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Ethno-Religious Composition of Colonial Security Forces and Post-Independence Civil Wars

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Civil War and International Politics: Syria in Context

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Political Science
Ethno-Religious Composition of Colonial Security Forces and Post-Independence Civil Wars

Introduction

Hypotheses about the inevitability of ethnic hatred and sectarian divisions have persisted to the modern day. Both interested observers and international policy makers consistently blame civil conflict on unsolvable and long-running disagreements between groups that are ethnically or religiously different. Though such explanations are popular, the political science literature has come to varying conclusions about the actual significance of ethnic fragmentation on the frequency of civil war. The lack of conclusive evidence suggesting a causal link between ethnic or religious diversity and propensity of civil conflict does not, however, suggest that these identities play no role in the outbreak of civil violence.

To date, no one has thoroughly explored the relationship between the ethnic or sectarian composition of the military during colonial times and the likelihood of civil war post-independence. Although Subhasish Ray at the National University of Singapore has written fairly extensively on the preference of imperial powers for minority groups in the military, he has not explored the implications of that finding on civil conflict after independence.\(^1\) This relationship is worth considering because colonial powers staffed their militaries primarily with members of minority groups, and some theories suggest small groups with outsized military capabilities create conflict. Because majority groups are threatened by their potential power, they work to exclude them, leading to rebellion and insurgency.\(^2\)

Therefore, I hypothesize that there may in fact be significant implications of minoritarian structure in the colonial security apparatus on the frequency and persistence of civil war after

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independence. First, I expect that civil conflict will be more likely to occur in countries where minorities were primarily recruited to the colonial forces. In this instance, civil conflict is measured as a dichotomous variable, in which two outcomes are possible—the presence of conflict and the absence of it. Second, the number of years between independence and violence outbreak will be shorter in countries where minorities were recruited to the colonial military because the two groups will have incentives to move quickly to consolidate power. Finally, because civil wars between ethnic groups are often fought as peripheral insurgencies between minorities on the edges and majorities in the center, they tend to last longer due to their guerilla nature. Therefore, I expect the total number of civil war years post-independence to be higher and the average length of civil war to be longer in countries where minorities filled the colonial security apparatus as compared to those without that colonial preference for minorities.

The states of the Middle East and North Africa, where both colonialism and civil war have been very prevalent, are a good place to start in the search for a relationship between minorities in the colonial military and civil wars after independence. After collecting data on colonial force composition and civil war post-independence in seventeen countries in that region, I find strong support for my first and third hypotheses and some support for my second. I find that colonial military recruitment of ethno-religious minorities is associated with the existence of civil war post-independence, a higher total number of civil war years post-independence, and a longer average length of civil war. I also find evidence that civil wars will break out more quickly in places where minorities filled the colonial forces, but the evidence does not support the idea that civil war breaks out immediately following the removal of the colonial power.

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This paper is separated into the following six sections: theory, methods, force composition, civil war data, results, and conclusion. First, in the theory section, I discuss the existing literature related to martial race theory and colonial preference for minorities. I also explain the relationship I expect to find between my two variables. Next, I describe the methods by which I chose my country set and collected my data. In the Force Composition section, I describe how I coded each of the countries in my set for the variable of preference for minorities in the security apparatus. In the next section, I show how each country was coded for civil war prevalence following independence and include a list of all civil wars used in my coding. In the following section, I analyze the results of my research to determine if they support my hypotheses. Finally, I conclude by recapping my findings and suggesting paths for future work related to this project.

Theory

Evidence that colonial powers considered ethnicity when recruiting military forces is abundant in the current political science and historical literature. Imperial powers often selected specific ethnic groups from within their colonies to staff the military, which essentially functioned as an internal police. Subhasish Ray discusses at length the various methods by which the “martial race” in each place was selected, but he finds that in general they were chosen for their loyalty and inability to pose a significant threat to the metro pole.⁴ Although the imperial powers justified their selections by arguing that certain groups had the “warrior” qualities necessary to serve, in actuality, the chosen “race” often was less politically or militarily developed than other groups in the colony. As Roger Petersen explains, the “colonial powers often employed a divide-and-rule policy that built one of the less dominant groups into a ‘martial

race” as a means of counteracting the possible power of other ethnic groups. In certain places, a similar strategy was applied to minority religious groups for the same reasons.

