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Indirect colonial rule and the salience of ethnicity

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ABSTRACT

Why is ethnicity more salient in some contexts than in others? This paper provides new theory and evidence linking indirect colonial rule to the contemporary salience of ethnicity in sub-Saharan Africa. Using Afrobarometer survey data, I establish a substantively significant cross-national relationship between the indirectness of colonial rule and the strength of contemporary ethnic identification in sub-Saharan Africa. To show that this relationship is causal, I then exploit a sub-national research design leveraging regional variation in direct and indirect colonial rule across the country of Namibia. I show that, controlling for location and ethnicity, indirect colonial rule is also associated with stronger ethnic identification within Namibia both across the country as a whole and within 50 km of the border dividing indirectly and directly ruled areas of Namibia. This paper then disentangles *why* indirect rule is so robustly associated with the salience of ethnicity. I theorize and provide evidence that the effects of indirect rule can be attributed to the greater importance of traditional leaders and ethnically demarcated customary land rights in formerly indirectly ruled areas. As such, this paper helps uncover the causes of important regional variation in the salience of ethnicity, advances our understanding of the institutional origins of ethnic conflict in parts of sub-Saharan Africa, and thus why indirect colonial rule is so often associated with poor developmental outcomes.

> "The colonial world is a world divided into zones…[an investigative] approach to the colonial world, its ordering and its geographical layout will allow us to mark out the lines on which a decolonized society will be reorganized"
>
> Frantz Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth

1. Introduction

Under what conditions is ethnicity an important social division? I here define ethnicity in a Barthian sense as a social grouping and intersubjective boundary delimiting members and non-members based on subjective descent (Barth, 1969). Polarized ethnic identities have been linked to lower public goods provision (Habyarimana, Humphreys, Posner, & Weinstein, 2009), economic growth (Easterly & Levine, 1997), civil peace (Montalvo & Reynal-Querol, 2005), democratic stability (Dahl, 1971) and quality of governance (La Porta, Lopez de Silanes, Shleifer, & Vishni, 1999). Yet, individuals have innumerable potentially salient identities, whether on the basis of class, gender, region or ethnicity, and individual ethnic identity is both contextual and contingent (Posner, 2005; Saperstein & Penner, 2012). Insofar as different identity groupings all rely on separate intersubjective boundaries delimiting 'us' and 'them', it is an open question as to which social boundary is selected as the basis for political contention. Moreover, given that salient internal ethnic divisions have long been viewed as antithetical to the ideal of the homogenous nation-state, the process of nation-state formation and ethnic boundary breakdown are intimately connected (Loveman, 2014; Miles & Rochefort, 1991; Weber, 1976). A central question for social scientists is therefore: what are the factors that account for whether ethnicity is a salient basis of domestic social and political organization? (Cheeseman & Ford, 2007; Lipset & Rokkan, 1967; Wimmer, 2013).

This paper seeks to provide new theory and evidence for the importance of one such factor – indirect colonial rule. European colonies can be roughly differentiated into indirectly ruled and directly ruled colonies depending on whether governance was conducted through 'traditional' local intermediaries administering customary law or through central bureaucrats administering written law respectively (Gerring, Ziblatt, Gorp, & Arívalo, 2011; Hariri, 2012; Iyer, 2010; Lange, 2009). Building on existing work, I emphasize that in sub-Saharan Africa indirect colonial rule took place through the introduction of ethnically demarcated land and governance institutions (Boone & Nyeme, 2015; Boone, 2014; Mamdani,

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1996). In such areas, subject Africans were allocated a tribal identity, chiefly authority and communal land rights as a means of administrative control (Newbury, 1988). I theorize that these same institutions, path dependently replenished in the post-colonial era, have provided a structural basis for salient ethnic identities in contemporary sub-Saharan Africa as traditional chiefs have been endowed with the authority and the incentive to politically mobilize their co-ethnics in defence of shared customary land rights.

Using cross-national data and only comparing members of the same ethnic group in different countries, I then show that individuals in sub-Saharan African countries that experienced indirect colonial rule indeed have more salient ethnic identities today. The difficulty in demonstrating that this cross-national relationship is causal is, of course, that forms of colonial rule were not assigned randomly. To overcome this challenge, this paper leverages regional variation in direct and indirect colonial rule across the sub-Saharan country of Namibia to more credibly measure its effects on the salience of ethnicity. I find that indirect colonial rule is positively associated with more salient ethnic identities relative to national identities across sub-Saharan Africa, within Namibia as a whole and within a zone 50 km (30 miles) either side of the boundary dividing indirect and directly ruled areas of Namibia. Disentangling potential causal mechanisms, I find that the relationship between indirect colonial rule and the political salience of ethnicity is indeed being driven by the greater importance of traditional leadership and customary land rights in areas ruled indirectly in the colonial era.

This paper thereby makes three key contributions to the broader literature. First, it contributes to long-standing debates over the factors that lead ethnicity to become a politically relevant cleavage. As Wimmer (2013) summarizes, institutions provide incentives for actors to draw certain types of social boundaries over others. Consistent with the emerging institutionalist tradition in the study of ethnic politics (e.g. Brubaker, 1996; Dunning & Harrison, 2010; Eifert, Miguel, & Posner, 2010; Hechter, 2004; Jha, 2013; Laitin, 1986; Miguel, 2004; Posner, 2005) and in contrast to the micro-sociological cognitive and rational choice traditions, this paper demonstrates that the institutional legacies of indirect colonial rule have incentivized the drawing of ethnic boundaries in contemporary sub-Saharan Africa. Secondly, this paper contributes to long-standing debates over the legacies of colonialism in sub-Saharan Africa, which for some time largely focused on cross-national comparisons (e.g. Acemoglu, Johnson, & Robinson, 2001; Hariri, 2012; Lange, 2004; Miles, 1994; Robinson, 2014). As Snyder (2001) highlights, however, national averages can conceal substantial internal heterogeneity, so shifting our attention to the sub-national level can strengthen our capacity to accurately code cases and thus make valid causal inferences. By exploiting the regional division of Namibia during the colonial era, this paper provides newly credible evidence causally linking indirect colonial rule to the contemporary salience of ethnicity and thus advances our understanding of why indirect colonial rule is so often associated with poor developmental outcomes. Finally, by uncovering the causes of the substantial sub-national variation in the salience of ethnicity as a political cleavage within Namibia, this paper bolsters the broader trend towards sub-national analysis in comparative politics (e.g. Boone, 2003; Gershman & Rivera, 2018; Sidel, 2014) and advances a research agenda seeking to uncover the causes of regional variation in the salience of ethnicity around the world.

The paper is structured as follows: I first survey relevant literature on colonialism and the salience of ethnicity. Building on existing work in African politics, I then theorize how the form of colonial rule affects the salience of ethnicity in the post-colonial context. I then present the cross-national results demonstrating a robust relationship between indirect colonial rule and strength of individual ethnic identification. I then discuss the Namibian context and present the sub-national results similarly establishing a robust relationship between indirect colonial rule and strength of individual ethnic identification within Namibia. Lastly, I provide evidence that the causal mechanism driving this relationship is the strength of traditional leaders and customary land rights in formerly indirectly ruled areas. I conclude by discussing the implications of these findings for our understanding of the effects of colonial rule and the salience of ethnicity in sub-Saharan Africa.

2. Literature review

There is substantial cross-national and within-country variation in the salience of ethnicity. A number of factors can account for variation in the salience of ethnicity, including the timing and intensity of national political competition (Eifert et al., 2010), the form of electoral system (Huber, 2012), levels of historical conflict (Reynal-Querol & Besley, 2014), the presence of cross-cutting cleavages (Dunning & Harrison, 2010), levels of modernization (Robinson, 2014) and the presence or absence of electoral intermediaries (Koter, 2013). Nation builders and colonial rulers can also play important roles in shaping the basis of political organization in a nascent polity (Laitin, 1986; Tilly, 2004). Yet, we have relatively little knowledge about the sources of path dependence in political identification long after such rulers have left the political scene. Moreover, whilst scholars have largely focused on cross-national variation in the salience of ethnicity (e.g. Miguel, 2004; Miles, 1994; Robinson, 2014) less attention has been paid to accounting for sub-national variation. Sub-national analysis is, however, important as African states differ substantially internally (Boone, 2003), so ethnicity can be highly politically salient in regions such as Kwa-Zulu Natal in South Africa even whilst political competition is organized around an entirely different basis in other parts of the same country (Chandra, 2007).

An important source of path dependence in political cleavage formation is the legacy of colonial institutions. The fact that colonialism dramatically reshaped the linguistic and ethnic landscape of sub-Saharan Africa through the institutionalization of new bases of social classification is well-established (e.g. Laitin, 1986, 1992; Posner, 2003). But there has been long-standing debate in African politics over whether the nature of colonial rule meaningfully differed across contexts. As Firmin-Sellers (2000) summarizes, this debate largely revolved over whether British and French colonial rule differed on important dimensions such as the extent to which colonial governance constructed and co-opted indigenous 'traditional' elites (e.g. Blanton, Mason, & Athow, 2001; Miles, 1994; Robinson, 2014, Ali et al. (2018)) or whether the similarities of colonization and its extractive imperatives outweighed cross-colonizer differences (e.g. Berman & Lonsdale, 1992; Deschamps, 1963). Intervening in this debate, Mamdani (1996) advanced the view that the form of colonial rule importantly differed across rural and urban areas but similarly downplayed the importance of colonizer identity.

