society for an educated and culturally homogenous workforce, Megalomanians were quickly divided between those who could assimilate into the newly dominant culture and those – including the Ruritanians – who could not assimilate due to 'genetically transmitted or deeply ingrained religious-cultural habits [which]

are impossible or difficult to drop' (Gellner, 2006 [1983]: 45). Due to the migration of Ruritarians to the newly industrialized areas, the cultural differences between Ruritarians and non-Ruritarians became stark and obvious for the first time. Thus Ruritanian intellectuals reacted by developing a common ideology of nationalism, and, with support from the Ruritanian peasants, the end result was a common Ruritanian identity and the political independence of Ruritania.

Gellner's model brilliantly uses the interaction between sub-national inequalities and industrialization to explain the creation of new national identities, ethnic conflict and state failure in Megalomania. However, his model can be critiqued and supplemented in two ways. First, Gellner focuses on how education and cultural differentiation separate Ruritarians from other Megalomanians due to the need to explain why the poor members of the Megalomanian core did not develop their own separatist nationalism. While perhaps valid in Europe where newly dominant cultures were built on a pre-existing core culture, this point is less valid in former colonies where governments have generally not encouraged cultural homogenization and whatever dominant cultures have developed owe as much to former colonial powers as to any indigenous ethnic groups (especially as regards language and religion). Gellner's theory, however, holds more traction in the developing world if we define the Megalomanian core not through culture but through industrialization itself: the poor of the Megalomanian core are more advantaged because they live in an industrializing area which provides greater job opportunities and higher land values than the peripherally-located Ruritarians, whose only value lies in their labour. Thus the core Megalomanians have few incentives to rebel, regardless of their culture; the Ruritarians, on the other hand, face discrimination and low wages and thus have lower opportunity costs for rebellion. Put in another way, Megalomania's core-periphery differences explain the emergence of Ruritanian nationalism, inasmuch as Ruritania is relatively rich in labour while the industrial areas to which Ruritarians migrate are rich in capital (and possibly land as well).

Second, Gellner posits that cultural homogenization imposed by industrialization is the driving force behind the differentiation between Ruritarians and non-Ruritarians. Yet it is by no means clear that industrialization necessarily requires cultural homogenization (Breuilly, 2006: xxxiv-xxxvi). A more plausible story emerges if we instead emphasize the way that industrialization divides society increasingly along ethnic rather than class lines, which in turn increases the

potential for ethnic conflict. More specifically, we can assume that pre-industrial Megalomanian society was differentiated along vertical class lines rather than lateral ethnic divisions, whereby the political interests of peasants were stymied by both the collective action problems of organization across thinly populated areas and their high opportunity costs in obtaining resources necessary for rebellion (Esteban and Ray, 2008: 2186). Industrialization, however, inevitably involves uneven capital investment due to the necessity of creating fixed capital (Harvey, 1982), which then subsequently not only encourages the growth of income inequality through urbanization and the resultant larger inequalities in urban than rural areas but also through increasing inequalities between rural and urban areas (Kuznets, 1955). Both of these types of inequalities increase divisions between Ruritarians and other Megalomanians, as Ruritarians form a disproportionate part of the urban underclass and Ruritania is less urbanized than the Megalomanian core.

Thus industrialization and modernity more generally involves the supersession of Megalomania's vertical class divisions by lateral ethno-regional divisions (Mann, 2005: 5), leading to greater opportunities for ethnic/nationalist rebellion in two ways. First, the higher population densities that were a result of both Gellner's 'population explosion' and the migration to industrial areas encourage greater collective action among Ruritarians.⁸ Second, the interests of the Ruritanian poor become allied with their rich co-ethnics rather than the poor from other ethnic groups, thereby encouraging an effective division of labour where rich Ruritarians contribute their capital and poor Ruritarians contribute their abundant labour (Esteban and Ray, 2008: 2186). By disaggregating Ruritarians by class and emphasizing the increasing incentives for ethnic conflict we can avoid Laitin (1998: 245)'s criticism that Gellner's model is too functionalist and denies human agency.

