

POLI 120N: Contention and Conflict in Africa

Professor Adida

Liberian case study

Final projects

- Final week of class, 6 groups, 3 per class session, 20 minutes each
- Structure
 - Background
 - Description of conflict
 - Explanation of conflict
 - Take-away
- Graded on
 - depth of understanding of case
 - Ability to apply theories learned in class
 - Clarity (slides and delivery)
 - Originality (keep us engaged)



Background

- Colonized by the American Colonization Society
- First Black Americans arrived in 1822

Background

- Colonized by the American Colonization Society
- First freed American slaves arrived in 1822
- Liberia proclaimed Africa's first independent republic in 1847
- Country's motto: "The love of liberty brought us here" - applied only to settlers; native population brutalized
- Source of settlers' power: support from US and US corporations

Domination of Americo-Liberians

- Settlers, aka Americo-Liberians, monopolized political power
- Indigenous peasants “eked out meager living” (Berkeley)

Tubman, 1944-1971

- Graft and repression peaked under his rule: devoted more than 1% of national budget to the upkeep of presidential yacht
- But also liberalized the system
 - Open-door policy
 - Unification policy

Tolbert, 1971-1980

- Tried to liberalize the political machinery, but not enough
- April 12, 1980: Samuel Doe, master sergeant in the Armed Forces of Liberia, led a coup; disemboweled Tolbert, executed his cabinet
- People's Redemption Council (PRC): brutal rule, repression, terrorization of population; stole \$300 million
- Ethnic favoritism: Doe progressively filled the top positions with family friends and loyal confidants, all who shared Doe's Krahn ethnicity
- Appointed Mandingos to positions in rural government and granted them preferential business opportunities

Samuel Doe's tyrannical rule

- Populist policies
- U.S. support (Cold War)



Samuel Doe with US Secretary of State Weinberger, 1982

Turning against the Gio/Mano

- After the flawed 1985 elections, a group of dissident soldiers slipped into Liberia from neighboring Sierra Leone, and staged an attempted coup
- Led by Thomas Quiwonkpa, who had helped Doe in his coup 5 years earlier
- Coup failed; Quiwonkpa tortured and killed
- Quiwonkpa was ethnic Gio; Doe turned against the Gio and neighboring Mano for revenge

Charles Taylor's rise

- Supported the 1980 coup that Doe led against Tolbert
- Worked in Doe's administration until he was sacked for embezzlement
- Fled to the U.S., then to Côte d'Ivoire, where he recruited... the Gio and Mano persecuted by Doe
- Named his movement the National Patriotic Front (NPFL), and launched armed uprising in December 1989, leading the country into its first civil war.
- By 1990, Prince Johnson, one of Taylor's senior commanders, broke away and created his own Independent NPFL (INPFL), who controlled Monrovia and executed Doe

Liberia's civil wars

- First civil war (1989-1996)
 - Taylor proclaims himself President in 1990
 - 1992-1996: Taylor vs. Johnson; Liberia a failed state
 - War ends in 1996 with ceasefire and elections
- 1997 election
 - Taylor campaigned: “He killed my ma, he killed my pa, but I will vote for him”; Gained 75% of the vote: fear that war would resume if he lost
 - Purges of Krahn and Mandingo
- Second civil war (1999-2003)
 - 1999: LURD appears in the North.
 - 2003: MODEL appears in the South
 - July 2003: Taylor controls only 1/3 of country; resigns, flees to Nigeria, is captured trying to flee into Cameroun

Taylor at the ICC



NYT

An ethnic conflict

Timeline	Ethnic groups in conflict
1847-1980: political dominance of Americo-Liberians	settlers (3%) vs. indigenous (95%)
1980: coup led by Sam Doe (Krahn) and Thomas Quiwonkpa (Gio)	Krahn/Gio vs. Americo-Liberian
1980-1990: Doe tyrannical rule	Krahn vs. Gio/Mano
1989-1997: Civil war, Taylor (Americo-Liberian) vs. Doe	Gio/Mano vs. Krahn
1997-1999: Taylor elected	Gio/Mano vs. Krahn
1999-2003: Civil war, LURD (Krahn/Mandingo) vs. Taylor	Krahn/Mandingo vs. Gio/Mano

The ethnic conflicts



Tim A. Hetherington/PANOS Pictures

- A war of ancient ethnic hatred
- The Americo-Liberians vs. the Krahns vs. the Gios

Ethnic hatred argument: observable implications

- Violence and conflict occur purely along ethnic lines; no crossing over. Different sides should be mono-ethnic
- Evidence of historical conflict between groups

And yet...