Recent work, however, has begun to more closely scrutinize how the form of colonial and post-colonial rule differed not according to colonizer identity but rather according to local conditions in a more continuous fashion (e.g. Acemoglu, Reed, & Robinson, 2014; Boone, 2003; Mizuno, 2016). In particular, the theoretical distinction between indirect and direct colonial rule has proven productive, where here I follow Lange (2009) who defines indirect rule as "domination via collaborative relations between a dominant colonial center and several regionally based indigenous institutions" (p. 28). The extent to which colonial rule formally incorporated indigenous mediators and 'customary' elites has recently been shown to be endogenous to factors such as the strength of pre-colonial states (Gerring et al., 2011; Hariri, 2012), settler mortality (Acemoglu

et al., 2001) and resource endowment (Engerman & Sokoloff, 2002). Moreover, the directness and indirectness of rule have been shown to have important effects on economic and democratic development to this day (Hariri, 2012; Iyer, 2010; Lange, 2004).

Methodologically, this paper builds on this body of literature by using both a measure of the indirectness of colonial rule at the cross-national level that reflects continuous variation in the incorporation of local intermediaries. It also exploits regional differences in the nature of colonial rule in Namibia that were the result of different pre-colonial local conditions. In this sense, this paper is similar in spirit to Lee and Schultz (2012), Lechler and McNamee (2018) and Ali et al. (2018)'s recent studies of the long-run effects of colonial rule insofar as it takes seriously the endogeneity of colonial rule and exploits sub-national variation in the form of colonial rule to more credibly measure its effects on contemporary outcomes. Finally, by conducting a number of empirical tests using individual-level data, this paper moves beyond identifying aggregate differences in the legacies of colonial rule to also disentangle *why* indirect rule is robustly associated with the salience of ethnicity.

3. Theory

How might the form of colonial rule affect the salience of ethnicity? Indirect and directly ruled colonies are typically distinguished according to whether administration occurred via imperial bureaucrats implementing enumerated laws or whether colonial rule occurred indirectly through local intermediaries such as chiefs whom had the authority to informally administer customary or 'traditional' law. Yet, one key facet of indirect rule highlighted by scholars of African politics tends to be missing from the quantitative and broader comparative literature – indirect rule typically took place through the institutionalization of ethnic divisions.

Applying Foucauldian conceptions of power, the classification of populations has been key to 'state simplifications' (Scott, 1998) that shape spatial systems of property ownership, conflict resolution and the exercise of authority. Colonial states that lacked the military capacity or willingness to govern a particular area outsourced land management to informal traditional 'tribal' authorities whose jurisdiction extended to a subset of a simplified categorization of the population (Boone, 2014). This institutionalization of different ethnic communities in space reflected the dominant colonial paradigm which viewed indigenous Africans as inherently communitarian and arguably furthered a political priority of dispersing collective resistance to white-minority colonial regimes (Düsing, 2002). Though there remains debate over the extent to which colonialism reshaped African society, officially recognized, hierarchical and territorially-organized traditional authorities are the legacies of indirect colonial rule that constructed for Africans a tribal identity under chiefly authority as a means of administrative control (Mamdani, 1996; Newbury, 1988).

For example, in perhaps the canonical case of indirect rule, the British in Sierra Leone created over one hundred separate Chieftaincies headed by a Paramount Chief whom had the authority to collect poll taxes and administer customary law on behalf of the colonial state (Acemoglu et al., 2014). The form that indirect rule took in Sierra Leone therefore meant that individual rights of residence, land, and legal representation in Sierra Leone were (and still are) subject to one's membership as a 'native' in a chiefdom, providing powerful privileges to those who are co-ethnics with the chief in their village (Fanthorpe, 2001). Political division between individuals of different ethnic chieftaincies has violently marked Sierra Leone's history since this time as descendants of chiefs and traditional leaders have mobilized to protect the hereditary rights of their co-ethnics (Fanthorpe, 2005).

This is not to imply that all countries ruled indirectly during the colonial era still retain strong traditional leaders and communal land systems. The relative power of the state vis-à-vis traditional authority in the post-independence sphere is rather best conceptualized as a path dependent continuum that varies over time and space (Boone, 2003; Lund, 2006). On the one hand, the globalization of food production has increased the return on the de facto enclosure of communal land (Bryceson, 2002). As such, in some formerly indirectly ruled areas of sub-Saharan Africa, vernacular markets for land within the framework of communal tenure have recently emerged with the explicit consent (or, indeed, complicity) of local customary authorities (Chimhowu & Woodhouse, 2006; German, Schoneveld, & Mwangi, 2013). On the other hand, the literature in African politics details how state and chieftaincy institutions have consistently competed over the constitution of political authority since independence (e.g. Boone, 2003; Lund, 2008; Mamdani, 1996). After independence, socialist-inspired revolutionary leaders in countries such as Burkina Faso, Uganda, Mozambique, Tanzania and Namibia viewed existing customary authorities as obstacles to agrarian reform and modernization and sought their wholesale replacement (Baldwin, 2014) whereas leaders linked to existing traditional authorities such as Seretse Khama of Botswana adopted more accommodating stances towards customary institutions. Yet, with the exception of Tanzania, even after socialist-inspired revolutions, an absence of state capacity in rural areas has imperiled mass land reform and such rationalization policies have generally stalled in practice. Indeed, since the 1990s and democratization, elites in countries such as Uganda and Mozambique have reversed such policies, officially recognizing and institutionalizing the governance roles of traditional leaders in order to build broader electoral coalitions (Ibid.).

As such, the ongoing maintenance of customary land and traditional leadership institutions in indirectly ruled areas of sub-Saharan Africa is best understood as the product of a path dependent process (Mahoney, 2000). Customary institutions persist because it has largely remained in the interests of central state elites to avoid short-term rural upheaval, sustain tax revenue collection (Boone, 2003), and to forge political alliances with traditional leaders after democratization; indeed, Baldwin (2014) shows that political liberalization is a necessary condition for post-independence central governments to devolve power to chiefs. As a consequence, with the telling exception of Tanzania, government in formerly indirectly ruled areas of sub-Saharan Africa remains a 'bifurcated state' (Mamdani, 1996) with (i) systems of customary legal rights and privileges and (ii) systems of traditional leadership in local governance in rural areas.

What are the effects of such institutions on individual social and political identity? Firstly, customary legal institutions provide a basis of conflict between individuals from distinct ethnic groups because in those formerly indirectly ruled or 'tribal' areas such as Kwa-Zulu or Sierra Leone, legal rights and in particular land rights are contingent on membership in an ethnic community. Yet, as theorized by Hechter (2004), when customary legal institutions materially advantage particular ethnic groups and these privileges come under challenge from outsiders or the state due to the shift from indirect to direct rule, individuals rationally mobilize with co-ethnics to protect communal privileges. In other words, in previously indirectly ruled areas of contemporary sub-Saharan Africa there is a powerful structural incentive for individuals to identify and politically mobilize with co-ethnics when collective legal privileges have come under threat by other political actors in the post-colonial era (Boone & Nyeme, 2015; Boone, 2014; Mamdani, 1996; Peters & Kambewa, 2007).

Secondly, regardless of the underlying material basis of political conflict, the institution of traditional leadership has provided an

important basis of political mobilization among co-ethnics in the post-colonial context. In a Weberian sense, the fact that local governance was outsourced by the colonial state in indirectly ruled areas to traditional leaders endowed such leaders with a powerful source of traditional authority to use in popular mobilisation. Barring a radical post-colonial upheaval of local governance, traditional chiefs, whose political legitimacy derives from the traditional authority embedded in ostensibly primordial ethnic identities, today have substantial power to regulate common resources, adjudicate disputes, and grant occupancy and land rights in formerly indirectly ruled areas of sub-Saharan Africa (Baldwin, 2014; Koter, 2013; Mamdani, 1996; Miles, 1994). Formerly indirectly ruled areas of sub-Saharan Africa have therefore inherited local governance institutions with ethnically demarcated sources of traditional authority, and the elite beneficiaries of this system – traditional leaders – have been highly active in making use of traditional sources of legitimacy to mobilize co-ethnics and preserve these political privileges in the post-colonial context (Lijphart, 1993).[1]

In the absence of such institutions, the major political cleavage in the post-colonial era in more directly ruled countries of sub-Saharan Africa such as Zimbabwe, South Africa, and Botswana has tended to be rural/urban. In the absence of explicit ethnic appeals, party campaigns in less ethnicized systems of sub-Saharan Africa tends to be dominated by valence appeals — with parties primarily campaigning on the basis of improving unemployment, corruption, and service delivery given the centrality of performance to voter choice (Bleck & Van de Walle, 2013; Bratton, Bhavnani, & Chen, 2012; Elischer, 2013). As such, opposition to ruling parties in such countries tends to be centered in either labor unions opposed to neoliberal economic policies — indeed, in both Botswana and Zimbabwe the primary opposition party was originally formed by trade unions — or in disaffected educated professionals concerned with corruption and democratic erosion, both of whom are based in urban centers (Mclaughlin, 2008; Molomo, 2000). Although the ruling parties may, for strategic reasons, highlight the unrepresentative ethno-racial composition of urban or regional opposition parties to diminish their appeal to core rural supporters (as in South Africa, Namibia, Tanzania and Zimbabwe), the relative absence of ethnicized party appeals is notable in formerly directly ruled countries.

