Constructing Groups, *Creating* Conflicts, *Changing* Minds

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When you hear "structural inequality" or "structural racism," what does **structural** mean?

Social, economic, political systems through institutions and policies **structure** society, our values, our lives

Census is an institution that (re)shapes groups

In the US,
- Started in 1790, racial categories to uphold slavery
- In the 1800s, Germans, Greeks, Irish, Italians were not "white"
- Asians first counted in 1870, the only category was "Chinese."
- When people of Hispanic descent were first counted in 1930, all "Mexicans," beforehand "white."
- 1960, people could choose their own identification.
- Even in 2020, people from MENA are counted as "white."

Similar cases in **Russia, South Africa, Brazil**, around the world.

Racial and ethnic categories are changed all the time. Censuses (and other institutions) make these categories *feel* real, common-sense, and that they've always been there.

What are the consequences of counting on political behaviors?

Censuses have consequences on Conflict

Lieberman, Evan and Prerna Singh. (2017). "Census Enumeration and Group Conflict: A Global Analysis of the Consequences of Counting." World Politics.

- Most of the civil conflicts today have an ethnic component
- Data on 1,300+ censuses spanning 156 countries between 1800 -- 2005.
- **Counting more groups as ethnic groups leads to more ethnic conflicts**
- Historical case study of how the colonial census in India in 1871 is a direct cause of Hindu-Muslim conflict today
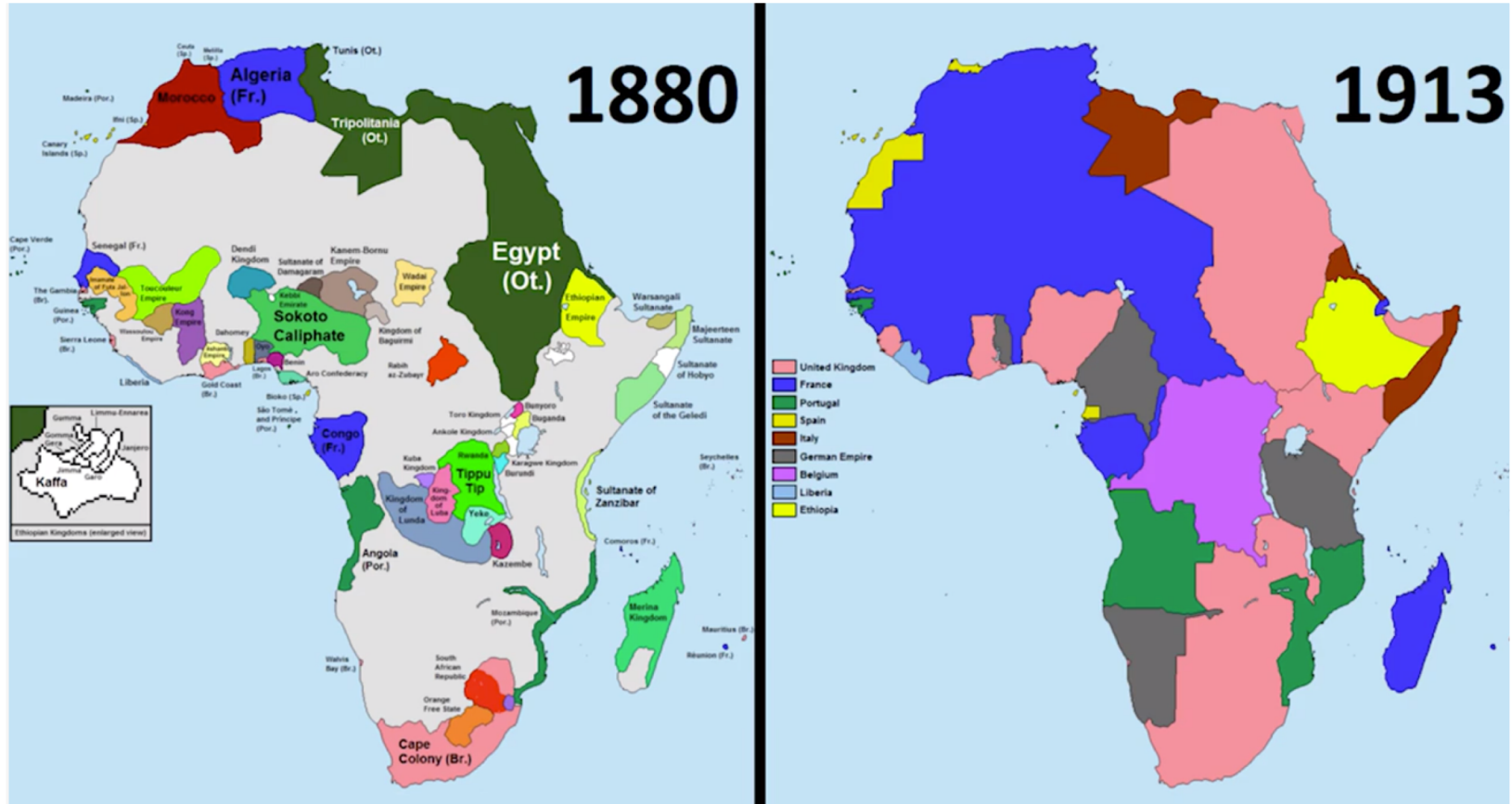