When states gained their independence from colonial powers, they had to determine who would lead their newly independent country. Neither side can trust the other to guarantee its security or interests in a post-colonial environment, so both have strong incentives to secure their own grasp on political control. In places where the colonial powers had given minorities positions of power and dominance in the military, after independence, majority ethnic or religious groups had strong incentives to overturn this status quo, while minorities clearly had strong incentives to preserve it.

Therefore, at the point of independence, the majority group has to find non-conventional ways to battle the minority because it has control of military tools. Philip Roessler establishes that people “are more likely to exclude groups that represent a credible threat to their political survival than other, less powerful ones.” The majority is likely threatened by the potential power of the minority due to its status in the military, and therefore it will work to consolidate power and exclude them. To do so, the majority can call for elections or just assume control of the government and military, leveraging their larger numbers, or they can attempt to pay off the minority.

On the other hand, the minority group, which has benefited from years of favoritism and dominance of the security forces, is likely to take extreme measures to maintain its power. Since the accession of the majority to power may jeopardize not only the minority’s special status but also their lives, members of the “martial race” will do whatever they can to prevent the majority

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from taking control. They often choose to leverage their outsized military capabilities to fight for power, using their security experience to develop an insurgency to battle the majority.

According to James Fearon, without the colonial power to guarantee peace, if the minority fears it will lose patronage and “anticipates that its ability to fight for a better deal will decline in the future”\(^7\) due to state consolidation, there may be “a surge in ethnic violence as a result of a commitment problem.”\(^8\) If the majority group is able to take control through their numerical advantage, the minority can use soldiers and military equipment to develop an insurgency in order to secure the patronage they had been receiving from the metro pole. Since many minority groups came from the periphery of states, they may choose to wage a guerilla war for control of the periphery against the majority groups at the center. As Fearon explains, these wars tend to take the form of guerilla insurgencies, which last longer by nature than civil conflicts emanating from tensions between groups at the center.\(^9\)

In sum, regardless of how either the minority or majority chooses to attempt to gain power following independence, we expect three particular outcomes in countries where minorities were primarily recruited to the colonial forces. First, we expect civil conflict to be more likely to ensue. Second, due to the incentives for both sides to try to consolidate power quickly, particularly the minority, we expect a short length of time between independence and the first outbreak of violence. Finally, because many of the minorities who received preference from the imperial powers came from the rural outlands, the wars they fight for control are likely to take the form of peripheral insurgencies. Since these are usually fought through guerilla

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\(^9\) James D. Fearon, “Why Do Some Civil Wars Last So Much Longer Than Others?”. 
tactics, we expect these conflicts to last longer, contributing to a higher number of civil war years post independence and a longer average length of civil war.

An alternative hypothesis, however, may be that the simple presence of ethnic minorities in these countries is the real driver of civil war, not the fact that these groups were given preference in colonial militaries. As mentioned earlier, however, there is significant evidence that ethnic fragmentation itself does not account for higher levels of civil war when income levels and other variables are held constant.\textsuperscript{10} Therefore, it is worth exploring whether there may be a causal relationship between preference for minorities in colonial security apparatuses and civil war prevalence.

Another plausible hypothesis might be that many countries in my data set were primarily colonized due to their abundance of natural resources, particularly oil, and that civil war may be more likely when there are valuable resources at stake for groups to compete over. A quick review of which countries in the Middle East and North Africa experienced civil war, however, shows that many of the countries with the most oil, particularly the UAE, Bahrain, and Qatar, never experienced civil war. Therefore, this hypothesis also does not seem to hold up, at least in this subset.

\textit{Methods}

To explore my hypotheses, I chose to focus on the following countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region: Algeria, Iran, Jordan, Yemen, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Iraq, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, Tunisia, Egypt, Israel, Libya, Qatar, and Turkey. For each country, I started off by identifying the colonial ruler, if one existed, and if

\textsuperscript{10} James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War," \textit{American Political Science Review} 97, 1 (March 2003): 75-90.
more than one existed, I identified the colonial ruler from whom the country gained independence. The International Correlates of War History Data codes every state in the world on a series of variables, including primary colonial ruler and the colonial power from which it gained independence.