3.2. Comparative Evidence

If we now return to the empirical evidence we can now see how this theory helps us understand why Tanzania has avoided nationalist secession and civil war unlike so many other African countries. More specifically, we can easily substitute the African state for Megalomania

⁸ The link between urbanization and collective action is also part of the basis behind Bates (1981)'s famous explanation for 'urban bias' and poor agricultural policies in post-colonial Africa.

and a peripheral ethnic group for the Ruritanians, a simultaneous population explosion and focus on large-scale industrialization (from the 1920s through the 1970s), and the emergence of subsequent interregional or 'horizontal' inequalities which then play a major role in the breakdown of stability and the outbreak of violent conflict (Stewart, 2000; Van de Walle, 2009). Finally, with a few notable exceptions we can also largely substitute civil wars and violent national politics for secessionist movements, inasmuch as post-colonial norms have discouraged secession in Africa in favour of struggles over state power and resources (Englebert, 2009).

Indeed, the empirical evidence from Africa supporting this theory is rich. For instance, Østby et al. (2009) show robust links between interregional inequalities and civil war, while global data on ethno-political inequalities also suggests a strong link with civil war (Cederman et al., 2010). More qualitative work has also suggested a strong link between unequal capital and labour endowments and migration on the one hand and the outbreak of civil wars on the other hand. For instance, in late colonial Angola the Portuguese invested in the creation of coffee plantations in the Bakongo-dominated north while drawing Ovimbundu labour from the highly-density central highlands. By the 1960s Angola had thus become the world's fourth-largest coffee producer but low wages led to uprisings among Ovimbundu migrants, reprisals involving the massacre of hundreds of Ovimbundu in 1961 and the subsequent creation by Ovimbundu elite of the *União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola* (UNITA). Thus by the time oil replaced coffee as Angola's primary export in 1973 the roots for the subsequent post-independence civil war between UNITA, the largely Bakongo FNLA and the Luanda-based MPLA had already long been sown (Newitt, 2008).

Similarly, south-eastern Nigeria enjoyed disproportionately high population densities in the colonial period, thereby leading to migration to the more industrial areas of western Nigeria and the subsequent formation of an Igbo ethnic identity. Dominance by southerners at the national level led northern politicians to promote secession from Nigeria far before the discovery of oil; in fact, anger at the lack of northern secession may have been a key reason behind a series of massacres of thousands of Igbo migrants in Northern Nigeria in 1966 (Nixon, 1972). Thus, while it was the discovery of oil in south-eastern Nigeria which made secession viable, the interregional conflict

which culminated in the Biafran civil war had as much or more to do with uneven labour endowments and migration than with oil.

There are, moreover, numerous examples in Africa of the role of unequally distributed capital and labour in the breakdown of political stability that have no relationship with mineral resources. In colonial Uganda capital investment took place in the south, where the economy was focused on the production of cotton and coffee for export markets, while the north became used as a labour reservoir for planters and the Ugandan army. As a result the north-south divide became the major fault line of Ugandan politics, with the civil wars in central Uganda in the early 1980s and in northern Uganda since the late 1980s thus born out of the perception that one half of the country had access to power at the expense of the other half (Stewart, 2000: 254-255). Another example comes from Côte d'Ivoire, which was considered up through the 1980s one of the most successful cases of industrialization in Africa based on the strength of its southern cocoa and coffee producers. However, this industrialization was built on large-scale labour migration from both northern Côte d'Ivoire and surrounding countries, and the dual factors of a declining economy and the death of President Houphouët-Boigny halted the ability of rulers in Abidjan to ease regional tensions, which led both to the creation of new ethnic/regional identities – *Ivoirité* in the South and a new concept of a 'Grand North' – and the outbreak of civil war in 2002 (Boone, 2007).