Professor of Political Science, Brown University

What are *other ways* in which those in power construct groups?

Historical legacy of colonialism on ethnic conflict today

"Scramble for Africa" (1881 - 1914)

Berlin Conference (1884): 13 European countries + US divided up African continent without regard to existing groups, local social or political dynamics

Asiwaju: artificial and arbitrary borders

Asiwaju, Anthony Ijaola. (1985) Partitioned Africans: Ethnic relations across Africa's international boundaries, 1884-1984.
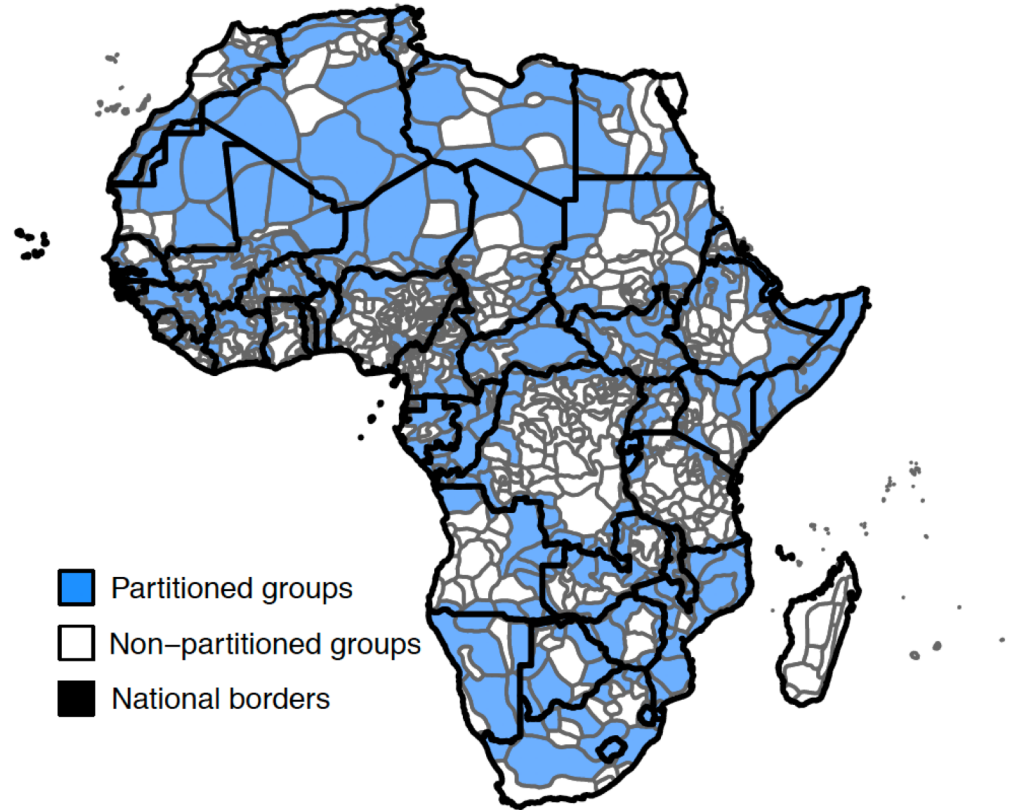

Emeritus Professor of History, University of Lagos

Modern nation-states made up of **disparate groups** without historical sense of common cultural-linguistic identity