Hence, given that customary land and governance institutions allocate scarce resources on the basis of ethnic identity and such institutions have been replenished in formerly indirectly ruled areas, we should correspondingly expect ethnicity to be more central to individual identity in formerly indirectly ruled areas today. I will now turn to test whether indirect rule is indeed associated with more salient ethnic identities both across sub-Saharan Africa as a whole and within the country of Namibia.

4. Cross-national analysis

4.1. Data and specification

To measure the relationship between indirect colonial rule and the relative salience of ethnic identity across sub-Saharan Africa, this paper uses data from the cross-national Afrobarometer[2] survey from rounds 3–6 (2005–2016).[3] To gain statistical power given the relatively small number of respondents in each country, the data are pooled from across all rounds.[4] I follow Robinson (2014) and Reynal-Querol and Besley (2014) by measuring the salience of ethnicity through responses to the survey question: "suppose that you had to choose between being a [Namibian/Kenyan/etc.] and being a [respondent's ethnic group]. Which of these two groups do you feel most strongly attached to?", the responses of which range from "only ethnic", "more ethnic than national", "equally national and ethnic", "more national than ethnic" or "only national".

The strength of this measure of the salience of ethnic identity is that it does not presuppose an erroneous ethnic identity group for respondents — respondents are only asked this question with reference to their self-nominated ethnicity, capturing the ethnic identity that is most salient for respondents. Moreover, this measure reflects the multifaceted nature of individual identity by assessing the *relative* salience of overlapping and mutually consistent social boundaries rather than the nominated salience of any particular identity group or 'objective' characteristic. Contrasting the relative salience of ethnic and national identities is moreover particularly appropriate as a measure of the salience of ethnicity in this context. Given that nation-builders in sub-Saharan Africa have often sought to reduce the salience of ethnicity by appealing to the ideal of the homogenous and unified nation-state, the relative salience of an individual's ethnic identity vis-à-vis their national identity is appropriate as a measure of the salience of ethnicity in the post-colonial African context (Miles & Rochefort, 1991).

I tend to model all five levels of subjective identification in a linear form. However, the distribution of responses across these five levels is quite uneven as the modal response — "equally national and ethnic" — records 40% of all respondents, more than either of its neighboring responses combined. Given the likelihood that the clustering of responses at this value in part represents social desirability bias, I also include specifications with a binary measure of whether an individual expresses stronger national (1) or ethnic (0) identity, dropping all respondents who did not express a directional preference. In both cases, higher values indicate a stronger national identity and lower values indicate a stronger ethnic identity.

This measure of the salience of ethnic identity does have shortcomings, the most prominent of which is reliability; there is substantial variation in mean levels of ethnic and national identification over time at the country level.[5] The instability of this variable over the decade of the survey raises the concern that the data may be poorly suited to testing a theory reliant on the existence of stable, long-run differences in the salience of ethnicity across countries and contexts. Yet, whilst there has indeed been significant instability in this measure across countries over time, patterns in the data nonetheless suggest that this question has validity as a measure of the salience of ethnicity. Of the fifteen countries continuously surveyed between 2005 and 2016, the countries that consistently score

[1] Koter (2013) makes a compelling argument that traditional leaders can also ethnically fragment the electoral sphere if many ethnically different traditional leaders are used to channel the provision of goods and services for a clientelistic party. Hence, the theoretical argument of this paper is most applicable to a context such as Namibia in which a governing party in the post-colonial context is seeking to rationalize governance structures and reduce the privileges of traditional leaders. See Peters and Kambewa (2007) for a similar analysis of the emergence of a new discourse distinguishing 'original settlers' and 'strangers' during customary law reform in Malawi.

[2] Afrobarometer "is an African-led, non-partisan research network that conducts public attitude surveys on democracy, governance, economic conditions, and related issues across more than 30 countries in Africa". Between 1999 and 2016, six rounds of surveys were conducted. All responses stem from face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice and the results are nationally representative samples with a margin of error of ±3 percent for samples of 1200 at the 95 percent level.

[3] The replication files for all analyses reported in this paper are available at https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/IRHHSL.

[4] These rounds constitute the largest possible cross-country sample because the outcome question of the survey is only asked after Round 3 and the merged cross-national Round 7 dataset was not available at the time of writing.

[5] For example, between 2005 and 2016, mean identification with nation on the five point scale rose from 2.8 to 3.7 in Nigeria whilst declining from 3.5 to 3.2 in Botswana.

the highest on surveyed strength of ethnic identity such as Zambia, Malawi and Uganda are indeed those where ethnicity has been particularly salient in the party political sphere. Moreover, with the notable exceptions of South Africa and Botswana, there has been little change in the *relative ranking* of countries according to this measure over 2005–16. The countries with the most salient ethnic identities in 2005 (Nigeria, Mali, Malawi, Uganda, Lesotho, Zambia, Benin) remained, with the exception of Botswana, those with the most salient ethnic identities in 2016. Similarly, the countries with the least salient ethnic identities in 2016 (Madagascar, Mozambique, Senegal, Namibia, South Africa) remained, with the exception of South Africa, those with the least salient ethnic identities in 2016.[6] Finally, a test of the suitability of using this measure to capture long-run differences in the salience of ethnicity would be to see whether, consistent with the declining importance of historical legacies over time, that the effect of indirect colonial rule on the salience of ethnicity is much larger in magnitude in earlier survey rounds than in later rounds. It will indeed be shown that this is the case.

The measure for the key cross-national independent variable of interest – the indirectness of colonial rule – comes from Hariri (2012). Hariri follows Lange by proxying indirect colonial rule by the number of colonially recognized customary court cases in 1955 divided by the total number of court cases. As Hariri puts it, "under direct rule, colonial powers would not recognize customary courts but would instead implement a uniform legal system based on metropolitan laws. Under indirect rule, on the contrary, the colonial legal system would incorporate the indigenous legal structure" (p.476) and thus the proportion of court cases officially decided on a customary basis is an apposite measure for the 'indirectness' of colonial rule. As this measure is limited to British colonies, Hariri interpolated the measure for the rest of the world based on measures of European settlement.[7] Whilst this is a limitation for the analysis, it will be shown that the results are unchanged when sub-setting the sample to former British colonies or to using other proxies for the indirectness of colonial rule. The final cross-country sample thus includes 27 countries with data both on the surveyed salience of ethnicity and the indirectness of colonial rule.[8]

Of course, the indirectness of colonial rule across sub-Saharan Africa was a function of pre-colonial factors such as pre-colonial political centralization that are themselves likely to shape the contemporary salience of ethnicity. To the extent that it is possible, this paper tries to address these issues and compare maximally comparable populations by including ethnic fixed effects in all specifications. In doing so, I am only comparing the salience of ethnicity among individuals in the same ethnic group residing in different countries – for example, partitioned Chewas in Malawi and Zimbabwe or Lozis in Namibia and Zambia. As such, ethnic group-specific pre-colonial differences in culture or political organization are controlled for and we are left with residual differences in the salience of ethnicity more plausibly the product of differences in colonial and post-colonial history across countries.

The main cross-country empirical specification is thus:

$$Y_{ide} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Indirectrule_d + X'_{ide}\Gamma + \eta_e + \epsilon_{ide}$$

where Y expresses the strength of national identification for individual i, living in country d, belonging to the ethnic group e. *Indirectrule* is the measure of the indirectness of colonial rule based on colonial customary court data in country d, **X** is a set of control variables, and are the ethnicity fixed effects.

I include specifications with and without controls to ensure the results are not being driven by post-treatment control bias.[9] The individual-level demographic controls included are age (measured in years), education (dummies for each level of schooling), gender (binary), and income (measured by how often the respondent goes without food). The country-level controls are log real GDP per capita in 2000, whether a country was colonized by Britain (binary), is landlocked (binary),[10] and country-level linguistic and ethnic fractionalization all of which were compiled from various sources by Hariri (2012).

I estimate this equation through OLS and cluster standard errors at the country-level to account for non-independence.

Finally, rather than include ethnic fixed effects, Robinson (2014) instead models the salience of national and ethnic identity across sub-Saharan Africa using a three-level linear probability model with random intercepts estimated at the ethnic group and country level.[11] For robustness and comparability, I also include these same specifications using Robinson's sample altered only through the introduction of the measure of the indirectness of colonial rule at the country-level.