4. Alternative Explanations for Tanzanian Nation Formation

All of these examples demonstrate how the unequal distribution of capital and labour leads to ethnic conflict and civil war through the mechanisms outlined in my neo-Gellnerian theory. The theory also helps to explain how Tanzania avoided ethnic conflict through its unusually even dispersion of capital and labour. What remains, however, is to analyze whether this theory provides a better explanation for Tanzanian nation formation than alternative theories. Thus in this section I examine three other popular explanations, all of which I find wanting; I then discuss Tanzania's Zanzibar region, long the most conflict-ridden part of the country, and show that only my theory explains its exceptional character.

4.1. Ethnic Diversity

Despite a literature suggesting the drawbacks of ethnic fractionalization, some have noted how extreme ethnic heterogeneity in countries like Tanzania and India might be helpful rather than harmful. More specifically, in their analysis of civil war Collier and Hoeffler (1998) find a quadratic relationship between ethnic fractionalization and civil wars, whereby extreme homogeneity and heterogeneity are negatively correlated with the duration of civil war violence. The theoretical explanation for why heterogeneity is so safe – that the existence of multiple ethnic groups poses a barrier to the collective action necessary to form a coherent rebel group – would seem to apply to nation formation as well inasmuch as there would be no one group could dominate the other, either on its own or in a small coalition. Indeed, from outside Africa this is the argument most used for why Papua New Guinea has similarly been able to maintain a functioning democracy despite its extreme heterogeneity (Reilly, 2001). Certainly Tanzania is one of the world's most ethnically fractionalized countries, as noted in Table 3; this argument would thus seem to have some traction here. Indeed, the 1967 census, which was the last to ask Tanzanians their ethnic identity, counted a total of 125 ethnic groups with more than 1000 members (Government of Tanzania, 1969).

[Insert Table 3 here]

However, the evidence for this theory is shaky, with many scholars finding a linear rather than a quadratic relationship between ethnic fractionalization and civil war (Easterly, 2001; Buhaug, 2006). Indeed, a closer examination of the other countries in Table 3 indicates that, with the one exception of India, all of them have had severe political turmoil. The DRC, Liberia, Uganda and the Republic of Congo have all experienced civil wars, military rule and large scale ethnic massacres; Madagascar has twice narrowly avoided civil wars in 1975 and 2002 and has ongoing political conflict; and Cameroon has seen continued political divisions between its Francophone majority and Anglophone minority. In fact, Papua New Guinea, despite its functioning democracy, still suffered from a long civil war in its Bougainville province and continues to suffer from large amounts of local-level ethnic conflict (Reilly, 2001: 176). Ethnic fractionalization obviously did not help these countries maintain stability.

Instead there is evidence that ethnic fractionalization may be more of a consequence of Tanzania's factor endowments than a cause of nation formation. Michalopoulos (2008) finds that diversity in land quality and elevation is significantly and positively correlated with ethnic fractionalization, a result which could be explained by the propensity for ethnic groups to develop 'location specific human capital [which thus] diminishes population mobility and leads to the creation of localized ethnicities.' Moreover, Michalopoulos (2008) shows as well a significant inverse correlation between historical population densities and ethnic fractionalization, possibly because low densities inhibit the large trading networks that can lead to the creation of larger ethnolinguistic groups. Tanzania's high ethnic diversity is also a consequence of its large geographic size, which itself was a result of its low pre-colonial population density as colonialists tried to save bureaucratic costs by constructing large colonies in under-populated areas (Green, 2012). Finally and perhaps most importantly, the poor economic growth that was a result of low level of capital and labour may have also prevented the formation of larger ethnic groups in Tanzania, in that the consolidation of ethno-national identities as described by Gellner did not take place due to a lack of industrial development.

4.2. The Enforcement of Swahili Language Policies

Perhaps the most common argument given in the literature for the development of a common Tanzanian identity is the promotion of the Swahili language (Miguel, 2004; Hastings, 1997; Young, 1976; Collier, 2009; Eifert et al., 2010). The pre-colonial slave trade helped to introduce Swahili throughout the territory, while British and German colonial rulers both directly and indirectly promoted Swahili as well. After independence Nyerere's government mandated Swahili as the official language of government and medium of instruction in primary schools in 1967, and created a National Swahili Council to promote its use outside the public sphere; Nyerere also famously translated several of Shakespeare's plays into Swahili himself. As a result Swahili has become one of the few indigenous national languages among Africa's linguistically heterogeneous states.