I used this information to narrow down my country set to eliminate any state that was never a colony. First, Turkey was never colonized, but rather was the primary seat of the Ottoman Empire. Second, Iran was never a colony but instead the seat of the Persian Empire. Finally, although parts of Saudi Arabia were claimed at various times by the Ottomans, it remained primarily ruled by tribal chiefs until it was unified in the early 1930s in its modern form. Therefore, I removed Turkey, Iran, and Saudi Arabia from my original data set, and I also separated Yemen into North Yemen and South Yemen, since the Ottomans and the British, respectively, colonized the two areas separately.

To test my hypothesis, I compared the ethnic and religious composition of the colonial military forces within a state to three different variables. To discover what ethnic groups I should be looking for in each colonial military, I drew on both Fearon’s dataset, “Ethnic and Cultural Diversity by Country”\textsuperscript{11}, as well as George Murdock’s Ethnographic Atlas.\textsuperscript{12} These sources allowed me to develop a sense of the ethnic and religious groups within each state. I then used Library of Congress country studies, as well as other scholarly articles, to determine the composition of the colonial security forces. Next, using Fearon and Laitin’s dataset from their “Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War”\textsuperscript{13} research project, I identified whether there was civil conflict.

\textsuperscript{13} James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War," \textit{American Political Science Review} 97, 1 (March 2003): 75-90.
war after independence in each state, and if so, the length between the date of independence and the outbreak of violence, and the total number of civil war years post-independence.

**Force Composition**

The first step in the data collection aspect of this project involved identifying whether the colonial ruler in a certain state gave preference to a minority group in military recruitment. As mentioned in the theory section, there is widespread social science literature about the tendency of colonial powers to conscript minorities in order to counteract the potential power of majority groups to mobilize against the metropole.\(^{14}\) While some colonial powers kept their own soldiers as the officers of the forces and recruited indigenous people to fill lower ranks, others staffed the entirety of the forces with natives. Therefore, I looked to identify the ethnic or religious group that was primarily recruited to the colonial forces in each state.

As an imperial power, the British Empire did not appear to have a single approach for recruitment to the colonial security forces. In Jordan, Britain did not display a preference towards a particular minority in the colonial armed forces. When the Amirate of Transjordan was created in 1921, the security forces that were left over from the period of Ottoman control were insufficient to maintain order. The British expanded the current police forces and created a military force, combining them under the command of a British Captain.\(^{15}\) These forces, which became known as the Arab Legion, were originally composed of Arabs from defeated Ottoman armies, but later expanded to include Circassians and Jews in the Frontier Forces and Bedouins in the Desert Mobile Force.

The British retained most of the officer positions throughout their rule, and they instituted a promotion system that “precluded the advancement of any Middle Easterners to a position of command over British troops.”\textsuperscript{16} Although they displayed a clear preference for Britons, the Arab Legion, Transjordan Frontier Force, and Desert Mobile Forces included people from various ethnicities and religious groups, as well as from the urban and desert areas. Though a large number of Palestinians who immigrated to Jordan following the creation of Israel in 1948 were primarily excluded from the military, this exclusion occurred after Jordan became independent, so it was not considered in this coding. Therefore, in Jordan, the British were coded as not demonstrating a preference towards a particular minority in military recruitment.

Similarly, in the Trucial Coast states, which include the emirates of what is now the UAE, Bahrain, Qatar, and Kuwait, the British did not display preferential treatment towards particular ethnic or religious groups. The numerous treaties between Britain and these states “provided that the British were responsible for foreign relations and protection from attack by Sea.”\textsuperscript{17} To fulfill these duties, the British created the Trucial Oman Scouts in 1951 as the principal military presence in the area. The Trucial Oman Scouts operated in the seven emirates of the current UAE, as well as in Bahrain, Qatar, and Kuwait, and they included men from all of the seven emirates, as well as Omanis, Iranians, Indians, Jordanians, and Pakistanis. Though British officers controlled the Trucial Oman Scouts, the available information suggests that


\textsuperscript{17} Helen Chapin Metz, “Persian Gulf States-Regional and National Security Considerations,” Federal Research Division Library of Congress, last modified January 1993, \url{http://www.country-data.com/cgi-bin/query/r-7624.html}. 
people from all tribes and nationalities filled its ranks. It was truly “a mobile force of mixed nationality that Britain supported and British officers commanded.”

