

Problematizing the Diversity Debit Hypothesis

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Abstract

One of the most studied hypotheses in political economy and development literature posits that social heterogeneity is negatively associated with favorable societal and political outcomes. This study problematizes the diversity debit hypothesis. It overviews its theoretical underpinning and uncovers its roots to be in rational choice theory and the homo economicus framework of human behavior. As such, scholarly accounts of diversity debit have attributed it to the agency (or lack thereof) of minority groups and their impaired ability to engage in collective mobilization to pressure elites for concessions. Through case studies of three countries – the United States, Turkey, and Vietnam, this study discovers that even when collective action problems have been overcome by minority groups either along ethnic or cross-ethnic boundaries, it has not led to favorable outcomes. In light of rapid changes to the global economic balance of power and the emergence of alternative modes of development policies, further investigation of the diversity debit problem is necessary to carry out through critically-oriented approaches.

Introduction

The diversity debit hypothesis posits that societal heterogeneity negatively impacts populations through economic, social, and political outcomes. Throughout dozens of studies across different social scientific disciplines, scholars have investigated whether ethnic and linguistic diversity are detrimental to political peace, public good provision, social trust, educational and health spending, conflict onset, duration, along with many different economic development indicators (Wimmer, 2016; Gisselquist et al. 2016). The association between social diversity and development outcomes represents one of the most “powerful” hypotheses in contemporary political economy (Banerjee & Somanathan, 2005). Through drawing upon rational choice and collective action theories, scholars have contended that ethnic divisions in a given society negatively impact the capability of the poor to be able to engage in various types of social participation (Alesina & Ferrara, 2000; Gerring et al. 2015). Levels of trust, social capital, and social sanctioning ability have been observed to be lower in ethnically diverse communities. In fact, some scholars have even contended that researchers should not even address this hypothesis anymore and should instead place focus on explaining its cross-national standing and salience (Habyarimana et al. 2007).

Recent inquiry has revealed that there exists variation in the diversity debit problem when observed across national, sub-national, and district levels (Gerring et al. 2015). To account for the general phenomenon of diversity debit, political economists have drawn from well-known Western-centric theoretical traditions to argue that diverse communities intrinsically have a harder time in engaging in and establishing collective action (Kosolapov et al. 2005). Others argue that social networks are stronger among members belonging to the same ethnic group which makes cross-movement mass mobilization more difficult to achieve for ethnic groups as they will tend to stick with their own kin. Institutional-based explanations tend to adopt neoliberal assumptions on political participation and place emphasis on democratic institutions which are argued to be able to deal with and alleviate conditions of poverty to superior extent than non-democracies (Boone, 1996; Bueno de Mesquita & Hilton, 2000). Since citizens can vote in elections and aim petitions at political elites, this is argued to incentivize bureaucrats and representatives to respond to the demands of their constituency.

In light of rapid ongoing changes to the global economy and the rise of alternative international institutions such as BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa), recent years have seen countries that contain upwards of 3 billion people put forward an alternative to political and economic suppositions that have long been espoused through Western hegemonic structures. This study demonstrates that the diversity-debit hypothesis and its numerous associated theoretical justifications have been articulated by a scholarly tradition that has reinforced classical capitalistic and neoliberal practices and ideas. Such ideas sustain subjugating tendencies that are necessary for the functioning of Western economic and political hegemony. Specifically, aforementioned explanatory frameworks of the diversity debit problem illustrate how rationality can serve as a modality of negation. It is the fault of the poor and their lack of organizational capability which are (incorrectly) theorized to underpin diversity debit. These viewpoints reflect hegemonic neoliberal models of economics that place societal faults and adverse outcomes at the hands of the individual. With a massive amount of scholarly attention being cast on the diversity debit problem, it is indeed surprising that up to now, this topic has not been investigated through a critical lens.

Few studies have taken grander political and historical factors into consideration that are outside the narrow scope of rationalistic justifications which have been brought up to account for the diversity debit issue. Singh and vom Hau (2016) argue processes of state formation and variance in state capacity can account for the diversity debit problem. Wimmer (2016) makes similar claims by arguing that ethnic boundaries are not fully exogenous to the historical processes that created them (Wimmer, 2016). Nevertheless, a crucial omission still remains. This study demonstrates that ethnic boundaries are not exogenous to economic conditions in which they subside. While my aim is not to “solve” the diversity debit problem, the analysis put forward in this study offers a much-needed critical glance into how adverse outcomes tend to arise in three different contexts that are representative of an established and advanced economy (the US), a rapidly growing neoliberal state (Turkey), and a highly ethnically diverse former Communist state (Vietnam). The analysis reveals that the diversity debit phenomenon is causally complex and empirically brought about as a result of factors that are akin to *structure* – featuring historical capitalistic and contemporary neoliberal forces and to *agency* – in which political and economic elites exercise and engage in discriminatory behaviors, antagonization, and corporate profiteering.

In developing this argument throughout this study, I first problematize existing theoretical underpinnings of the diversity debit hypothesis. I then carry out three country-level case studies of socially heterogeneous contexts (United States; Turkey; Vietnam) and apply an alternative theoretical framework to account for diversity debit outcomes across these contexts. The analysis reveals that the diversity debit problem is much more complex and intricate than previously considered. Regardless of whether ethnic groups overcame collective action problems and organized themselves into a political force representative of different ethnic and class interests, the ultimate outcome of uneven economic and social distribution still ensued.