However, it is not evident that the promotion of Swahili in and of itself created a sense of nationhood in Tanzania, for two reasons. First, on a comparative level a common *lingua franca* is

neither necessary or sufficient to promote nationhood. In the former case, the examples of Switzerland and Canada, among others, point to the ways in which multi-lingual nations can form as 'civic nations' centred around democratic norms. As per the latter, dominant national languages failed to halt the bloody civil wars of Burundi, Rwanda and Somalia. Indeed, in Sierra Leone the local Krio language is now spoken by up to 95% of the population despite being the first language of only 10% of the population and a lack of government recognition (Oyètádé and Luke, 2008: 135); yet its ubiquity failed to halt one of Africa's bloodiest civil wars.

Second, as with ethnicity it is possible that Nyerere's ability to promote Swahili was more a consequence of Tanzania's low population density than a cause of nation formation. Indeed, Nyerere's promotion of Swahili was largely non-controversial in part because low population densities inhibited collective action among those resistant to Swahili but also because the language was not associated with a rich ethnic group or region. Here is again fruitful to contrast Tanzania with other African countries. In Ethiopia Emperor Haile Selassie promoted Amharic as the sole official language from 1943, even going so far as to ban literature in other languages; yet the end result was merely to promote virulent opposition among non-Amharic speakers (Bulcha, 1997). In contrast, President Mobutu failed to promote a single African language in the DRC/Zaire, despite his obvious preference for Lingala, inasmuch as doing so would undoubtedly have angered Tshiluba and Swahili speakers, among others (Hunt-Johnson, 1986). Thus the Swahili language itself does not seem to explain the formation of Tanzania nationhood.

4.3. Nation-Building and Institutional Ethnic Conflict Management

Many scholars have argued that the formation of the Tanzania nation is a result of Nyerere's commitment to fight tribalism whereby he 'forcefully downplayed the role of ethnic affiliation in public life and instead emphasized a single Tanzanian national identity' (Miguel, 2004: 337). For instance, Nyerere relocated the capital of Tanzania from the coast city of Dar es Salaam to the more centrally-located Dodoma in 1973, an act that 'clearly demonstrated his larger purpose of moving beyond inherited localized identities' (Collier, 2009: 67). Moreover, he also banned tribal unions and the mention of ethnic groups in newspapers, created a one-party state and stopped collecting information on ethnic identity in national censuses (Tripp, 1999). Finally, Nyerere

promoted national identity through the school curriculum, in particular through his emphasis on *siasa* (political education); in a 1973 Form 6 exam, for example, students were required to answer such questions as 'discipline is a prerequisite of nation building. Comment on this with respect to Tanzania at present.'⁹

This school of argument has much in common with the broader literature on nation-building and institutional ethnic conflict management summarized by Wolff (2011). Indeed, as shown by Wolff (2011) a focus on proportional job allocation and power-sharing, among other policies, has long been considered essential in alleviating Africa's numerous ethnic conflicts. Yet there is evidence that these policies have been neither necessary nor sufficient for ethnic conflict management in Tanzania. For instance, proportional public sector job allocation was not evident under Nyerere's government, in that there were numerous accusations that his regime was biased in hiring too many citizens from his own Lake Zone region and not enough from Tanzania's Muslim plurality, who were (and still are) underrepresented across all levels of education and government (Tripp, 1999).

Moreover, Nyerere was not the only leader in post-colonial Africa to embrace the aforementioned nation-building policies. Other countries like Côte d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Malawi and Nigeria also moved their capital cities to more central locations, itself a form of power-sharing, while many altered their primary school curricula to better promote national integration. In Ghana the NRC regime similarly banned the word 'tribe' from all government documents and even advocated eliminating tribal names like 'Asante' as surnames as well as tribal facial markings (Chazan, 1982: 464-465). Other countries also stopped asking questions about ethnicity on their censuses: by 2000 only 44% of African countries asked about ethnicity in 2000 compared to 65% in Asia and 83% in the Americas (Morning, 2008: 246). Finally, many leaders across Africa banned opposition parties in (what they claimed) were efforts to reduce political factionalism and unite their countries.