- Loyalty and violence did not always fall along ethnic lines
- Samuel Doe may have been a Krahn, but Charles Taylor was not a Gio nor a Mano
- No violent divisions among Liberia's 16 ethnic groups before 1980: they frequently intermarried, traded with each other, coexisted peaceably (Berkeley)

If not ethnic hatred, then what?

- Role of leaders: “All of Africa’s ethnic conflicts start at the top and spread downward” (Berkeley).
- Role of poverty: By mid-1980s, only 1 in 4 Liberians had access to safe running water (only 6% in rural areas). Barely 1 in 4 adults could read or write. Infant mortality was ten times the American average. Life expectancy was 52 years.
- Role of external forces: US looking for economic investment and political allies; Libya looking for power in SSA; France looking for business opportunities (timber)
- Role of natural resources: iron-ore, timber, diamonds, gold
- Role of political institutions/exclusion (Wimmer et al.; Roessler)

Figure 2a: *Probability of Civil War at Low/High Levels of Political Rights and Variable Ethno-linguistic Fractionalisation*

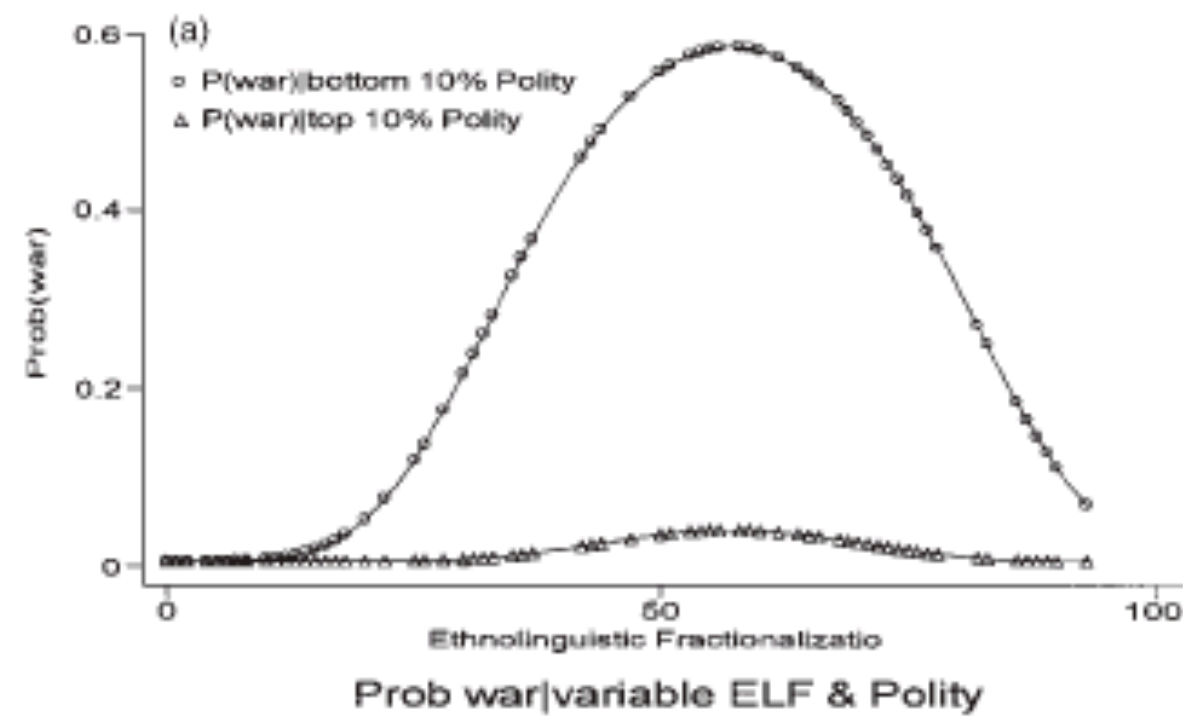
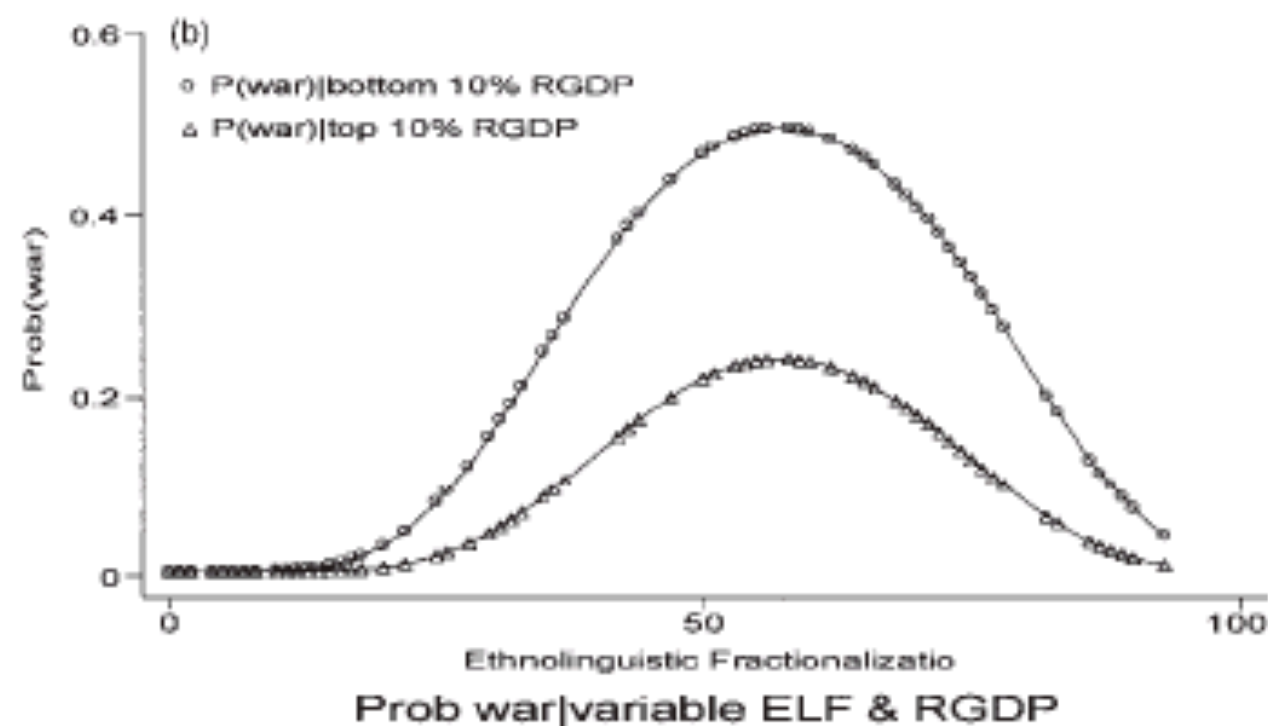


Figure 2b: *Probability of Civil War at Low/High Levels of Income and Variable Ethno-linguistic Fractionalisation*



Roessler in action

- Doe (Krahn) and Quiwonkpa (Gio) take over
- Become rivals, Doe sacks Quiwonkpa and purges Gio; stacks government with Krahn/Mandingo
- Taylor organizes Gio and Mano to overthrow Doe (triggers 1st civil war)
- Taylor wins war and election, purges government of Krahn/Mandingo
- Krahn/Mandingo organize to take over from Taylor (triggers 2nd civil war)

POLI 120N: Contention and Conflict in Africa

Professor Adida

Liberian case study