5. Results

There is a substantively significant and robust relationship between indirect colonial rule and strength of ethnic identification across sub-Saharan Africa among individuals from the same ethnic group (Table 1). Moving from a relatively directly ruled country in which 25% of colonial court cases were decided on a customary basis such as South Africa to a relatively indirectly ruled country such as Uganda in which 75% of court cases were decided on a customary basis during the colonial era increases the probability an individual from the same ethnic group identifies more strongly on the basis of ethnicity relative to their national identity by 25 percentage points (or by 0.5 on a 5 point scale). Note that these specifications are only comparing strength of ethnic identification among members of partitioned ethnic groups and so pre-colonial differences in group centralization and culture are controlled for by design. The significant association between the indirectness of colonial rule and strength of ethnic identification is moreover robust to the inclusion of a battery of potentially important controls including a country's level of development, its geography, ethnic and linguistic heterogeneity, individual-level demographic characteristics and whether a country was colonized by the British.

[6] The declining strength of national identification in Southern Africa is explicable through the sustained economic downturn that South Africa and Botswana have experienced since 2007.

[7] Hariri regressed Lange's measure of the indirectness of colonial rule on the contemporary proportion of the population in each country that speaks a European language and the proportion of the population in each country that is European descent and used the coefficients from this regression to predict the extent of indirect rule for countries with missing data. These measures are strongly associated with the indirectness of colonial rule for the countries where data is available and levels of European settlement can also intuitively be used as a proxy for the directness of colonial rule, so these measures have validity as a basis for interpolation. See (Hariri,

[8] 36 countries were sampled by Afrobarometer in Round 6, however the survey in North African countries and Swaziland did not include the question about the relative salience of ethnicity and there is missing data on the indirectness of colonial rule for Tanzania and Cape Verde. The sample thus includes Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Niger, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Togo, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

[9] Post-treatment control bias arises when one seeks to control away some of the consequences of a treatment (e.g. development) to better isolate the effects of other consequences (e.g. different institutional legacies). Doing so can introduce bias in one's estimates and is generally inadvisable – see Rosenbaum (1984).

[10] This is important given the disproportionate effects of the slave trade on coastal countries, which has been shown to affect social trust and identity today (Nunn & Wantchekon, 2011).

[11] A three level model includes intercepts that capture average differences in the strength of ethnic identification both across different countries and across different ethnic groups. It is a common way of modelling survey data when individuals are nested within groups such as countries, as the groups explain much of the cross-individual variation.

Table 1
Regression of strength of ethnic relative to national identification of all respondents in sub-Saharan Africa in Afrobarometer Rounds 3–6. Standard errors clustered at the country level. The outcome variable is coded such that higher values indicate a stronger national identity.

	Ethnic or National Identification Across sub-Saharan Africa			
	Ethnic vs. National (1–5)		Ethnic vs. National (0/1)	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Indirect Rule	−0.66***	−0.48*	−0.28***	−0.28*
	(0.156)	(0.238)	(0.075)	(0.137)
Year	0.02***	0.02***	0.01***	0.01***
	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.003)	(0.002)
British colony		−0.11		−0.03
		(0.087)		(0.054)
Ln GDP per capita (2000)		0.07		0.01
		(0.085)		(0.038)
Ethnic fractionalization		0.16		0.13
		(0.289)		(0.135)
Linguistic fractionalization		−0.32		−0.14
		(0.229)		(0.133)
Landlocked		−0.17*		−0.06
Education		(0.088)		(0.046)
		0.23***		0.12***
		(0.062)		(0.023)
Age		0.00**		0.00**
		(0.000)		(0.000)
Female		−0.06***		−0.02***
		(0.014)		(0.007)
Frequency without food		−0.02***		−0.02***
		(0.005)		(0.002)
Observations	124,936	116,107	73,892	68,821
Countries	27	27	27	27
Ethnicity FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
Cluster SE	✓	✓	✓	✓

Note: ***$p < 0.01$, **$p < 0.05$, *$p < 0.1$.

Interestingly, all the specifications show that, once controlling for the indirectness of colonial rule, being colonized by the British no longer exerts a significant effect on the relative salience of ethnicity, with the coefficient negative but insignificant. This suggests that the form of colonial rule rather than the colonizer *per se* matters more for the salience of ethnicity in the post-colonial context. Of course, in a sense the distinction between British and French colonial rule has been hypothesized to matter in part precisely because British rule was more 'indirect' (Blanton et al., 2001; Miles, 1994; Robinson, 2014; Ali et al. (2018)). These results support this theorized mechanism as, once controlling for the indirectness of colonial rule, there are no residual significant differences in strength of ethnic identification across former British and non-British colonies. Also interesting is that the effect of indirect colonial rule on the salience of ethnic identities is much stronger in earlier years of the Afrobarometer survey than in later years (Supplementary Appendix Table 1). This suggests, consistent with the path dependent theory of this paper, that the legacy of indirect colonial rule on contemporary social identification is far from determinative. Rather, the legacy of indirect colonial rule appears to be attenuating over time due to the different developmental and political trajectories of post-colonial African states.

One may be concerned that, given the measure of indirect colonial rule is based on customary court data from British colonies which has been interpolated to other countries in sub-Saharan Africa, that these results may being driven by measurement error in the indirect rule variable. To address this concern, I ran the same models only on respondents in former British colonies and there remains a substantively and statistically significant relationship between the indirectness of colonial rule and strength of ethnic identification (Supplementary Appendix Table 2). One may also be concerned that the uncovered relationship between indirect colonial rule and ethnic identification is not robust to changing the empirical specification. To address this concern, I replicated Robinson (2014) multilevel linear probability models with country and ethnic group random effects altered only through the inclusion of the measure of indirect colonial rule — and the results are quite similar (Supplementary Appendix Table 3).

Finally, a shortcoming of this analysis is that it relies heavily on a single measure of indirect colonial rule – itself based on a cross-section of British colonial court cases from a single year and thus prone to measurement error. To address this concern, we can follow Hariri (2012) and include specifications with other proxies used for the indirectness of colonial rule: early state history,[12] the proportion of the population today that is of European descent and that speaks a European language, and the duration of colonial rule. Though these are imperfect proxies, each of these measures to some degree picks up the penetration of European colonizers (Hariri, 2012, p. 476). When replicating Table 1 with these measures as the independent variable, the evidence also suggests a strong relationship between three out of the four proxies for the indirectness of colonial rule and the salience of contemporary ethnic identity; weaker pre-colonial states, a greater proportion of the population that is of European descent today, and a longer duration of colonial rule are all robustly associated with stronger national identities relative to ethnic identities (Supplementary Appendix Table 4).[13] This suggests that the uncovered relationship between the form of colonial rule and the contemporary salience of ethnicity is robust to measuring the indirectness of colonial rule in quite different ways.

Cross-country regressions, whilst substantively of interest in

[12] European colonizers tended to rule strong pre-colonial states indirectly, see Gerring et al. (2011).

[13] The proportion of the population that speaks a European language has no association with the salience of contemporary ethnic identity. However, given that most sub-Saharan African countries adopted the colonial language as the official language post-independence, a drawback of this measure is that it also likely picks up the penetration of the contemporary state and formal schooling — see Laitin and Ramachandran, 2016, p. 458.

their own right, should be interpreted cautiously and regarded as only suggestive of causal relationships as countries differ on so many potentially relevant dimensions. Nevertheless, these results establish an empirically robust and substantively important relationship between indirect colonial rule and strength of ethnic identity in contemporary sub-Saharan Africa.

5.1. Sub-national Analysis: Namibia

This section begins with an overview of the Namibian historical context. It then turns to a sub-national quantitative analysis similarly linking the form of colonial rule to the contemporary salience of ethnicity within Namibia.

5.2. Historical context: direct and indirect rule in Namibia

> "German administration was equipped with very scanty forces, because public opinion in Germany demanded an economical colonial policy. . .It would naturally have been more to the purpose had the administration been able from the very beginning to exert its authority throughout the entire land"
>
> German Colonial Office (1919, p. 41).

Namibia was arbitrarily divided by its German colonial rulers in 1897 (Miescher, 2012; Lechler and McNamee (2018)[14]). The more densely populated northern region had little or no European settlement whilst the German authorities directly ruled the central and southern regions of Namibia. This division, which was informally called the Red Line, was later formalized by the South African authorities through the Odendaal Commission of 1964 (Fig. 1). This division was unrelated to the productive potential of Namibian agricultural land as the southern region of Namibia actually receives significantly less rain and is largely arid (Mendelsohn, 2002). Thus, somewhat strikingly, the Germans (and later South Africans) did not systematically settle in the area of Namibia most environmentally well suited to large-scale commercial agriculture – indeed, quite the opposite is true (Werner & Odendaal, 2010).