In fact, African leaders implemented a great variety of institutional nation-building policies after independence that even went beyond Nyerere's efforts. In Uganda Milton Obote set up national elections which required candidates to secure a minimum percentage of the vote across

⁹ National Form 6 Examinations 1973, General Paper, page 2.

different parts of the country to ensure that national politicians did not merely have ethnic bases to their support, a plan which was subsequently adopted in Kenya and Nigeria as well. In Guinea President Sékou Touré's government passed a law criminalizing attempts 'to place the interest of one or several men in one specific region of the territory above the imperative of national unity' (Adamolekun, 1976: 127-128), while Houphouët-Boigny's government in Côte d'Ivoire rotated the site of the annual *fête de l'indépendance* to demonstrate its concern for 'balanced national development' (Cohen, 1973: 239). Finally and perhaps most famously, in the DRC President Mobutu attempted to promote a common sense of national identity through his ideology of *authenticité*, his policy of renaming cities, the country and himself with African names, his creation of the *abacost* national dress¹⁰ and his use of the murdered former Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba as a national hero, among other measures (Dunn, 2001).

Yet these institutional nation-building policies often had no serious or long-term effects. Policies promoting ethnic balance led to overstaffing and corruption, while those ethnic groups which had been previously over-represented often revolted against efforts to diminish their power. Some leaders like Obote were assassinated or overthrown before completing their reforms, while others like Houphouët-Boigny and Touré survived only to see their countries devolve into political instability and civil war after they left office. In none of these cases did nation-building produce as coherent a sense of national identity as in Tanzania.

4.4. The Case of Zanzibar

The ethnic conflict management literature has also suggested a strong role for federalism, local government and consociationalism (Wolff, 2011), which is best exemplified in the Tanzanian case with a focus on the Indian Ocean islands of Zanzibar. Since joining the mainland to create Tanzania in 1964 Zanzibar has been a semi-autonomous state with its own President, Council of Ministers and House of Representatives.¹¹ Its ruling party, the Afro-Shirazi Party (ASP), joined TANU to create the CCM party in 1977, which has subsequently ruled over both parts of Tanzania.

¹⁰ From the French '*a bas le costume*,' or 'down with suits.'

¹¹ In this regard it is different from the mainland, which no longer enjoys a separate sub-national government despite a government proposal to create one in 1992 (Presidential Commission on Single-Party or Multi-Party System in Tanzania, 1992).

Finally, the islands enjoy a power-sharing agreement with the mainland that guarantees the allocation of either the Presidency or the Vice-Presidency to Zanzibar at any one time.

However, unlike the rest of Tanzania, Zanzibar has had a tumultuous and violent history with no indication that a coherent and peaceful sense of a common national identity has developed along similar lines as on the mainland. Immediately after independence in January 1964 the Sultan of Zanzibar was overthrown in a revolution which led to the violent deaths of hundreds of Arabs before the country was unified with Tanganyika in April 1964. While Zanzibar has been henceforth ruled by the ASP and CCM, the re-introduction of multi-party politics led to significant support for the opposition Civic United Front (CUF), which refused to recognize the Zanzibari government after winning almost half the vote in the disputed elections of 1995. The subsequent election in 2000 led to more deaths proportionally than have ever died in a single election in either Kenya or Uganda.¹² This unrest has been echoed at the national level by tensions between Zanzibar and the mainland, with accusations from the mainland that power-sharing agreement over the Presidency and Vice-Presidency gives the islands undue influence, and from Zanzibar that the Union government has taken control over such issues as natural resources without any consultation and that the unofficial agreement that the presidency of Tanzania would alternate between a Mainlander and a Zanzibari was broken with the election of the Mainlander Jakaya Kikwete in 2005 (Brents, 2004; Rawlence, 2005).