Diversity Debit

The diversity debit hypothesis entails that social heterogeneity is associated with adverse economic and political outcomes. Heterogeneity is usually measured according to linguistic and religious differences in populations, and is most frequently associated with ethnicity. To measure ethnic differences in a given societal context, the ethno-linguistic fractionalization (ELF) has been utilized by scholars. This is a statistical index that ranges from 0 (homogeneous societal composition) to 1 (maximal societal differentiation). Many also draw on the Herfindahl index which approximates a probability that two randomly chosen individuals within a society are members of different ethnolinguistic groups (Gerring et al. 2015). Ethnic heterogeneity has been correlated with inferior

provisioning of public goods when compared to ethnic homogeneity. Countries and populations that are ethnically diverse, on average, experience lower rates of economic growth (Easterly and Levine, 1997). These results remain salient when viewed nationally as well. For example, several widely referenced studies found this to be true in the United States (Alesina et al. 1999; Alesina & Glaeser, 2004). Others identified similar adverse outcomes in Zambia (Gisselquist et al. 2016). Why then, is ethnic diversity such a burden on economic, political, and social dynamics? Some economists have argued that ethnicity increases social distances between groups in a given societal context and this in turn, makes ethnic divisions more salient than class divisions (Berge et al. 2015). These dynamics have been observed to manifest alongside ethnic groups' cultural, linguistic, and network-based characteristics.

Political scientists have contended that ethnic differences make it harder for individuals, especially those of low economic status, to identify with other members of society with either identical or similar backgrounds (Habyariman et al. 2007). Accompanying observations can be traced not only in studies investigating cross-national data, but also in regional inquiries as well as qualitative assessments on the country-level. For instance, Van De Walle (2003) observed that the identity of workers and those employed in manufacturing industries were threatened as a result of ethnic cleavages across different contexts in Sub-Saharan Africa. Along similar lines, Alesina and affiliated scholars have posited that because of rampant ethnic heterogeneity, the US never experienced the same degree of working-class mobilization as in Europe and in turn, welfare state development (Alesina & Glaeser, 2004). Similar research has revealed that ethnically segregated neighborhoods in the US tend to support welfare redistribution for their groups belonging to their same racial background, while simultaneously voicing less support for other racial groups (Luttmer, 2001).

Another prominent finding belonging to the diversity debit problem is the pronounced lack of trust that ethnically diverse societies tend to experience. As political scientists have long noted, civil societies and civic association cannot flourish in social contexts lacking in trust. In an analysis of 44 countries, Anderson and Paskeviciute (2006) investigated levels of interpersonal trust and found that ethnic heterogeneity is negatively associated with this trust. This relationship is also variant in terms of established versus weak democracies, with the former experiencing greater levels of trust. Annett (2001) discovered that high levels of ethnic fractionalization are correlated with social conflict. Scholars have also attributed information inaccessibility to the diversity debit problem. Many economically disadvantaged citizens suffer from low rates of literacy, have less access to information, and are less aware of public policies than other more privileged groups. Khemani and Keefer (2005) refer to this as an information asymmetry imbalance between ethnically segregated groups and those that form the majority. Ethnic heterogeneity has also been observed to be positively correlated with societal and political corruption – ethnically diverse societies tend to be more corrupt on average (Mauro 1995; La Porta et al. 1999; Glaeser & Saks 2006; Alesina et al. 2012).

In one of the more comprehensive (cross-national) assessments to date, Gerring et al. (2015) investigated the impact of diversity on development outcomes through Demographic and Health Survey data on 36 different countries, 271 regions, and 322 districts. The outcomes of 1) child birth rate, 2) child mortality rate, 3) personal education levels, 4) personal wealth were examined with relation to diversity on the three noted levels. While diversity was found to be positively associated with only one of four outcomes on the national level (children born), it was positively associated with three of four outcomes on sub-national levels (lower child mortality; higher educational attainment; greater wealth/income). These findings raised an important implication for the literature – that the diversity debit hypothesis may falter when it comes to sub-national contexts. As Bharathi and Malghan (2018) note, there is no consensus one why this is so, yet they do point out that migratory waves within a given country can bring about optimal sorting wherein economically productive

workers move to socially diverse geographical areas (such as cities). In turn this may lead to positive outcomes in diverse societal contexts.

With these identified patterns in mind, it is important to keep in mind that social scientists' explanations that have been articulated in response to the diversity deficit problem are premised on very particular assumptions of political and economic reality and that such approaches inherently fail to demarcate the scientific characteristics of "social science" away from underlying ideological influences. In order to problematize this hypothesis and its explanations, we must ask the following questions: how can we characterize the phenomenon and its associated practices? Where did its explanations originate from and how did they get entrained in scholarly discourse? What are the logics that underpin and govern its assumptions? (Glynos & Howarth, 2008). This brings us to the beginning stage of my assessment.

Rationality and Collective Action

Rational choice theory (RCT) underpins most scholarly accounts of the diversity deficit problem. Since the 1960s a set of theoretical premises have grown to be definitive across economics and political science. Rational choice is part of what is frequently referred to as the "homo economicus" mode of thought (Labiano, 2000). It suggests that human beings are not only individualistic in their nature, but they are also self-interested, distrustful of one another, and fearful of insecurity - echoing the classical philosophical work of Thomas Hobbes (Labiano 2000, p. 145). RCT is heavily embedded in Olson's (1965) *Logic of Collective Action* which shifted attention to a rational ontology of human nature. Olson, similar to the many liberal thinkers that preceded him (even centuries prior), reasoned that rationality is the fundamental diagnostic of human behavior. A primary premise of Olson's argument is that governmental public policies are in themselves, public goods. This entails that obtaining favorable governance for a given society or segment of society is not predetermined, but rather, is conditional on the ability of a given group to be able to engage in successful collective action.