Rather, the higher level of indigenous population density in the north meant that German colonization initially focused on central and southern Namibia. Stringent budgetary constraints precluded large-scale military expansion, and colonial authorities instead gradually expanded their territorial remit in the south by progressively playing off warring indigenous factions (German Colonial Office, 1919; Ofcansky, 1981). In 1897, a devastating rinderpest epidemic then swept from central Africa that was to kill almost 95 percent of central and southern Namibian cattle herds. This epidemic presented both a threat and an opportunity to the German colonists – it provided a key opportunity to consolidate the nascent colony in central and southern Namibia by securing vast tracts of land in the south relatively cheaply as the more arid land there was unable to be converted into crop-based agriculture, forcing many desperate indigenous landholders in the south to sell their land at extremely low prices (Eirola, 1992; Miescher, 2012); However, the epidemic also presented an economic threat to German herds and so insulation from future epidemics from central Africa became a first-order priority for the colony. Thus, at the time of the epidemic the Germans created a veterinary cordon fence at the extent of the area then directly controlled by the colonial authorities and left areas beyond this veterinary fence relatively untouched by German colonial rule (Eckl, 2007).

After creating a veterinary cordon fence to protect their livestock from future epidemics in 1897, the German government was then faced with the policy question of how to administer the areas north of the veterinary fence. The German and later South African authorities developed a policy of indirect colonial rule that created crudely defined racial 'homelands' to resettle displaced indigenous populations and either constructed or co-opted existing local indigenous authorities into administering these homelands. After the boundaries of the Red Line and ethnic homelands in both the north and south[15] were finalized as part of the Odendaal Commission of 1964, indirectly ruled areas were governed under a system in which legal rights were contingent upon membership in state-demarcated ethnic citizenships (Melber, 2015).

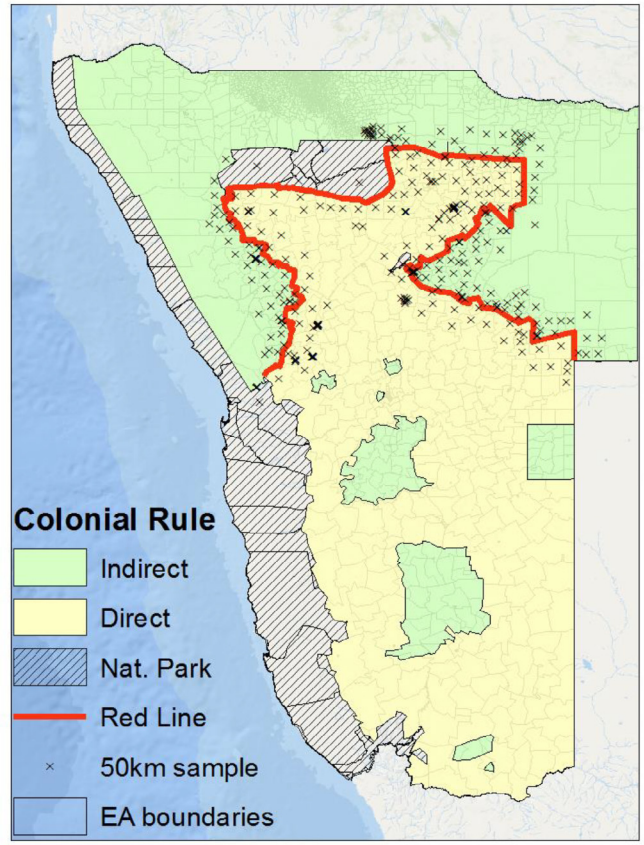

Fig. 1. Location of direct and indirectly ruled areas of Namibia formalized through the Odendaal Commission of 1964, the location of the Red Line, sampled areas within a 50 km buffer either side of the Red Line, and Namibian census Enumeration Areas (2001). Sources: Mendelsohn (2002), Namibian Statistics Agency. (For interpretation of the references to colour in this figure legend, the reader is referred to the web version of this article.)

The precise location the Red Line experienced a number of changes between 1897 and 1964 that should be noted (Fig. 2). Between 1907 and 1937 the location of the Red Line progressively expanded west and east due to efforts on the part of individual farmers to cultivate adjacent agricultural land (Miescher, 2012). In 1946 and seeking to encourage European settlement, the Lardner-Burke commission recommended a dramatic expansion of the Red Line northwards but this proposal was rejected for fear of exposing European herds to diseased cattle (Botha, 2000). Ultimately, after the Odendaal Commission of 1964, the South African government actually purchased back most of the white farms that were outside the initial Red Line and allocated these lands to new ethnic homelands. The Odendaal commissioners believed that this

[14] I here draw on Lechler and McNamee (2018)'s discussion of the historical development of the Red Line.

[15] As Fig. 1 shows, there were also a number of indirectly ruled areas south of the Red Line. These areas were designated for historically important communities in southern Namibia such as the Namas and Basters.

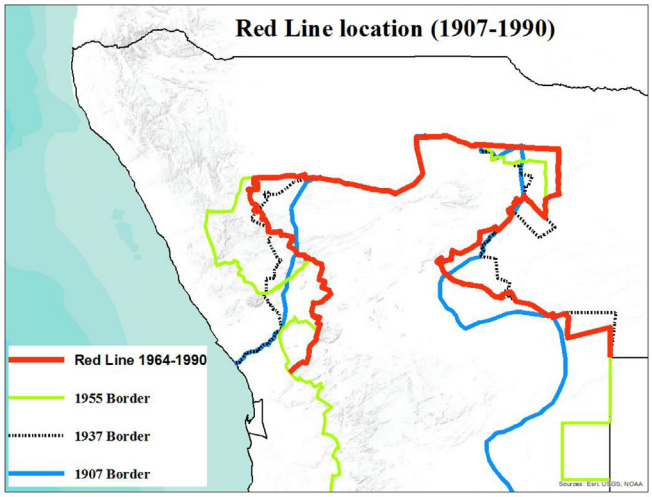

Fig. 2. Changes in boundaries defining area of legal European settlement between 1907 and 1990. 1907 is the first historical map representing the location of the Red Line. *Sources:* Karte des unter polizeilichen Schutzder Regierung zu stellenden Gebietes in Duetsch-Sudwest Afrika 1907; Verodnung betreffend Bildung von Wildreservaten in dem sudwesafrikanischen Schutzgebiet 22 March 1907, South West Africa – Suidwes Afrika 1937, Suidwes Afrika – South West Africa 1955, Suidwes Afrika – South West Africa 1966. National Archives of Namibia; Mendelsohn, 2002; Lechler and McNamee, 2018. (For interpretation of the references to colour in this figure legend, the reader is referred to the web version of this article.)

was necessary so that newly created racial homelands for the Damara and Herero would be economically viable (Odendaal Commission of Enquiry into South West Africa Affairs, 1964). After 1964, no further changes were made to the location of the Red Line.

Hence, whilst the final location of the Red Line in Namibia is clearly not random, it is the product of historical forces that are reasonably orthogonal to the political salience of ethnicity in contemporary Namibia. In particular, the boundary of the Red Line in 1964 was not drawn to respect the existing territorial distribution of pre-colonial ethnic groups (Fig. 3). For example, 'Damaraland' was created equally out of land previously occupied by the Damara and the Herero, whilst 'Hereroland' was fashioned almost entirely out of land previously occupied by the Heikum and the Kung (both now classified as 'San' groups). Moreover, areas immediately on the indirectly ruled side of the Red Line were previously cultivated by European settlers, indicating that such areas were suitable for direct rule. As such, localities within a small 50 km buffer either side of the final location of the Red Line represent credible counterfactuals for the effect of direct and indirect colonial rule.

Moreover, there was virtually no permanent migration across the border separating the indirectly and directly ruled areas during the colonial period. European settlement north of the border was heavily curtailed – for example, of the approximately 20,000 white settlers in South-West Africa in 1921, only 60 resided north of the veterinary cordon fence (Union of South Africa Office of Census and Statistics, 1921). On the other hand, non-white migration across the Red Line was tightly controlled – papers were required to cross the Red Line from the north, and temporary non-white migration occurred via a scheme that brought labourers from the north across the border to work on commercial farms for a period of 12–18 months (Melber, 1996; Moorsom, 1977). After the working period was over, such workers were required to return to their respective 'homelands' in order to minimize inter-ethnic mixing and so permanent migration was severely limited (Odendaal Commission of Enquiry into South West Africa Affairs, 1964).

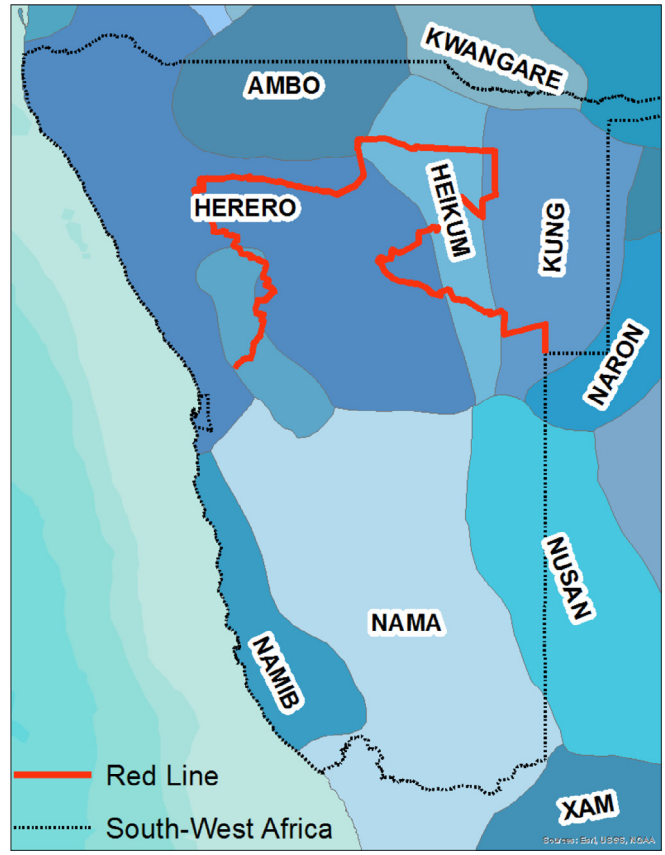

Fig. 3. Namibian Red Line and distribution of pre-colonial ethnic groups. *Sources*: (Mendelsohn, 2002; Murdock, 1959; Nunn, 2008; Lechler and McNamee 2018). (For interpretation of the references to colour in this figure legend, the reader is referred to the web version of this article.)