Post-independence leaders had to create **nations of citizens**

Colonial borders drew new lines that split groups

Research shows that
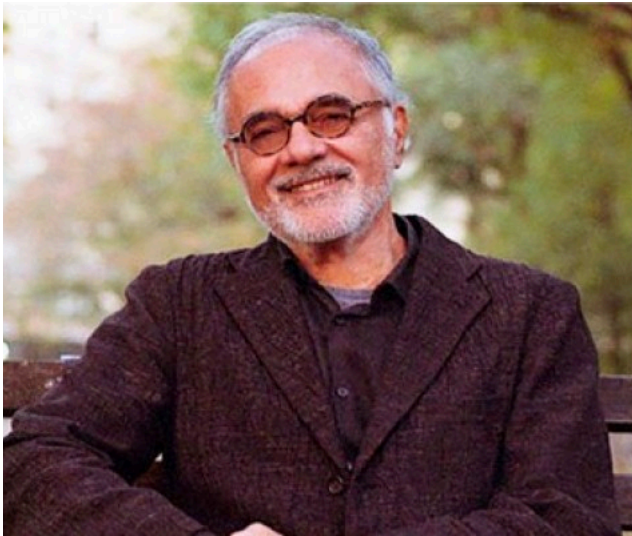**split groups**
experience more violent
conflict today

*Michalopoulos S, and E Papaioannou
(2016). The long-run effects of the
scramble for Africa. American
Economic Review.*

Partitioned groups
Non–partitioned groups
National borders

Data source: G. P. Murdock's ethnolinguistic map (1959)

Mamdani: State-structured ethnicity

Mamdani, Mahmood (1996). Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism.

Chancellor, Kampala International University

"If the law recognizes you as member of an ethnicity, and state institutions treat you as member of that particular ethnicity, then you *become* an ethnic being legally."

These "ethnic" political identities continue to structure political conflicts today

Nigeria turns 60: Can Africa's most populous nation remain united?
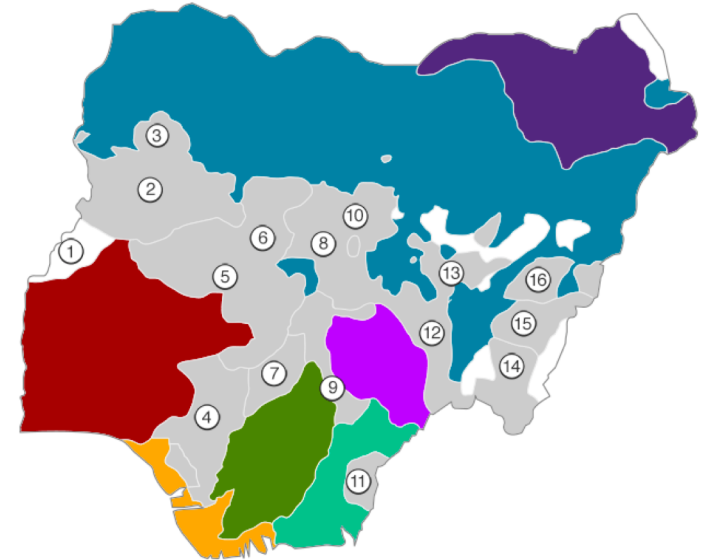
🕐 17 hours ago

GETTY IMAGES

In our series of letters from African journalists, novelist and journalist Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani considers the greatest challenge facing Nigeria as Africa's most populous nation marks 60 years of independence from the UK.

Ethnic diversity
Major ethnic groups (% of population)

- Hausa-Fulani 29%
- Yoruba 21%
- Igbo 18%
- Ijaw 10%
- Kanuri 4%
- Ibibio 3.5%
- Tiv 2.5%
- Other 12%

1 Bokobaru	5 Nupe	9 Idoma	13 Tarok
2 Kanbari	6 Gbagyi	10 Berom	14 Jibu
3 Zuru	7 Igala	11 Efik	15 Somyev
4 Edo	8 Kaje	12 Jukunoid	16 Mumuye