Similar to the states mentioned above, Oman was a protectorate of the British Empire. The Trucial Oman Scouts operated in parts of Oman as well, but, in the late 1950s, the Sultan of Oman came to an agreement with the British that allowed for the establishment of a new military. The Sultan’s Armed Forces (SAF), as they were called, would be aided and developed by the British. Initially, nearly all the army officers and soldiers were Baluchis from Pakistan, except for senior commanders, who were British. Balochistan was under British control at that point, which allowed for the recruitment of Baluchis to the SAF. The Baluchi tribesmen were fiercely loyal to the Sultan, as they had originally formed part of his palace guard, and he relied on them to staff the armed forces once he reorganized them into the SAF. The Baluchs were a minority in Oman and not the indigenous people, and even following independence, many Baluchis remained in the Sultan’s Armed Forces and in the country. Therefore, this case can also be considered an instance of minority preference in the colonial armed forces.

When Egypt became a part of the British Empire in the late 19th century (though it was never considered a full colony), the British “disbanded the Egyptian army, and recreated it by incorporating Egyptian units staffed by British officers into British commands.” In order to fill the Egyptian units, the British had to resort to “irregular conscription among the fellahin

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(peasants),” who consistently attempted to avoid military service at all costs. The only way conscripts could avoid their service was to pay a fee, which led to the majority of the Egyptian units being staffed by the poorest segments of society. Although most officers were British, some Egyptians did attain this status, though they were primarily from the wealthy and distinguished Egyptian families. Therefore, in Egypt, Britain did not pursue a policy of recruiting and promoting minorities, particularly Coptic Christians, to positions of status in the military, but rather tried to mobilize conscription quickly, which created a policy that ended up excluding the wealthy and middle-class that could pay to avoid service.

In Mandate Palestine (now Israel), the British at first prevented the population from bearing unauthorized arms and administered the military entirely with British forces. The Palestinian Jews found themselves under Arab attack often, however, and they therefore organized a clandestine Haganah, or defense force, despite the fact that this action was illegal under the mandate. A series of Arab attacks on Jewish communities in 1921 and 1929, however, “found the Haganah to be ill-equipped and ineffective,” and “when renewed Arab rioting broke out in 1936 and soon spread throughout Palestine, the Mandate authorities—realizing that they could not defend every Jewish settlement—authorized the creation of the Jewish settlement police, who were trained, armed, and paid by the British.”

During World War II, many of the Haganah forces served abroad for the British, and with their ranks at home severely weakened, the British and Haganah leaders decided to establish a mobile Jewish force—the Palmach—to defend the homeland. The Palmach “was trained with the

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24 Ibid.
aid of the British’ and considered the “first full-time standing Jewish army in more than 2,000 years.” Considering that, as of 1921, only about 5% of the population of Palestine was Jewish, the British were at least clearly aiding the armament of a minority, if not actively creating an armed minority force. Though the percent of the population that was Jewish steadily increased leading up to and through World War II, it was a minority throughout this period (albeit a growing one). Therefore, Mandate Palestine is considered in this paper to be a case of preference for a minority in the colonial armed forces.

In Iraq, the British created a Hashemite Sunni monarchy, installing King Faisal despite the fact that he was not an Iraqi himself. They also created an indigenous Iraqi army, installing the Sunnis who had served under the Ottomans as officers, while filling the lower ranks with Shia tribal elements. The Sunnis had military experience from the Ottoman period, so their choice as officers may not have been solely to counteract the potential power of the Shia majority. That being said, the British did have a divide-and-rule mentality when setting up the monarchy and the armed forces: “a major goal of the British policy was to keep the (Sunni) monarchy stronger than any one (Shia) tribe but weaker than a coalition of tribes so that British power would ultimately be decisive in arbitrating disputes between the two.” The British kept the minority Sunni group in control of the government and military to counteract the collective potential of all of the various Shia tribes, who would have created a numerical majority. Therefore, in my data, the British were coded as demonstrating a preference for a minority group in the colonial security forces.