5.3. Historical context: post-independence politics in Namibia

Namibia secured independence from Apartheid South Africa in 1990 and successfully transitioned toward stable multi-party democracy under the supervision of the United Nations. Namibia has been rated as 'Free' by Freedom House and has maintained an average above 6 on the Polity score in all of its post-independence period. However, although regional and national political structures across the formerly directly and indirectly ruled regions of Namibia were homogenized after independence, differences in customary legal regimes and local governance structures persist, with governance in the northern region dominated by influential traditional leaders administering areas under customary tenure whilst the southern region remains under freehold and bureaucratic governance (Melber, 2015; Werner & Odendaal, 2010).[16]

With respect to post-independence politics, Namibian politics has been largely dominated by the South West African People's Organization (SWAPO), which has relied on valence and the legacy of its anti-colonial struggle to draw cross-ethnic support (Düsing, 2002; Elischer, 2013). Two particular political issues have proven highly contested since independence in Namibia, however – land rights and the status of traditional leaders in local governance. In line with the theoretical argument of this paper, conflict over communal land and traditional leadership has catalyzed ethnic mobilization in formerly indirectly ruled areas of Namibia.

[16] Traditional leaders do indeed still exist in the south - however, as they have no legal jurisdiction or authority, their role is largely symbolic (Keulder, 2000).

Land is an important asset to much of the Namibian population; over 60 percent of Namibians depend on agriculture for their livelihood (Melber, 2015). Persistent attempts to rationalize communal land holdings since independence, however, have stalled in the face of fierce communal resistance. In line with the theoretical argument of this paper, individuals in formerly indirectly ruled areas have sought to protect ethnically-based land privileges and evict ethnic outsiders that have tried to either graze on or illegally 'fence off' communal land (Open Society Initiative for Southern Afric, 2012). Moreover, traditional leaders, marginalized by the Communal Land Reform Act (2002) which aimed to set up formal Land Boards to control communal land, have been highly active in mobilizing their communities to prevent its implementation and protect "ancestral" land rights – in one case, even appealing to the UN on the basis that their "traditional territory being invaded by the ruling Owambo ethnic group that controls the ruling SWAPO Party. . .We are losing our land. Our land is being fenced by outsiders" (Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa, 2012). These divisions continue to manifest at the highest levels of Namibian government – for example, in 2016 the deputy minister of land reform Bernadus Swartbooi implored Namas, Hereros and Damaras to 'stand up' and defend their ancestral land from northern Owambos before he was sacked by the President.

Within directly ruled areas of Namibia, however, the distribution of land has been one facet of a broader conflict over persistent and extreme economic inequality. Most significantly, the ongoing issue of housing for urban squatters, estimated at 900,000 people (35% of Namibia's population), spectacularly exploded in 2015 with the emergence of the biggest social movement in Namibia since independence, Affirmative Repositioning (AR) (Becker, 2016). AR, whose central aim is to improve the socio-economic conditions of urban youth, organized more than 50,000 land applications at municipal offices in 2015 and threatened the government with mass land occupations in urban areas. In response, President Geingob personally negotiated with AR to establish a new Ministry of Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare and jointly launched a plan to increase housing provision in major urban areas (Republic of Namibia, 2015). AR has since broadened out into a broad class-based movement that aims to combat â€œthe 'social ills' of poverty, inequality, hunger and disease" (Becker, 2016). Thus, in directly ruled areas of Namibia, contentious politics since independence has largely been centered around economic inequality.

The status of traditional leaders has also proven another highly contested aspect of Namibian politics in formerly indirectly ruled areas. Opposition parties, led by a number of high-profile traditional leaders such as Kuaima Riruako or Justus Garoeb, have historically tried to formally include traditional leaders in local governance structures whereas the governing party SWAPO regularly rails against the 'tribalism' of its political opponents, consistently rejecting proposals to do so and even placing restrictions on the eligibility of traditional leaders to run for political office (Düsing, 2002). Seeking to forestall ethnic political appeals, SWAPO has enshrined a constitutional duty that the Cabinet and National Assembly must "remain vigilant and vigorous for the purposes of ensuring that the scourges of apartheid, tribalism and colonialism do not again manifest themselves in any form in a free and independent Namibia" (Namibian Constitution, 1990) and its political opponents regularly have to defend themselves against the charge of tribalism.

Thus, ethnic mobilisation in formerly indirectly ruled areas of Namibia can best be characterized as a process through which the indigenous elite beneficiaries of indirect colonial rule have mobilized co-ethnics to protect ethnically demarcated systems of governance. State efforts to rationalize governance across Namibia have manifested latent inter-ethnic bases of conflict. Contest over the institutional legacies of indirect colonial rule – customary legal rights and traditional leadership – have thereby helped foster ethnic cleavage formation in formerly indirectly ruled areas of Namibia by instituting conflict of material interests between non-co-ethnics and the mobilizational means to collectively organize co-ethnics around a particular axis of ethnic difference.

6. Data and specification

The within-country analysis of ethnic identification in Namibia parallels the cross-country analysis, similarly using the full sample of all individual-level data from the Afrobarometer survey between Rounds 3–5.[17] A key virtue of using Afrobarometer to measure spatial variation in ethnic identification in Namibia is that each individual response contains a geocode corresponding to the Enumeration Areas (EAs) in the Namibian census, which each contain roughly 500 households. Thus, we also have the ability to locate each individual according to whether they live in a former indirectly or directly ruled area.

The data on the spatial incidence of direct and indirect colonial rule comes from the original Odendaal Report (Odendaal Commission of Enquiry into South West Africa Affairs, 1964) as digitized by Mendelsohn (2002). I exclude from the analyses individuals living in national parks, which were neither direct not indirectly ruled. Because the Red Line cuts through traditional ethnic territories, all ethnic groups are present in both indirect and directly ruled areas.

The key dependent variable of interest is, as before, the strength of ethnic/national identification. I control for both the year of the sample and ethnic fixed effects, thereby picking up the confounding effects of time and ethnic-group specific differences in the salience of ethnicity. Hence, we are only comparing strength of ethnic identification among members of the same ethnic group.

To control for the confounding effect of space more generally, I include specifications controlling for both latitude and longitude and respondent distance to the Red Line measured at the EA level. I also include specifications with and without the same individual-level demographic controls as in the cross-country analysis to ensure the results are not being driven by post-treatment control bias.

The main Namibian empirical specification is thus:

$$Y_{ide} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Indirectrule_d + X'_{ide}\Gamma + \eta_e + \varepsilon_{ide}$$

where Y expresses the strength of national identification for individual i, living in enumeration area d, belonging to the ethnic group e. *Indirectrule* is a dummy variable indicating whether the individual lives in an enumeration area which was indirect or directly ruled. **X** is a set of control variables including year of the sample, longitude, latitude and distance to the Red Line, and are the ethnicity fixed effects.

I estimate this equation through OLS and cluster standard errors at the enumeration-area (EA) level to account for the survey design which randomly sampled EAs in Namibia.

7. Results

There is also a significant relationship between indirect colonial rule and strength of ethnic identification across Namibia (Table 2). Respondents in areas of Namibia ruled indirectly during the colonial era are 8 percentage points more likely to identify more strongly with their ethnic group relative to the nation (an average 0.15 fall on a 5 point scale). This result is unchanged when controlling flexibly for location. The estimated coefficient is smaller in

[17] Round 6 was not available when applying for the geocoded dataset.

Table 2
OLS regression of strength of ethnic relative to national identification of all respondents in Namibia. Geographic controls include longitude, latitude and distance to the Red Line. Standard errors clustered by Enumeration Area. The outcome variable is coded such that higher values indicate a stronger national identity.

	Ethnic or National Identification Across Namibia			
	Ethnic vs. National (1–5)		Ethnic vs. National (0/1)	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Indirect Rule	−0.15**	−0.18**	−0.08***	−0.08*
	(0.058)	(0.078)	(0.026)	(0.039)
Observations	2930	2930	1670	1670
Ethnicity FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
Geographic controls	X	✓	X	✓
Cluster SE	✓	✓	✓	✓

Note: ***$p < 0.01$, **$p < 0.05$, *$p < 0.1$.

magnitude than the cross-country estimates. Given that indirect rule tended to be employed to govern more centralized and developed pre-colonial groups, this suggests that the cross-country estimates may be biased upwards by omitted variables. By only comparing individuals in the same country, the within-Namibia results provide stronger evidence that indirect colonial rule is causally associated with the salience of ethnicity.