For a given group or organization to be successful, individuals need to be able to strategically organize membership through providing selective incentives. This is especially important if a group is to successfully obtain public goods. Monitoring members of a group, rewarding them for cooperative behavior, and punishing them for bad behavior is necessary, argued Olson (1965). In other words, monitoring and providing selective incentives to members of organizations or groups is essential due to the proposed intrinsic, selfish, and egotistical nature of human beings. Why participate in a protest or contribute to a group or organization if you can reap the benefits from it without putting in your own time and resources? This line of reasoning introduced the classical free-rider problem. Olson's (1965) work was of great significance as it not only changed the understanding of what many considered to be the nature of protest and revolutionary struggle, but it also spurred subsequent scholarship which led researchers to posit new concepts such as a rebel's dilemma (Lichbach, 1998). For example, Lichbach (1998) argued that an opposition movement can never get too large (e.g., 5% or more of an entire population) because of the free-riding problem. Protesters will weigh the costs of participating in collective action. If a social movement fails to provide selective-incentives to its members, there will be free riders that will take advantage of the resources of the movement at large, and in the end, the movement might not be able to sustain enough participation to achieve its goals.

These strategic dynamics have been applied to organizations and their experiences within institutional and market-based processes. For instance, Sandler (2015) gives sector specific examples of firms (find this info) strategically failing to dedicate adequate resources to lobby political actors because they know they can free ride on the lobbying activities that other firms engage in. Along these lines, political economists have theorized that ethnicity is a major barrier in the way of

collective action, and thus many in this tradition believe that the reason behind why economically disadvantaged segments of a population and specific communities do not obtain a greater number of resources from their representatives is because of their failure to act collectively. Some have accounted for these processes through the causal mechanisms of “ethnic egotism” and “preference divergence” (Wimmer, 2016). Ethnic egotism entails that in heterogeneous socio-demographic contexts, individuals may not want to share public goods with other ethnic groups. Collective action is also believed to be difficult for individuals to achieve if they have divergent preferences. These argumentative points have significant implications: societal heterogeneity is assumed to bring about a dysconnectivity effect that impacts the ability of populations to put forward cohesive demands to political representatives and hence, governments do not provide adequate public goods to those that need it most because of the latter’s lack of organizational capability. In the worst of cases, patronage networks will form as governmental actors will address specific groups that can successfully summon their preferences into coherent policy demands, while leaving those that cannot behind. For instance, in a case study of political parties and politician-public preference ordering in Mali, Gottlieb (2015) discovered that opposition parties that were held accountable to their electorate were likelier to provide public goods.

Among the most cited political economy research on welfare spending confers these points – electoral competition leads to more spending by governments on welfare (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2002). This brings us to the central political assumptions in this literature. Democracy is said to provide bureaucrats and political representatives incentives to respond to their electorate. The most compelling of incentives for political elites is re-election and in order to get re-elected, one must adhere to his/her constituency through responsive provisioning of public goods. In contrast, groups must be able to organize themselves accordingly to pressure their representatives for favorable public policy creation. As such, it becomes clear that justifications and theory behind the diversity deficit hypothesis serve specific political practices (democratic governance) and their origin is in the homo economicus framework of human behavior. If democracy does not work for all segments of society (ethnic groups or the poor), it is not due to corporations, groups of ruling elites manipulating markets for profit, the offshoring of industry for cheaper labor, or due to structural economic forces such as the never-ending need to acquire surplus profit, but rather, fault gets placed on the individual and his/her surrounding group. The installment of these ideas into scholarly discourse is influenced by the embeddedness of rational choice theory in the social sciences (especially in economics) as well as neoliberal logics. The promotion of such policies and their accompanying arguments is indicative of global power in international politics (Wolff, 2015).

Collective Action to No Avail?

The last few decades in the West have spawned the outgrowth of an oligarchic configuration of politics (Hutter et al. 2018). Liberal democracies increasingly rely on governance models that keep elites immune from popular claims, collective mobilization, and governance continues to shift to outside the setting of democratic competition. Special sector authorities that claim to be politically neutral play a crucial role in governance processes through the “technicization of political decisions” (Caruso & Cini, 2020). What sets apart recent history from previous eras is a marked lack of resistance to an ever-changing configuration of capitalistic order. Organizing into any significant class-based movement is just about unachievable in today’s political milieu. In agreement with Hassan (2012), market forces in the age of neoliberalism (since the late 1970s) and accompanying technological change have functioned as “abstract forces that are not under any meaningful democratic control anywhere in the world” (Hassan, 2012, p. 294). The age-old Marxian concept of “common ruin” of class identity now prevails as a formless logic and is present in networked globalization (Hassan,

2012). Populations across much of the world are now living under a new paradigm of capital in which resistance to it is minimal and disjointed.

Thus, before we can understand why ethnic group mobilization cannot be fruitful in a capitalistic context, we first have to consider the ailments of middle classes. For the numerous protests and mass movements of resistance that do unfold on a yearly basis around the world, nearly all seek to democratize their polis and liberalize markets. Democracy, unfortunately, in its modern manifestation, is a mere front for capitalistic economic structures at its best, and one of the ultimate and most successful scams in human history at its worst. Kropotkin pointed this out over a century ago in his comparative analyses of historical economic and social configurations in *the Conquest for Bread* [1906] in which he wrote, "A society founded on serfdom is in keeping with absolute monarchy; a society based on the wage system and the exploitation of the masses by the capitalists finds its political expression in parliamentarianism" (Kropotkin, 2011, p. 42). While middle classes fail to see their incomes rise, minority groups also suffer. This is precisely why "affirmative action" programs tend to fail in bringing about their intended results (Sander & Taylor Jr., 2012).