27 Ibid.
Similarly, in South Yemen, which was colonized by the British and known as the “Aden Protectorate,” the British applied the “martial race theory.” The Aden Protectorate Levies “were established in 1928 as part of Aden’s new defense scheme,” and the main body of these troops was “recruited from the tribes of the eastern mountains.” In a telegram written to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, the Political Resident, Major General Stewart, explained, “the best fighting material in the Protectorate is in the mountain tribes.” The British intended to “harness the tribesman’s military capability, with the aim of either neutralizing it or putting it to use for the protection of the British sphere of influence.” Therefore, the British clearly favored the tribal minorities in the military over the people from the more central areas near Aden.

In North Yemen, the Ottomans did not operate according to their normal colonial procedures and actually did not implement any policy of local conscription. The Ottomans were very wary of doing anything that would contribute to anti-colonial sentiment, so Ottoman policy makers “were very careful to employ only those elements of colonial rule that they considered conducive to securing Ottoman domination over Yemen and careful to not implement those that they feared would undermine Ottoman rule.” For example, in contrast to other areas, in North Yemen, “local males were excluded from compulsory military service partly because the central government feared that the introduction of conscription would lead to serious opposition.” The Ottomans were more focused on creating a homogenous population that would support the empire than on using conscription, which could create unrest, to divide-and-rule. They relied

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32 Willis, *Unmaking*, 181.
33 Willis, *Unmaking*, 118.
both on Ottoman troops, as well as local shayks whom they contracted to support them, to
govern the area.\textsuperscript{36}

In contrast to the British and Ottoman Empires, France had a more consistent divide-and-
rule policy. In the Middle East, specifically in Syria and Lebanon, the French created the
Levantine Special Forces, or the Troupes Spéciales du Levant, and a paramilitary police force,
the gendarmerie, to maintain order in the rural provinces. In both the LSF and the gendarmerie,
French officers continually held the top positions. The lower ranks were filled primarily with
individuals of “rural background and minority ethnic origin.”\textsuperscript{37} Nikolas Van Dam writes, “As
part of a divide-and-rule policy, the French favored the military recruitment of special
detachments among Alawis, Druzes, Kurds, Circassians and other minorities, who then formed
part of the Troupes Spéciales de Levant used to maintain order and to suppress local rebellions.
The fact that the troops were largely composed of minorities increased the resentment among the
Arabic-speaking Sunnis.”\textsuperscript{38} In the Levant, French colonial forces were staffed by minorities,
which allowed the French to stem the potential power of the Sunni majority.

In the Maghreb in Northern Africa, the French pursued a similar strategy through
demonstrated favoritism for the Berber ethnic minority in military recruitment. When the French
first began to take over Morocco, they embarked on an effort to use conquered Berber tribesmen
as forces to pacify the rest of the population, including other tribes. They began to perpetuate the
“Kabyle myth,” which characterized the Berbers as warrior people with the natural ability to

\textsuperscript{36} Willis, Unmaking, 297.
Library of Congress, last modified April 1987, \url{http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+sv0109)}.
\textsuperscript{38} Nikolas Van Dam, \textit{The Struggle for Power in Syria: Politics and Society Under Asad and the Ba’ath Party} (New
fight the Arab population and help ensure French colonial dominance.  

They created a Moroccan paramilitary police force that could be used to suppress rebellions with recruits, known as Goums, from the conquered tribes, romanticizing the “noble savages of la montagne berbère as France’s natural allies.” Although originally just used as a police force within Morocco, the French eventually enlisted the Moroccan Goums in battle during the Second World War. In Algeria and Tunisia, the French similarly recruited the Berber tribesmen to the security forces because of their “natural alliance” to the French forces. Berbers from all three Maghreb countries were used both in the Second World War and in the French colonial war in Indochina in the 1950s.

This policy strengthened the “good Berber” myth, “as French officers increasingly idealized the rural Berber tribesmen who made up the majority of their soldiers as France’s natural allies against their supposedly more nationalist and martially deficient Arab compatriots.” According to Michael Bodin, who is a leading scholar of the French army, people from rural areas made up “74% of Algerian troops, 79% of the Tunisian contingent, and 83% of the Moroccans.” Furthermore, the French believed not only in recruiting the rural minorities of the periphery, but also in “simultaneously seeking to keep regiments segregated by geographical origin” to prevent possible mobilization of a large anti-French Berber force. In sum, the French had a clear preference for recruiting ethnic minorities for its colonial security forces in Northern Africa.