However, given the incidence of direct and indirect rule across Namibia as a whole was non-random, we can also only compare individuals 50 km either side of the Red Line. As the Namibia Context section makes clear, the location of the Red Line can reasonably be considered orthogonal to contemporary ethnic identification so individuals immediately either side of the Red Line constitute plausible counter-factuals for one another. Comparing individuals of the same ethnic group within 50 km of the Red Line, I also find a significant relationship between indirect rule and strength of ethnic identification (Table 3). The estimated coefficient is now greater in magnitude with indirect rule associated with a 20 percentage point increase in the probability an individual will identify more strongly with their ethnic group relative to identifying as Namibian. This result is unchanged when including geographic controls.

Whilst aware that this introduces post-treatment control bias, we can also instead control for confounders by controlling for individual demographic characteristics. Controlling for the standard demographic characteristics of age, education, gender, income and regional ethno-linguistic fractionalization and the proportion of a region that is white, the estimated effect of indirect rule across Namibia is approximately identical to the uncontrolled estimates with indirect rule associated with a 7 percentage point increase in the probability an individual will identify more strongly with their ethnic group (Table 4). This suggests the results are not merely a function of different levels of modernization or ethnic heterogeneity across indirect and directly ruled areas of Namibia.

Interestingly, the results tend to strengthen when including a measure of the proportion of a respondent's region that is white and this measure it itself associated with more salient national identities. Because the inclusion of this measure strengthens rather than weakens the effects of indirect rule, this suggests that white settlement is not the causal mechanism behind the effect of indirect colonial rule — rather, the institutional legacies of direct colonial rule and the demographic legacies of European settlement exert *separate* yet complementary effects in strengthening national identities. It could be, for example, that the presence of whites diminishes the perceived importance of other inter-ethnic divisions or that economically privileged whites strategically promote nationalism in order to avoid becoming political targets. Further unpacking the mechanisms linking proximity to white settlers and stronger national identities is thus a promising avenue for future research.

Finally, I also checked whether the results were robust to changing the form of the regression. Because the response variables are an ordinal category (1–5) and a binary indicator (0/1), I replicated Table 2 using ordered logistic and logistic regressions — neither of which changes the significant association between indirect colonial rule and strength of ethnic identification in Namibia (Supplementary Appendix Table 5).

Thus, in sum, there is consistent evidence that individuals in areas of both sub-Saharan Africa and Namibia ruled indirectly during the colonial era are more likely to identify with their ethnic group. Before moving onto causal mechanism tests, it is important to acknowledge that a potential pitfall for this analysis is, however, selective sorting (McCauley & Posner, 2015). In this case, selective sorting is the concern that individuals with stronger national identities have disproportionately migrated out of formerly indirectly ruled areas to directly ruled areas, biasing the effect of indirect rule on the salience of ethnicity upwards. As outlined above, there was little to no permanent migration across the Namibian Red Line so selective sorting during the colonial era is not a plausible confounder. Unfortunately Afrobarometer did not ask respondents about their migration background, however I have also tried to control for the confounding influence of post-independence migration by including measures of factors that affect an individual's

Table 3
Regression of strength of ethnic relative to national identification of all respondents within 50 km of the Red Line in Namibia. Geographic controls include longitude, latitude and distance to the Red Line. Standard errors clustered by Enumeration Area. The outcome variable is coded such that higher values indicate a stronger national identity.

	Ethnic or National Identification Within 50 km of Red Line			
	Ethnic vs. National (1–5)		Ethnic vs. National (0/1)	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Indirect Rule	−0.33*	−0.43**	−0.20**	−0.22***
	(0.189)	(0.193)	(0.079)	(0.081)
Observations	288	288	162	162
Ethnicity FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
Geographic controls	X	✓	X	✓
Cluster SE	✓	✓	✓	✓

Note: ***$p < 0.01$, **$p < 0.05$, *$p < 0.1$.

Table 4
Regression of strength of ethnic relative to national identification of all respondents in Namibia. Geographic controls include longitude, latitude and distance to the Red Line. Standard errors clustered by Enumeration Area. The outcome variable is coded such that higher values indicate a stronger national identity.

	Ethnic or National Identification in Namibia with Controls			
	Ethnic vs. National (1–5)		Ethnic vs. National (0/1)	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Indirect Rule	−0.17**	−0.21**	−0.08*	−0.09**
	(0.086)	(0.089)	(0.041)	(0.044)
Year	−0.01	−0.01*	−0.00	−0.00
	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.004)	(0.004)
Education	0.46***	0.45***	0.22***	0.22***
	(0.162)	(0.163)	(0.066)	(0.067)
Age	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Region ELF	−0.25	−0.03	−0.13	−0.04
	(0.197)	(0.210)	(0.095)	(0.105)
Region % White	0.76*	0.77	0.50**	0.54*
	(0.408)	(0.615)	(0.201)	(0.328)
Female	−0.08*	−0.07*	−0.05**	−0.04**
	(0.040)	(0.040)	(0.020)	(0.020)
Without Food	−0.05**	−0.05**	−0.03***	−0.03***
	(0.023)	(0.023)	(0.010)	(0.010)
Observations	2,900	2,900	1,652	1,652
Ethnicity FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
Geographic controls	X	✓	X	✓
Cluster SE	✓	✓	✓	✓

Note: ***$p < 0.01$, **$p < 0.05$, *$p < 0.1$.

likelihood of migrating across regional borders – age and education (Namibia Statistics Agency, 2015). The inclusion of these measures does not change the significance of the coefficient on indirect rule (Table 4). Thus, non-compliance and selective sorting would struggle to account for the documented relationship between indirect colonial rule and the salience of ethnicity in Namibia.

Moreover, a key advantage of showing that the relationship between indirect colonial rule and the salience of ethnicity holds across a small 50 km zone, Namibia as a whole and across sub-Saharan Africa is that it is progressively less credible that any single confounder could be driving these results. Hence, whilst as in all historically oriented work and particularly those that try to leverage variation across borders, one cannot rule out all potential confounders, the evidence provided above is nonetheless suggestive of a causal relationship between indirect colonial rule and the salience of ethnicity as a social boundary.

7.1. Causal mechanism: traditional leadership and customary land

What causal mechanism likely accounts for the greater salience of ethnicity in areas of sub-Saharan Africa ruled indirectly during the colonial era? Following Judd and Kenny (1981) and Baron and Kenny (1986), if indirect colonial rule affects the salience of ethnicity through a particular causal mechanism or 'mediator' such as modernization or traditional leadership, then a number of conditions should be satisfied. First, indirect colonial rule should actually be significantly associated with the mediator. Second, when controlling for the mediator, the effect of indirect colonial rule on the strength of ethnic identification should be attenuated. This is because by controlling for the mediator one is removing the effect of the mediator on ethnic identification, so if indirect colonial rule affects ethnic identification *through* the mediator then the magnitude of the controlled effect of indirect rule should fall. If the effect of indirect colonial is completely attenuated when controlling for a particular mediator (i.e. the coefficient is zero), then this suggests the mediator completely mediates the causal relationship.

Thus, whilst it may seem initially difficult to establish the causal mechanism connecting indirect colonial rule and the strength of ethnic identification given indirect rule has been shown to affect a number of different outcomes, we can adjudicate between competing mediators by conducting empirical tests. First, we can test whether indirect colonial rule is significant associated with a variety of theoretically important mediators including ethnic homogeneity, presence of whites, contact with traditional leaders, levels of education and income. We can then test whether the effect of indirect rule is attenuated when controlling for the mediator. As Table 4 has already demonstrated, however, the estimated effect of indirect colonial rule is approximately identical both controlling and not controlling for regional ethnic composition, education and income. Thus, we can plausibly rule out these variables as important mediators.

The theorized mediator for indirect rule in this paper has been the path dependent persistence of traditional leadership and customary land institutions in formerly indirectly ruled areas. To quantitatively test whether this theorized institutional path dependence is indeed borne out in the data, I measure the importance of traditional leadership by survey respondent frequency of contact with traditional leaders on a 0 (never) to 3 (often) scale. The importance of customary land rights is measured through a binary indicator of whether the survey respondent says land allocation in the locality is primarily the responsibility of traditional leaders — a proxy for the strength of local customary land rights relative to freehold title.

Consistent with the path dependent theoretical argument of this paper, indirect colonial rule is indeed associated with more frequent contact with traditional leaders and a more important role for traditional leaders relative to the government in allocating land (Table 5). Moreover, consistent with the mediating importance of traditional leadership, when controlling for individual frequency of contact with traditional leaders, the effect of indirect rule is estimated at approximately zero (Table 6). Similarly, when controlling for whether a respondent suggests land is primarily allocated by traditional leaders, the effect of indirect colonial rule on national identification is actually positive but insignificant (Table 7).[16]

[16] The sample size here changes with each specification because the questions with respect to contact to traditional leaders and customary land were not asked in every survey round.