Irrespective of electoral mechanisms that are argued to be intended for middle classes (e.g., political representatives are assumed by political scientists to respond to the preferences of the median voter), and state-centered programs aimed at improving the socio-economic well-being of minority groups, empirically, the market reigns supreme and the central logic of the market means that there can only be a handful of winners. By placing fault onto the individual level, scholars in the diversity debit literature have neatly shifted attention away from the many discriminatory practices that not only sustain neoliberalism and market values, but uphold the structural positioning of the West within neoliberal globalization. In fact, twentieth century history has shown us that when markets do not have room to exist or have run the course of their exploitative cycle, then they must be recreated anew. This is why scholars have equated colonialism and imperialism with the expansion of capitalist markets (Pradella, 2017; Caruso & Cini, 2020). This does not merely mean that capitalism or unequal outcomes are completely identical across space and time. Rather, as the subsequent sections of this study will reveal, such outcomes are variant and are contingent upon complex dynamics and interactions that get brought about by an interplay of structural and agency-based forces that manifest according to cultural, historical, and other qualitative characteristics. None of these forces, importantly, can be accounted for by aforementioned individual faults and insufficiencies.

The Subjugation of Minority Groups: Insights from Three Countries

The following analysis features three different country level cases (the US, Turkey, and Vietnam) in which the statuses of minority groups will be assessed across ethnic, religious, social, economic, and political boundaries. These cases were selected according to the most different systems design which entails that the sample of cases differ in their independent variables (Landman, 2008). For instance, the chosen countries vary in terms of their type of governmental system, degree of ethnic heterogeneity, historical legacies of discrimination, income levels, among other factors such as the age of the governing polity. The US has possessed more or less the same governmental structure since 1789, Turkey since 1923, and Vietnam since 1975. I also will give attention to the temporal variance of processes that have left minority groups in disadvantageous positions. For example, the US has experienced slow moving processes of high level Federal based discrimination which were static for over a century but then transmuted into lower-level state-based discrimination. Other countries such as Turkey have experienced national level discrimination that was intensified when neoliberal structures were molded into governance status quos, whereas in Vietnam, temporally rapid processes of privatization were accompanied with new state policies of land grabs and ethnic discrimination.

While these independent characteristics belonging to each case are variant, there is similarity in the dependent variable (diversity debit) because it is present in all three cases. To investigate these similarities, I will overview the status of minority groups across important historical events, political processes, and economic outcomes. This will enable us to ascertain whether the agency of these groups was visible through collective mobilization and if it turned out to be causally relevant for their socio-economic standing. Throughout this analysis, emphasis will be placed on capitalistic forces that are indicative of structure and on agency which can be observed across behaviors of governmental and political elites as well as corporations. Before carrying out these three case studies, Table 1 reveals information drawn from the Ethnic Power Relations (EPR) dataset which features data on ethnic groups' access to executive power from 1946-2017 (Vogt et al. 2015). The EPR data are considered some of the best in terms the number of groups present in observations (more than 800 in total) across every country in the world. Ethnicity is defined as "a subjectively experienced sense of commonality based on a belief in common ancestry and shared culture." The dataset codes how representatives from ethnic groups held executive-level state power and also measures their degree of control and political discrimination.

Table 1. Ethnic Power Relations in the United States, Turkey, and Vietnam

Country	from	to	group	size	status
United States	1946	1965	Whites	0.691	MONOPOLY
United States	1946	1965	Latinos	0.125	IRRELEVANT
United States	1946	1965	African Americans	0.124	DISCRIMINATED
United States	1946	1965	Asian Americans	0.036	IRRELEVANT
United States	1946	1965	American Indians	0.0078	POWERLESS
United States	1946	1965	Arab Americans	0.0042	IRRELEVANT
United States	1966	2008	Whites	0.691	DOMINANT
United States	1966	2008	Latinos	0.125	POWERLESS
United States	1966	2008	African Americans	0.124	POWERLESS
United States	1966	2008	Asian Americans	0.036	POWERLESS
United States	1966	2008	American Indians	0.0078	POWERLESS
United States	1966	2008	Arab Americans	0.0042	POWERLESS
United States	2009	2014	Whites	0.66	SENIOR PARTNER
United States	2009	2014	Latinos	0.15	JUNIOR PARTNER
United States	2009	2014	African Americans	0.124	JUNIOR PARTNER
United States	2009	2014	Asian Americans	0.044	JUNIOR PARTNER
United States	2009	2014	American Indians	0.0078	POWERLESS
United States	2009	2014	Arab Americans	0.005	POWERLESS
United States	2015	2017	Whites	0.66	SENIOR PARTNER
United States	2015	2017	Latinos	0.15	JUNIOR PARTNER
United States	2015	2017	African Americans	0.124	JUNIOR PARTNER
United States	2015	2017	Asian Americans	0.044	POWERLESS
United States	2015	2017	American Indians	0.0078	POWERLESS
United States	2015	2017	Arab Americans	0.005	POWERLESS
Vietnam	1954	1975	Kinh (Vietnamese)	0.794507	DOMINANT
Vietnam	1954	1975	Tay	0.018311	IRRELEVANT