BBC

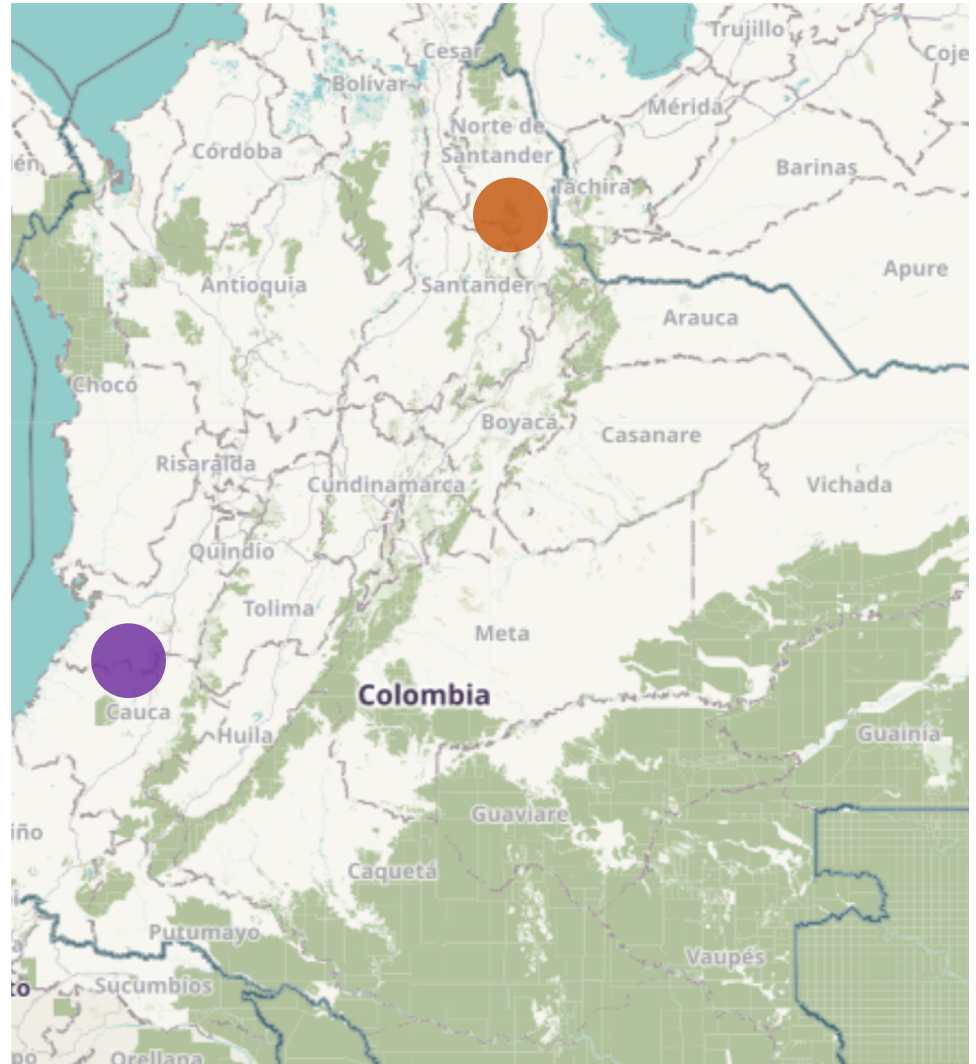How do these group boundaries change based on changes in context?

My research is on how migration changes group boundaries

In 2015, massive Burundian refugee influx of 230k into Tanzania.
Before, Burundian Hutu and Tanzanian Ha were co-ethnic ("cousins and uncles"), afterwards, Tanzanians near camps emphasized their difference ("we don't know them…bad neighbors").

Since 2013, 1.8 million Venezuelans have migrated to Colombia.

Surveys in **Cúcuta**, on the Venezuelan border and **Cali**, in the interior of Colombia show that Colombians from Cali are more accepting of Venezuelan migrants, that they have more in common culturally.

Okay, so these groups are politically constructed. How do we put a stop to these conflicts?

How can we change minds to reduce bias and prejudice?

Programs that try to change minds aren't working

❑ **Implicit Bias / Diversity trainings**
➔ Effects are small especially in real work place settings, they don't last long (maybe only 24 hours)

❑ **Face-to-face Contact between groups**
  ▪ Christians and Muslims in **Nigeria** through **computer classes** (Scacco and Warren 2018),
  ▪ Christians and Muslims in **Iraq** through **soccer** (Mousa 2020),
  ▪ Men of different castes through **cricket** games in **India** (Lowe 2020)
  ▪ Locals and Internally Displaced Migrants through **skills training** program in **Afghanistan** (Zhou and Lyall 2020)
➔ Change minds about those specific people, but about the other group as a whole

Paluck, Elizabeth Levy, Roni Porat, Chelsey S. Clark, and Donald P. Green.(2020) "Prejudice reduction: Progress and challenges." Annual Review of Psychology.

Why would we expect a day long program to change beliefs that have been structurally engrained in us our whole lives?

So where do we go from here?

We can't only try to change **minds**, we have to change **structures**.