Table 5
OLS regression of frequency of contact with traditional leaders and whether respondents suggest land is primarily allocated by traditional leaders in Namibia. Geographic controls include longitude, latitude and distance to the Red Line. Standard errors clustered by Enumeration Area. Outcome variables coded such that higher values indicate more frequent contact to traditional leaders or the presence of customary land.

	Traditional Leader and Customary Land in Namibia			
	Contact with Traditional Leader (0–3)		Customary land (0/1)	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Indirect Rule	0.37***	0.26***	0.18***	0.14***
	(0.041)	(0.052)	(0.035)	(0.038)
Observations	4040	4040	920	920
Ethnicity FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
Geographic controls	X	✓	X	✓
Cluster SE	✓	✓	✓	✓

Note: ***$p < 0.01$, **$p < 0.05$, *$p < 0.1$.

Table 6
OLS regression of strength of ethnic relative to national identification of all respondents in Namibia controlling for causal mechanism of contact with traditional leaders. Geographic controls include longitude, latitude and distance to the Red Line. Standard errors clustered by Enumeration Area. The outcome variable is coded such that higher values indicate a stronger national identity.

	Causal Mechanism Test: Traditional Leaders			
	Ethnic vs. National (1–5)		Ethnic vs. National (0/1)	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Indirect Rule	−0.02	−0.08	−0.03	−0.05
	(0.067)	(0.087)	(0.031)	(0.043)
Frequency of contact to traditional leader	−0.02	−0.03	0.00	−0.00
	(0.031)	(0.030)	(0.014)	(0.014)
Observations	1942	1942	1128	1128
Ethnicity FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
Geographic controls	X	✓	X	✓
Cluster SE	✓	✓	✓	✓

Note: ***$p < 0.01$, **$p < 0.05$, *$p < 0.1$.

Table 7
Regression of strength of ethnic relative to national identification of all respondents in Namibia controlling for the potential causal mechanism of customary land tenure measured by whether the respondent says land is primarily allocated by traditional leaders. Geographic controls include longitude, latitude and distance to the Red Line. Standard errors clustered by Enumeration Area. The outcome variable is coded such that higher values indicate a stronger national identity.

	Causal Mechanism Test: Customary Land			
	Ethnic vs. National (1–5)		Ethnic vs. National (0/1)	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Indirect Rule	0.14	0.11	0.06	0.07
	(0.116)	(0.119)	(0.076)	(0.078)
Customary land	−0.14	−0.12	−0.07	−0.05
	(0.100)	(0.103)	(0.057)	(0.058)
Observations	912	912	479	479
Ethnicity FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
Geographic controls	X	✓	X	✓
Cluster SE	✓	✓	✓	✓

Note: ***$p < 0.01$, **$p < 0.05$, *$p < 0.1$.

This result holds when instead including other variables that measure the closeness of a respondent to traditional leaders – including how well an individual feels traditional leaders listen (Supplementary Appendix Tables 6 and 7), and how much an individual trusts traditional leaders (Supplementary Appendix Tables 6 and 8). Similarly, the evidence suggests that traditional leadership and customary land rights is an important mediator for the cross-country relationship between indirect colonial rule and the salience of ethnicity. When controlling for these theorized mediators, the coefficient on indirect rule is approximately halved relative to the uncontrolled baseline in Table 1 and its statistical significance is unstable (Supplementary Appendix Table 9).

Thus, whilst this form of non-experimental mediation analysis can only ever be suggestive (c.f. Bullock & Ha, 2011; Gerber & Green, 2012), the evidence indicates that the institutional legacies of traditional leadership and customary land rights in formerly indirectly ruled areas mediate the relationship between indirect colonial rule and strength of ethnic identification. These results thus help advance our understanding of why ethnicity still remains so salient in formerly indirectly ruled areas of sub-Saharan Africa, as ethnically differentiated institutions path dependently retain a central role in allocating resources and structuring local governance.

8. Conclusion

Hence, taken together, the findings presented in this paper provide consistent evidence that the form of colonial rule is an important factor affecting the salience of ethnicity in the

post-colonial context. Even when only comparing members of the same ethnic group in different areas, indirect colonial rule is positively associated with strength of ethnic identification both across sub-Saharan Africa as a whole, within the country of Namibia, and within a 50 km zone either side of the boundary dividing formerly indirectly and directly ruled areas of Namibia. The evidence moreover suggests that this relationship is being driven by persistent regional differences in the institutional importance of traditional leadership and customary land in the post-colonial era.

In shifting our analytical attention to sub-national variation in the salience of ethnicity, this paper advances our understanding of both the legacies of colonialism and of ethnic politics. As noted by a number of scholars, cross-national comparisons have the drawback of concealing often substantial internal heterogeneity in outcomes such as democratization, diversity and development (Boone, 2003; Gershman & Rivera, 2018; McLaughlin, 2007; Sidel, 2014; Snyder, 2001). With respect to ethnic politics, for example, particular ethnic distinctions can be salient in some regions such as Kwa-Zulu Natal of South Africa, Gujarat in India or county Tyrone of Northern Ireland whilst being markedly less salient elsewhere in the same country (Chandra, 2007; Jha, 2013; Whyte, 1991). By accounting for regional variation in the salience of ethnicity in Namibia, this paper hopes to help advance a research agenda that can account for important regional differences in the salience of ethnicity elsewhere in the world.

Moreover, by exploiting sub-national variation in the form of colonial rule, this paper helps overcome the more well-known issues of causal inference in cross-national analyses. For some time, theorization of the legacies of colonialism in sub-Saharan Africa have focused primarily on cross-national comparisons (e.g. Acemoglu et al., 2001; Hariri, 2012; Lange, 2004; Miles, 1994; Robinson, 2014)[17]. Bolstering cross-national analysis of colonial legacies with more fine-grained and textured sub-national analysis, this paper provides the strongest evidence to date of a causal link between the institutional legacies of indirect colonial rule and the salience of ethnic identities in sub-Saharan Africa. Given the robust association between polarized ethnic identities and a battery of important political and economic outcomes that impede development (e.g. Dahl, 1971; Easterly & Levine, 1997; Habyarimana et al., 2009; La Porta et al., 1999; Montalvo & Reynal-Querol, 2005), these results thus also help us understand why areas of the world ruled indirectly during the colonial era tend to lag so greatly on measures of development today.

Above all, however, the results of this paper suggest that greater emphasis should be placed on institutions as a source of spatial variance in the salience of ethnicity. The role of colonial authorities in historically generating new social boundaries has been well documented (e.g. Laitin, 1986; Tilly, 2004), yet ethnicity is more than a purely ideational force constructed by elites in the past; in areas with ethnically demarcated institutions, one's ethnic identity is essential for securing and maintaining access to scarce resources. This institutionalist perspective contrasts with alternative theoretical traditions that locate the salience of ethnic categories in micro-sociological processes — for example, the dynamics of urban occupational competition (e.g. Bates, 1974; Olzak, 1992), the visibility of ethnic markers (e.g. Chandra, 2007; Hale, 2004; Van den Berghe, 1987), or the rational organizational choices of electoral parties (e.g. Eifert et al., 2010; Posner, 2005). Rather, the results of this paper support the contention that the 'obstructive chieftainships' (Coleman, 1954) and ethnically demarcated customary institutions set up by colonial authorities to govern subject indigenous populations are also an important explanatory factor behind the ongoing salience of ethnicity as a political cleavage (Boone, 2014; Mamdani, 1996). As newly independent African states shifted towards direct rule over rural areas, the institutional legacies of indirect rule have provided a structural basis for inter-ethnic conflict in sub-Saharan Africa as chiefs have politically mobilized their co-ethnics in defence of shared customary rights. There is great scope for future work to further theorize the operation of ethnicity in sub-Saharan Africa through the lens of conflict over membership in sticky juridical categories that govern the right to scarce resources.

Promisingly, this institutionalist perspective on ethnicity may allow us to bridge our understanding of ethnic and racial politics across the Global North and South (c.f. Horowitz, 1985; Chandra, 2007). Assuming similar motivations and goals among all social actors, there is little reason to believe without further justification that the forces that cause ethnicity to become salient differ between developed and developing countries. Moreover, consistent with the emerging institutionalist tradition in the study of ethnic politics (e.g. Brubaker, 1996; Dunning & Harrison, 2010; Hechter, 2004; Jha, 2013; Laitin, 1986; Miguel, 2004; Wimmer, 2013), ethnicity is also highly salient in areas of the Global North such as the United States or Northern Ireland where institutions historically allocated scarce resources on the basis of ethnicity; in such areas, privileged groups would similarly be expected to mobilize to protect structural privileges. Hence, whilst this paper has provided evidence for the importance of the institutional legacies of indirect colonial rule in causing ethnic cleavage formation in sub-Saharan Africa, the broader theoretical perspective suggests that there may be great potential for different institutional configurations to account for previously unexplained variation in the nature of political conflict and ethnic boundaries around the world.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The author is unaware of any conflicts of interest.

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Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2019.05.017.

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