Country	from	to	group	size	status
Vietnam	1954	1975	Thai	0.016277	IRRELEVANT
Vietnam	1954	1975	Muong	0.014242	IRRELEVANT
Vietnam	1954	1975	Hoa (Chinese)	0.010173	POWERLESS
Vietnam	1954	1975	Nung	0.010173	IRRELEVANT
Vietnam	1954	1975	Hmong	0.009156	IRRELEVANT
Vietnam	1954	1975	Dao	0.007121	IRRELEVANT
Vietnam	1976	1978	Kinh (Vietnamese)	0.781	DOMINANT
Vietnam	1976	1978	Tay	0.018	DISCRIMINATED
Vietnam	1976	1978	Thai	0.016	DISCRIMINATED
Vietnam	1976	1978	Muong	0.014	DISCRIMINATED
Vietnam	1976	1978	Khmer	0.013	DISCRIMINATED
Vietnam	1976	1978	Hoa (Chinese)	0.01	DISCRIMINATED
Vietnam	1976	1978	Nung	0.01	DISCRIMINATED
Vietnam	1976	1978	Hmong	0.009	DISCRIMINATED
Vietnam	1976	1978	Dao	0.007	DISCRIMINATED
Vietnam	1976	1978	Gia Rai	0.004	DISCRIMINATED
Vietnam	1979	2017	Kinh (Vietnamese)	0.85	DOMINANT
Vietnam	1979	2017	Tay	0.018	POWERLESS
Vietnam	1979	2017	Thai	0.018	POWERLESS
Vietnam	1979	2017	Muong	0.015	POWERLESS
Vietnam	1979	2017	Khmer	0.014	POWERLESS
Vietnam	1979	2017	Hoa (Chinese)	0.01	POWERLESS
Vietnam	1979	2017	Hmong	0.01	POWERLESS
Vietnam	1979	2017	Nung	0.01	POWERLESS
Vietnam	1979	2017	Dao	0.007	POWERLESS
Vietnam	1979	2017	Gia Rai	0.004	POWERLESS
Turkey	1946	2017	Turkish	0.75	MONOPOLY
Turkey	1946	2017	Kurds	0.18	DISCRIMINATED
Turkey	1946	2017	Roma	0.0066	DISCRIMINATED

Data are featured on the US context from the 1946-2017; Vietnam from 1954-2017; Turkey 1946-2017. As readers will observe, these data do not include all possible ethnic groups in each of these countries, but they do nevertheless offer the most comprehensive quantitative measures available. The column titled “status” captures the following tiers of political power (as defined in the EPR Codebook)¹ – *Monopoly*: group rules alone; *Dominance*: elite members hold monopoly power in the executive to the exclusion of members of all other ethnic groups and elite members of the group hold dominant power in the executive but there is some limited inclusion of “token” members of other groups who however do not have real influence on decision making; *Senior Partner*: representatives of the group participate as senior partners in a formal or informal power-sharing arrangement. By power sharing, we mean any arrangement that divides executive power among leaders who claim to represent particular ethnic groups and who have real influence on political decision making; *Junior Partner*: Representatives participate as junior partners in government; *Powerless*: elite representatives hold no political power (or do not have influence on decision making) at the national

1 The codebook is publicly accessible at: https://icr.ethz.ch/data/epr/core/EPR_2019_Codebook_EPR.pdf

level of executive power - although without being explicitly discriminated against; *Discrimination*: group members are subjected to active, intentional, and targeted discrimination by the state, with the intent of excluding them from political power. Such active discrimination can be either formal or informal, but always refers to the domain of public politics (excluding discrimination in the socio-economic sphere).

United States

Over a long span of history, both Federal and state governments have subjugated minority segments of the American population. The American people are ethnically, linguistically, economically, and politically diverse. Notions of freedom are realized through the pursuit of happiness and private property acquisition in a society that in its contemporary form, is considered to consist of chiefly free individuals. Although the US is formally a pluralistic democracy that features regular elections, an independent press, and an assorted civil society, the diversity debit problem is still salient in this country. In multiple ways, this is the perfect milieu for which to investigate the diversity debit problem. Of our three cases under attention in this study, the US has the utmost functioning democratic institutions and the greatest historical degree of civic association. The interplay of structure (economic/market forces) and agency (the incentives and behavior of state and non-state actors) have contributed to diversity debit in the US.

According to the Institute for Research on Poverty (University of Wisconsin-Madison), since 1959, non-Hispanic Whites in the US have lived in lower poverty in comparison to Hispanics and Blacks. As of 2011, 27% of Blacks and 25% of Hispanics were living in poverty whereas only 9.7% of the majority group (Whites) were. American slavery was a rigorous capitalistic endeavor and its exploitative effects were ravaging for the Black segment of the population. When British settlers, especially those from rural areas of Scotland arrived into the US South, the vast amounts of land they acquired were incomparable to anything they had seen in their country of origin. The vast land, however, was worth very little if there was no labor available to work the land. Hence, early on in American colonial history, shifting into the 19th century and well into the 20th century, America became the world's largest cotton producer (Rivoli, 2014). Slave labor played a mighty role in the production of cotton. In comparison to serfdom which was prevalent across much of Central and Eastern Europe at the same time in which slavery was present in America, the US system of slavery resulted in the total subjugation of a segment of the population that never fully recovered. The necessity of importing slaves and then up-keeping the slave labor system in the US was dictated by economic structure – in that there was no physical way to reap profits and produce cotton without human beings working the land.