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40 Wyrzten, “Colonial State Building,” 231.
42 Orwin, “Of Couscous and Control.”
In Libya, the Italians essentially were in a constant battle for control against the local Sanusi forces, a Sufi sect that was agitating against Italian dominance. This battle continued between World War I and World War II, with the Italians focused more on how to subdue the Sanusi forces than on a defined policy of indigenous recruitment. That being said, Arabs and Berbers did join the Royal Corps of Colonial Libyan Troops, and the desert Bedouin, many of whom were Berber, were deployed to patrol the desert areas. In the First World War, Italy deployed a small number of indigenous African troops, comprised of both Arabs and Berbers, throughout the African theatre. In World War II, however, the British took Libya from Italy in an alliance with the Sanusi tribes. In general, it does not appear that the Italians favored recruitment of the Berbers nearly to the extent that the French did but rather that they deployed the Bedouin Berbers to patrol their desert areas and used Arabs in more of the central places. Therefore, the Italians did not pursue a policy of intense recruitment of minorities to the security forces.

In conclusion, the concept of promoting a “martial race,” or recruiting primarily minorities to the colonial security forces, is evident in French Colonial North Africa and the Levant, as well as in British Iraq, Israel, Oman, and South Yemen. In contrast, in British Transjordan and the Trucial Coast states, as well as in Italian Libya and Ottoman North Yemen, this sort of divide-and-rule strategy was not as vigorously employed. In the next section, I examine the implications of these two different policies on civil war violence after independence from colonial rule.

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**Data**

Using the information on force composition described above, each country was coded on a dichotomous variable for minority recruitment into the military. Countries were given a score of 0 for the variable “Ethmin” if ethnic and religious minorities were not recruited more heavily into the armed forces and they were given a score of 1 if preference was shown towards minorities. See Appendix One for a more detailed breakdown.

Next, using data from James Fearon and David Laitin’s “Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War” dataset, each country was coded for the dichotomous variable “Civil War” based on whether or not they experienced any civil wars post-independence. Countries were assigned a 0 if they experienced no civil war after the date of independence, and a 1 if they experienced at least one year of civil war. The number of years between independence and the first outbreak of violence was determined by calculating the number of years between the date of independence from the colonial ruler and the first year coded as a civil war year in a particular country. Next, the total number of civil war years experienced by each country was determined by aggregating the number of years from all civil wars they experienced. Finally, the average length of civil war within a country was determined by dividing the total number of civil war years in a country by the number of distinct civil wars it experienced.

There were certain instances of civil war that I included that were not in Fearon and Laitin’s data. First, their latest coding was published in 2013, and the Libyan, Iraqi, and Syrian civil wars are still ongoing. Using Fearon and Laitin’s criteria of over 100 battle deaths per year, the Libyan and Syrian civil wars began in 2011 and continued through 2014, so they were coded as having experienced four civil war years each. The Iraqi civil war began in 2004 and continues through 2014, so this conflict was coded for 11 civil war years.

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47 James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War."
Additionally, Fearon and Laitin did not originally include the Dhofar Rebellion in Oman in their data, as Oman did not have over 500,000 people, one of their original criteria. For the purposes of my project, I was not concerned with population size. Therefore, because during the Dhofar Rebellion over 3,000 people died\textsuperscript{48} between 1970-75, and over 100 people died on each side throughout the conflict, it can be coded for six civil war years according to Fearon and Laitin’s criteria. Lastly, I coded the First and Second Intifadas in Israel as civil wars. Both these conflicts meet the criteria in Fearon and Laitin’s paper if the First Intifada is considered between 1987-94\textsuperscript{49} and the Second Intifada between 2000-05.\textsuperscript{50}