Clearly, then, Zanzibar is not at peace internally or in relation to the mainland, and its high levels of violence does not suggest a strong amount of national identity. Yet the alternative policy-focussed hypotheses listed above fail to explain Zanzibar's separate development. Ethnic diversity, while lower than mainland Tanzania, is still higher than other conflict-prone countries like Eritrea and Guinea and is considerably distant from the most dangerous level of diversity according to Collier and Hoeffler (1998). Secondly, despite being indigenous to the islands and universally spoken on them, Swahili has not helped to bring Zanzibaris together. Finally, the power-sharing agreements between Zanzibar and the mainland and the islands' autonomy arrangements have similarly failed to promote ethnic conflict management.

¹² Around 40 people were killed in Zanzibar's election violence in 2000-01, or the equivalent of about 1400 deaths in a country the size of Kenya. Numbers vary, but the typical estimate of Kenya's 2007-08 election violence is around 1000 deaths.

Instead, what makes Zanzibar different from mainland Tanzania is its different capital and labour ratios. Whereas in mainland Tanzania labour has been scarce and land has been abundant, the opposite has been true in Zanzibar, due in large part to being the centre of the East African slave trade in the decades before colonization. The Arabs who settled there developed infrastructural capital in the form of large coconut and clove plantations, while capital accumulation came from the intercontinental trade in slavery and agricultural commodities. In other words, politics in Zanzibar developed along 'settler' Arab and 'native' African/Shirazi lines not unlike parts of the Sahel and Saharan regions.¹³ This divide meant that political parties developed in Zanzibar along the lines seen elsewhere in Africa, with the Zanzibar Nationalist Party drawing support from the richer Arab community while the ASP drew more support from the African/Shirazi and trade unionist, peasant and squatter populations. Thus the development of economic inequalities between Arabs and Africans and conflict over the small amount of land available per capita in Zanzibar has been the basis for Zanzibar's long history of ethnic conflict since the colonial period.

5. Conclusion

In this paper I examined the exceptional case of nation formation in Tanzania, and demonstrated that Tanzania's low and evenly dispersed labour and capital endowments explained its unusually strong political stability and national identity. I then developed a neo-Gellnerian theory of nationalism, where interregional inequalities lead to political instability and conflict. I have shown that the theory helps to explain the failures of nation-building in most parts of Africa and success in Tanzania. Finally, I then examined three alternative theories for Tanzanian nation formation and found them lacking, especially in light of the political instability and failures of ethnic conflict management in Zanzibar.

There are three conclusions which we can draw here. First, the paper helps to resolve a paradox about the Tanzanian state, namely its supposedly simultaneous strength and weakness. Specifically, Hydén (1980) and others have described the inability of the Tanzanian state to reach

¹³ Ironically, the 'indigenous' inhabitants of Zanzibar initially adopted the name of the small number of Persian immigrants – the Shirazi – to distinguish themselves from both mainland African immigrants and Arabs. However, as the economic gulf between land-owning Arabs (and Asians) and landless Africans and Shirazis grew over time, the African and Shirazi groups have merged both politically and culturally (Brents, 2004).

the vast majority of its own citizens who worked as farmers, captured in the famous phrase 'the uncaptured peasantry.'¹⁴ However, scholars have also praised Nyerere and other Tanzanian leaders for the way they were able to create a strong sense of Tanzanian nationalism through a variety of government policies, including the 'complete overhaul' of local government, the 'aggressive employment' of the public school curriculum, and the 'forceful downplaying' of ethnicity (Miguel, 2004: 335-337). This ability of the Tanzanian state to be both weak and strong at the same time becomes clearer when we recall that Tanzania never developed any significant inter-regional or inter-ethnic inequalities and its citizens were uniquely weak at confronting state policies due to the collective action problems inherent in a widely dispersed and poor population. Thus the Tanzanian state has been able to implement nation-building policies while simultaneously remaining weak at promoting economic development policies. In other words, to paraphrase Migdal (1988), Tanzania has a weak state but an even weaker society.