The Fifteenth amendment to the constitution (1870) granted a degree of freedom to male slaves, but political representation was never realized completely due to the enactment of Jim Crow Laws in the South. After Jim Crow, the case of Plessy vs. Ferguson (1896) resulted in an institutionalized (Supreme Court) mandated status quo which upheld discrimination along the lines of *separate but equal*. Former slaves never actually obtained political representation and significant protection under both state and Federal law until nearly a century after the abolishing of slavery. As late as the 1960s, what at the time was the largest minority group in the US (Blacks), were categorically excluded from participation in politics. Although abolished, the effect of racism on US institutions was prevalent for more than a hundred years after. Although the 1960s ended formal federally upheld discrimination, discriminatory practices shifted to lower levels, including state governments. Evidence even exists of this effect today on a political level in the highly conspicuous practice of gerrymandering (Lipsitz, 2011; Tarter, 2019).

The most salient attempt of cross-societal collective mobilization waged by Black citizens in the US was the 1960s Civil Rights movement, led by Martin Luther King Jr. The movement, numbering in the millions, did bring about new political inclusiveness for Blacks (e.g., the Congressional passage of the Civil Rights Act), and resulted in subsequent higher wages and better economic opportunities. There are however, a significant number of citizens that believe the movement failed – in fact, recent survey evidence indicates that nearly half of all Blacks believe the movement was not a success (Santoro, 2015). Apart from the Civil Rights movement, very few instances of mobilization can be observed throughout US history in which a minority group obtained significant concessions from the government.² The caveat here is that when concessions were granted, their impact was positive in one realm, but highly negative in another. The impact to civil rights laws of the 1960s/70s were excluded from surveys, hence it was impossible to gauge their effects statistically, particularly in terms of their association with inequality (Pettit & Sykes, 2015). What's more, after the Civil Rights movement, mass incarceration started to pick up and resulted in a rapid expansion and growth of the prison system. As discovered by Pettit and Sykes (2015), "in the post–Great Recession era, young black men who have dropped out of high school are more likely to be incarcerated than working in the paid labor force."

On the other hand, throughout much of US history, Mexican-Americans have experienced what Ortiz and Telles (2012) argue is second-class citizen treatment. The historical incorporation of Mexicans into the Mexican-American category was carried out through a grueling process in which many Mexicans were granted US citizenship, but at the same time lost their property (Ortiz & Telles, 2012). What's more, Mexicans became demoted to low-status labor positions. They were discriminated upon in schools and workplaces. In 1953, the US government formally launched what was called "Operation Wetback," in order to deport nearly four million ethnic Mexicans, most of which were US citizens (Astor, 2009). Minority groups also do not experience the same outcomes when it comes to accessing public goods. For example, clean air and water are arguably the most significant of all public goods, but not all groups have equal access to these public goods. Pulido et al. (2016), ascertain that regulations in ethnically poor communities in the US have been inequitably enforced. Through case studies conducted in California, Texas, and in Georgia, the authors find that even though environmental activism has been recurrent and salient in these two states, organized and well-articulated demands have failed to bring about environmental conditions and regulations in minority communities. Although organized collective interests are achieved by ethnic groups in these contexts, either environmental regulations get explicitly ignored or no regulations get implemented at all.

One particular qualitative example of how this has occurred can be observed in California and the Exide Corporation (a battery recycling conglomerate). In recent decades, the Exide Corporation was observed to be operating on expired permits. The corporation has been accused of dumping toxic dust on neighborhoods in East Los Angeles and Maywood, specifically in Latino/working class communities. Pulido et al. (2016) explain how residents have filed complaints about arsenic emissions from the plant – arguing that these emissions have caused illnesses such as cancer and respiratory disease. Over the course of thirteen years (2000-2013), the Exide Corporation was cited 41 times for excessive lead emissions, but was still allowed to continue operations. Protesters have pressured the Department of Toxic Substance Control (DTSC), and over the years have experienced what Pulido et al., (2016) coin to be environmental racism. Similarly, in Texas, the South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD) has also failed to control environmental pollution in poor communities, again with practices related to the Exide company. Pulido et al. (2016) argue that

² This claim also applies to societal wide mobilization – apart from mass unionization during the 1930s or the anti-war (Vietnam) protests, few instances can be observed.

these two agencies have failed to protect the public. Tens of thousands of local residents still live in contaminated neighborhoods.

In Newtown, Georgia, predominantly Black communities have suffered not from bad regulations, but from a lack of regulations. Newtown is situated in the center of a number of different industrial sights, and over the last half century its residents have experienced high cancer rates. The major complaints of Newtown's residents are dust pollution and excess noise. Withal, even though complaints have been made and formally put forward to political representatives, they have not been adequately addressed over the last decades due to the activities of a primary polluter (a junkyard) which is designated as too small of an entity to be addressed by state and Federal monitors. The junkyard, thus, has had to abide by the Georgia *Regulated Metals Recycling Law*. Over the last decade, there have been many attempts by activists and residents to pressure lawmakers and bureaucrats in search of regulations, but hitherto, there has been reoccurring political failure.

These examples reveal that adverse outcomes are continuously being experienced by ethnic minority groups which are not as bold or severe as previous outcomes that were tied to Federal level discrimination, yet such outcomes are still important because they elucidate how diversity debit can still arise and ensue in a context that is theoretically ripe for its overcoming. In other words, ethnic groups were able to organize themselves, attract cross-ethnic support, put pressure on political representatives, but still could not alleviate their problems. There are a variety of other examples low-level processes ongoing which highlight how even in our present-day period of time, ethnic communities are failing to obtain public goods either as a result of indirect institutional discrimination or due to market forces and governmental failure of industrial regulation (e.g., Flint, MI water crisis).