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\caption{Coded Civil Wars}
\begin{tabular}{|l|l|l|}
\hline
\textbf{Country} & \textbf{Civil War} & \textbf{Years} \\
\hline
Algeria & Kabylie & 1962-63 \\
Algeria & FIS & 1992-2001 \\
Iraq & Shammar & 1959-59 \\
Iraq & KDP, PUK (Kurds) & 1961-74 \\
Iraq & Iraqi Insurgency & 2004-Present \\
Israel & First Intifada & 1987-94 \\
Israel & Second Intifada & 2000-05 \\
Jordan & Fedeyeen/Syria v. Govt & 1970-70 \\
Lebanon & Nasserites v. Chamoun & 1958-58 \\
Lebanon & Various Militias & 1975-90 \\
Libya & Libyan Civil War & 2011-14 \\
Morocco & Polisario & 1975-88 \\
North Yemen (YAR) & Opp. Coalition & 1948-48 \\
North Yemen (YAR) & Royalists & 1962-69 \\
North Yemen (YAR) & South Yemen (YPR) & 1994-94 \\
Oman & Dhofar Rebellion & 1970-75 \\
South Yemen (YPR) & Faction of Socialist Party & 1986-87 \\
Syria & Syrian Civil War & 2011-14 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}


This data was then analyzed using Stata software to determine the relationship between recruitment of ethnic and religious minorities in the colonial era to civil war prevalence after independence. See Table Two below for the full coded dataset.

### Table Two: Dataset

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Ethnic or Religious Minority Prominent Status in Military</th>
<th>Civil War</th>
<th>Civil War Years Post Independence</th>
<th>Years Between Independence and Outbreak of Violence</th>
<th>Average Length of Civil War</th>
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<td>6</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Yemen</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Syria</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
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### Results

My first hypothesis suggested that civil war would simply be more prevalent in places where ethnic or religious minorities filled the colonial security forces. To test that hypothesis, I compared the existence of civil war within a country to whether or not the colonial ruler had
recruited minorities. I found that among the nine countries that received a 0 on the variable of minority preference in the military, five experienced no civil war and four experienced civil war. Among the eight countries that received a 1, only one country experienced no civil war and seven countries experienced it (see Table Two). Therefore, among the countries where civil war broke out, 64% had demonstrated recruitment of minorities during colonial times. Among those countries where minorities were primarily recruited, 88% experienced civil war compared to 44% of the countries where minorities were not primarily recruited.

I used a Fisher’s exact test, due to small sample sizes, to determine if there was a statistically significant relationship between preference for minorities and the existence of civil war. The test yielded a p-value of 0.1312 (see Table Five), which is not necessarily statistically significant at a standard 95% or 90% significance level, but it is close to being there. In sum, although countries were almost as likely to experience civil war as to avoid it when recruitment was not focused primarily on minorities, a history of colonial preference for minorities in the military certainly is related to higher levels of civil war post-independence in this sample.

**Table Three: Results #1**
My second hypothesis was that the tension created by preferential recruitment of minorities during colonial times and the power vacuum created by independence would cause civil war to break out more quickly. I find some evidence to support this claim. For all of the countries that experienced no civil war, I coded the length between independence and outbreak of violence as the length of time between their independence and the present. If these were coded as 0, it would seem as if they experienced civil war immediately after independence. If they were left out entirely, the statistics would be biased. Therefore, assigning them a value based on the length of time since independence, since they still have not experienced civil war, allows me to get a conservative estimate of the mean and median length of time between independence and outbreak of violence. The mean was 44.33 in countries without preferential recruitment of minorities and 30.63 in countries where minorities filled the colonial forces. Using a t-test to determine if there is a significant difference between the means of these two groups, I found a p-value of 0.2479. This finding suggests there is not a significant relationship between preference for minorities and the time it takes for violence to break out in a state.

For this type of variable, which is focused on durability, the median is probably the better measure, however. The median was 44 in countries without minority preference and 23 for countries that did recruit minorities. Using the median, it appears that minority composition of the colonial forces causes civil war to break out more quickly than it does in countries where minorities were not primarily recruited. It does not appear, however, to be breaking out particularly rapidly following independence.

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51 This statistic was calculated only including countries that experienced civil war following independence.
My third hypothesis predicted that preference towards ethnic or religious minorities in the military would also be associated with an increase in the total number of civil war years experienced by a state, as well as in the average length of a civil war. I found that the mean number of civil war years post-independence was 2.33 for countries with no preference for minorities in the military and 10.88 for countries that did show that preference. The median was 0 for countries with no preference for minorities and 12.5 for countries with minority recruitment. Neither of those is extremely different from the mean, but it does suggest that the mean of 2.33 for countries without minority recruitment is probably higher due to a few outliers. North Yemen, which has 10 civil war years post-independence, is an obvious outlier, but when it is discarded, it just brings the mean down closer to zero, further confirming my hypothesis. A t-test yields a p-value of 0.0141, which is significant at a 95% confidence interval.