Second, the paper suggests that theorists of ethnic conflict management would do well to incorporate demographic variables into their analyses. At the very least this paper suggests that demography is a better explanation than institutional design for the success of ethnic conflict building on the Tanzanian mainland and its failures on Zanzibar; it also suggests that Tanzania is not exceptional in this regard. Thus future discussion of ethnic conflict management could focus more on such factors as the alleviation of inter-regional inequalities and the management of internal migration, with Stewart (2000) as an exemplar in this regard.

Third and finally, the paper suggest a strong link between low economic growth and nation formation. A lack of labour and capital has both contributed to Tanzania's stability and nation formation while also hindering its economic development. More specifically, the insipient industrialization that led to inter-regional inequalities and conflict between labour-rich and capital-rich areas in Côte d'Ivoire, the DRC, Nigeria, Sudan and Uganda was absent in Tanzania. While initially surprising in light of the fact that economic development always has an inverse relationship with civil wars in cross-national regression analysis (Fearon and Laitin, 2003), this relationship is less remarkable when we note that conflict has a tendency of wiping out the gains of previous

¹⁴ Nyerere notably claimed that 'while other people have gone to the moon, we are still trying to reach the village.'

economic growth.¹⁵ In comparison to the successful examples of late development in East Asia, economic growth is thus perhaps more likely to lead to a period of ethnic tensions and political disorder in states that are already fragmented and not cohesive, to use Kohli (2004)'s terminology. This conclusion suggests that the majority of states in Africa that are both poor and religiously and/or ethnically diverse cannot have it all: they might be able to pursue economic development or national cohesion as a policy goal, but not both.

There is, however, a sliver lining to our analysis here. While Tanzania's strong sense of national identity does not currently seem to play a positive role in its economic development, we should remember that economic development is inherently a long process. For instance, Acemoglu et al. (2003) have suggested that good institutions in Botswana helped to bring it from one of the world's poorest countries in the 1960s to one of the richest in Africa by the 1990s. It is thus possible that Tanzania's strong sense of national identity may play a positive role in years to come, an outcome which would be much appreciated by its poor citizens.

¹⁵ Moreover, Djankov and Reynal-Querol (2010) show that the link between poverty and civil wars is spurious.

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Table 1: Population Density in 1900 (persons/km² on potentially arable land) (Sources: McEvedy (1978); FAO (2000))

Zambia	1.3	Malawi	11.1
DRC	3.9	Coastal West Africa*	14.6
Mozambique	4.7	South Africa	18.8
Tanzania	5.9	Uganda	21.2
Sudan	6.9	Kenya	22.0
SS African Average	7.9	Burundi and Rwanda	115.7

* Includes Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Nigeria and Senegal

Table 2: Population Dispersion, 1950-1970
(Sources: Various Country Censuses)

Country	Date	# of Regions	Population Density	SDPD*
Ghana	1970	9	35.9	26.3
Kenya	1969	8	26.9	102.3
Nigeria	1952/53	28	20.6	29.3
Mainland Tanzania	1967	18	13.4	14.1
Uganda	1959	18	33.0	30.4
<i>German East Africa</i> **	1967	20	19.6	35.9

* Standard Deviation of Population Density

** Mainland Tanzania, Rwanda and Burundi

To avoid bias from outliers the highest density regions in each country have been eliminated here. As data on potentially arable land at the sub-national level does not exist, population density here measures persons per square kilometre.

Table 3: The Most Ethnically Fractionalized Countries in the World

Taylor/Hudson (1972)	Fearon (2003)	Alesina et al. (2003)	Mean Ranking	Median Ranking
1 Tanzania	Papua New Guinea	Uganda	Uganda	Tanzania (tie)
2 Uganda (tie: 2)	Tanzania	Liberia	Zaire/DRC	Uganda (tie)
3 Zaire/DRC (tie: 2)	Zaire/DRC	Madagascar	Cameroon (tie: 3)	Zaire/DRC
4 Cameroon (tie: 4)	Uganda	Zaire/DRC (tie)	Liberia (tie: 3)	Liberia
5 India (tie: 4)	Liberia	Rep. of Congo (tie)	Tanzania	Cameroon