Turkey

In Turkey, dynamics akin to state identity formation have consistently brought about human rights violations towards particular ethnic identities (Jongerden, 2003). Similar to the US context, in order to understand different adverse outcomes experienced by ethnic groups, one must begin the analysis at the historical origin of statehood. In Turkey, an interesting configuration of secularist premised political ideology emerged after the fall of the Ottoman empire. Here, the Turkish nation state came into being in the early 1920s when Mustafa Kemal Atatürk articulated a distinct ideology premised on a secularized polity that was imagined to be compatible with democratic conventions of Europe – this was formalized in a framework that ended up being referred to as *Republicanism* (Lewis, 1968, p. 414). In 1930 women were able to vote and by 1934 universal suffrage was achieved. Nevertheless, the exclusion of minority groups from dominant governmental positions were consistently carried out for political gain (Yeğen, 1996). In some cases, this was accomplished via the Guardian state, an institutional structure that was overseen by the Turkish Armed forces (Demirel, 2004). Governing elites frequently repressed those not fitting in with their perceived goals and these included Kurds, Communists, and religious groups such as Alevis. The latter are a Shiite minority religious group that make up nearly 20 percent of the Turkish population and have experienced significant historical persecution (Jongerden, 2003, p. 73).

In the 1960s and 70s, Marxist, socialist and various other left wing movements arose and posed highly threatening demands to governmental status quos, but were ultimately unsuccessful. The 1980s on the other hand, were filled with economic distress and separatism during a Kurdish insurgency against the Turkish state that began in 1984 for the hope of establishing an independent Kurdistan. Economically, by the 1980s, processes of neoliberalization began to make their way into Turkey. The instilling of neoliberalism into the Turkish economy and polity was accomplished by Ozal as well as the military junta who made what Blad and Kocer (2012) argue was a strategic effort to

reconcile many contradictory requirements of the neoliberal state. This in turn would rid the state of its protectionist ability and help to “legitimate authority for the purposes of capital accumulation” (Blad & Kocer, 2012, p. 51). By 1999, Turkey had agreed on a deal with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) where a program was accepted that sought to settle down, privatize, and accordingly “soothe” Turkey’s unsteady economy (Bakir and Onis, 2010). In the 2000s, a significant portion of the citizenry and voters shifted away from the Kemalist Elite in favor of the AKP.

The AKP (Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi) has controlled the Turkish polity since 2002 and can be viewed as a regime rooted in a new historical epoch; it has been highly effective electorally, and has obtained a wide array of political support (Türkün, 2013). What needs to be considered here is that even with IMF packages, it was the earlier shift to a neoliberal governance model that made an “efficacy of Islamist politics in Turkey” possible (Blad & Kocer, 2012). By the time the AKP came onto the Turkish political platform, it offered what Tugal notes was an “alternative Islamist elite” that has since gained support from some secularists (Tugal, 2009). While high rates of profit and private surpluses have accumulated, socio-economic dynamics have left many behind under the AKP’s tenure. As noted by Zülfikar Doğan, poverty has increased with nearly 50 percent of the Turkish population living at or near the poverty line (Zülfikar, 2015). The AKP government and its historical rule contain two important components: these are a Western-supported (IMF) neoliberal economic expansion scheme that operates at all levels of state and infrastructural development, and the articulation of a new symbol of Turkish citizenship. In AKP discourse, individualism and economic entrepreneurship have been championed as elements belonging to a “good” category of citizenship. Tax-loops have enabled the AKP to gain great support from the corporate sector while keeping union rights minimal. These processes are most visible in the sphere of housing. The TOKI, with aid from the AKP, has engaged in acts of flattening and literally bulldozing entire poor neighborhoods (Lovering & Türkmen, 2011). David Harvey (2012) notes similar processes at work in upscale areas of globalized cities such as New York city (Manhattan) and London (central). This has brought about ruinous outcomes for underprivileged populations (Harvey, 2012, p. 29).

Previously suppressed segments of the population (Kurds and Alevis – two of the largest ethnic and religious minority groups) continue to be antagonized in relation to the articulation of a “good” citizen. This echoes a larger historical trend from modern Turkish history – Kurds and Alevis have experienced disproportionately low rates of political participation as a result of historical occurrences and state practices (Grigoriadis, 2006). Survey evidence has verified these prejudices and discriminatory practices (Sarigil, 2018). Economic disparities between Kurds and Alevis when compared to Sunnis (the majority group) are vast. Kurdish regions in Turkey are by far the poorest (Shatzmiller, 2005). Throughout western cities in Turkey, Kurds are considered to be scavengers, benefit seekers and get blamed for rambunctious neighborhood conduct (Saraçoğlu, 2010). This is the binary opposite of the hard-working AKP voter aimed at progressing oneself through material development. In recent years, the Kurdish minority in Turkey have increasingly suffered from what Gambetti notes are violent responses (in the form of mob violence) that have been cast on Kurds by AKP supporters (Gambetti, 2013, p. 129). Similar outcomes have been experienced by highly segregated Roma communities throughout urban areas in Turkey. Social violence has broken out along state dictated ideological fault lines and many AKP politicians have portrayed the lynching of Kurds as a justifiable outburst of anger (Gambetti, 2013, p. 135).