Finally, I also examined the relationship between ethnic and religious minorities in the colonial forces and the average length of civil war in a particular country. I found that the mean length of civil war was 1.59 years in countries without preference for minorities in colonial recruitment and 6.21 in countries where minorities were preferred. The median average length of civil war was 0 in countries without preference for minorities and 6.25 in countries with it. This gap suggests that civil wars lasted longer in places where minorities had staffed the colonial forces, supporting my hypothesis that these civil conflicts will last longer because they are likely to be peripheral insurgencies. A t-test yields a p-value of 0.0139, which is significant at a 95% confidence interval.
Table Four: Results #2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic Minority Given Prominent Status in Military?</th>
<th>Civil War Existence</th>
<th>Civil War Years Post Independence</th>
<th>Years Between Independence and Violence Outbreak</th>
<th>Average Length of Civil War in a Country</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percentage of Total</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Median</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>10.88</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table Five: Significance Tests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Significance Test</th>
<th>P-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Civil War Existence</td>
<td>Fisher's exact test</td>
<td>0.1312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil War Years Post Independence</td>
<td>T-test</td>
<td>0.0141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years Between Independence and Violence Outbreak</td>
<td>T-test</td>
<td>0.2479</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Length of Civil War in a Country</td>
<td>T-test</td>
<td>0.0139</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These findings suggest that there is an overall relationship between the ethnic and religious composition of the colonial security forces and the prevalence of civil war following independence. A history of minority recruitment to the colonial forces not only is related to the existence of a civil war following independence but also is associated with more total years of civil war and longer average civil wars. In addition, it appears to be associated with a shorter
period of time between independence and the initial break out of civil violence, but the median length of time between independence and initial violence was still two decades in countries that showed a preference for minorities. In sum, it appears that the force composition of the colonial security forces does have significant implications for levels of civil war following independence.

The evidence in support of my hypotheses, particularly the first and third, suggest further attention be paid to the mechanisms underlying the causal relationship between minority recruitment and civil war prevalence. I argued that preference for ethnic and religious minorities in colonial militaries produced strong incentives for both majority and minority groups to try to consolidate power quickly after independence, which then leads to a higher likelihood of civil conflict and a quicker outbreak of civil violence than in countries where minorities did not receive preference. I also argued that these civil wars would last a long time, considering they were likely to take the form of peripheral insurgencies fought through guerilla warfare. My evidence supported all three hypotheses, suggesting that there are, in fact, strong incentives for both majorities and minorities to consolidate power. Since my hypothesis that minority preference would cause civil violence to break out very quickly after independence did not prove particularly true, that mechanism requires further examination. Perhaps because there is evidence that these wars may have been peripheral insurgencies, they did not break out particularly quickly because it takes a long time to put together this kind of guerilla warfare. These mechanisms are not explored in depth in this paper, but they provide ideas for future work.

**Conclusion**

These findings suggest that minority dominance of a colonial security apparatus is related to higher instances of civil war following independence. Again, the causal mechanisms
employed in my hypotheses are not explored further in this paper, but future work could examine whether the ideas behind my hypotheses, which I put forward in the theory section of this paper, explain my results or if there are other mechanisms causing this relationship all together. Regardless of whether or not my causal links are correct, however, my findings may have implications for predicting violence in the future. Since I conclude that giving preference to minorities in the military leads to higher instances of civil conflict following a regime change, we may expect similar outcomes even when the regime change is not of an anti-colonial nature.

Risa Brooks (1998) argues that Arab regimes today maintain power by filling the military with senior officers from privileged minority groups, which have a vested interested in ensuring the current regime stays in place. Such action seems to parallel what colonial regimes did in the past. Since my results show that this type of military recruitment leads to more frequent and longer civil conflict following a shift in the ruling regime, then perhaps these results help explain the recent outbreak of civil war in the Middle East following the “liberation” movements of the Arab Spring. Unfortunately, my findings support the idea these are the type of civil conflicts that last a long time. The violence that is overtaking many areas of the Middle East and North Africa right now may not go away anytime soon.

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