As Akdemir points out, AKP dialogues regarding Alevism are always linked to the internal differences within the religion and how it relates to Sunni Islam; rather than acknowledging it as its own set of spiritual belief system (Akdemir, 2015). The Alevi population suffered immensely from rapid urbanization processes of the 1960s, and experienced several massacres during ethnic violence in the 1970s (Mutluer, 2016). Alevis are considered to be “Muslims that do not go to the Mosque,” and

the place of worship of Alevis (called Cemevi) are not recognized as actual locations of worship by the state (Akdemir, 2015, p. 71). What's more, Erdogan referred to Alevi protesters during a mass civil resistance based anti-governmental uprising (Gezi) in 2013 as "our Alevi Brothers," yet neither Erdoğan or any other AKP members would refer to their own party's and Turkey's majority (Sunni) religious population as "our Sunni-Brothers" (Akdemir, 2015, p. 73).

In recent years, the AKP has led a re-naming campaign having to do with newly constructed landmarks. For example, a mega-project bridge was named after a historical Ottoman ruler (Yavuz Sultan Selim), who oversaw the massacring of Alevi populations centuries ago. These are pertinent realities because collective mobilization is an uphill battle for these minority groups. On one hand, the Kurds sought territorial secession three decades ago, were defeated in conflict, and since, have been banned from parliamentary involvement and increasingly suffer from societal discrimination. On the other hand, Alevis are systematically antagonized by political leadership which brings us back to our claim that even if a cross-societal movement does emerge, it unlikely to foster significant change in the current neoliberal landscape. This entails that ethnic-based collective mobilization under a representative democratic system has an even smaller likelihood of leading to the types of outcomes that rational choice theorists believe it can. Such an oppositional challenge did indeed arise in Turkey, and was one of the largest protests in the country's modern history.

The 2013 Gezi movement began as a relatively low-profile peaceful protest in Istanbul which turned into a country-wide mass uprising. Dissent was triggered by the repression of environmental activists who were protesting an urbanization plan that sought to remove trees in a historic park (Anisin, 2016). In multiple ways, the state-led cooperative endeavor with a major development firm elucidated the salience of a neoliberal inter-linkage of decision making between elites and governmental actors that had been taking place for an entire decade prior to June of 2013. Upwards of two million protesters were dissenting in over 70 different cities in the country calling for regime change. The Gezi movement was very diverse in terms of demographic, social, religious, and political preferences (KONDA 2014). It featured participation from Kurds, Alevis, unions, youth, socialist groups, students, the elderly, and a variety of other segments of society. Yet similar to many other mass movements that have arisen in neoliberal contexts over the last several decades (e.g., Occupy Wall Street), Gezi was ultimately unsuccessful, and the socioeconomic well-being of the noted minority groups have not significantly improved even though such groups were able to organize themselves with other groups, establish collective action, and pressure political elites.

Vietnam

In Vietnam, economic growth has outpaced nearly every other country in the world if viewed from the time of the end of the Cold War up until present. Yet, market forces have left dozens of ethnic minority groups behind, even in light of significant state funding for social welfare and development. Put differently, state funding for social welfare, poverty, education, and other development categories has not brought about its intended effects – over the span of 1993-2014, notable indicators of the development gap between the majority group and minority groups widened (Fujii, 2018). In contrast to the US and Turkey, Vietnam illustrates how a state-centric approach of mass funding towards minority groups does not solve the diversity debit issue. This is fascinating as the diversity debit problem still persists, even in light of specific state policies that have targeted it. In fact, the 1990s still featured a significant degree of socialist ideas voiced by Vietnamese political elites who tried to constrain neoliberal reforms. This is observable in the rejection of WTO membership and other trade deals, and similarly, social policies during this decade were very pro-poor. Nevertheless, these policies could not alleviate the vast structural tendencies that transformed and commercialized the nation.

Although Vietnam's judicial branch of government is independent from its executive, the country is considered to be a one-party state. The institutional formation of the Vietnamese government places constraints on party leaders through what Malesky et al. (2011) argue are vertical checks and semi-competitive (one-party) elections. Vietnamese political elites have rearticulated their state ideology (similar to the Chinese model) to be complimentary to capitalism. In 1986, the state shifted its economy towards a market-compatible socialist doctrine called *Doi Moi*. Eventually, Vietnam joined the World Trade Organization (WTO), signed a free-trade agreement with the European Union, and now has a relatively open economy in comparison to some other Asian countries. The contemporary regime, interestingly enough, has articulated a logic of equivalence that combines communistic symbols alongside free market trade. This logic relies on the support of the majority ethnic group and the concurrent antagonization of minority groups.

Throughout Vietnam's transition, it became a significant actor in global markets and manufacturing. It also approved the sale of state-owned companies and mass privatization. This mixture of a one-party socialist state and a complimentary neoliberal economic structure has been a popular topic of scholarly investigations (Schwenkel & Leshkovich, 2012). Vietnam now has the worst of two systems – an authoritarian socialist state and an unfettered ideology of neoliberalism. In tandem, both of these factors have led to a tiny elite filling its pockets with large sums while touting rhetoric about socialist revolution (Davies, 2015). Of the three countries under analysis, Vietnam is by far the most ethnically diverse. In its population of 91 million, there are 54 different ethnic groups. The dominant group is primarily the Viet (Kinh) which is around 86 percent of the population (Imai et al. 2007). Another group that enjoys access to political and economic power are the Hoa which are ethnically Chinese – although only 1% of the population, this group is considered to be a part of the “majority” due to its unchained access to resources and capital (Fujii, 2018). In contrast, minority ethnic groups such as the Tay, Thai, Khmer, Muong, and Nung are greatly disadvantaged. Dang (2012), analyzed 54 different ethnic groups and discovered that even with a number of different applied government assistant programs, ethnic minority groups (when compared to the majority), live in five times of greater poverty, are four times more illiterate, and experience three times higher child labor rates (Dang, 2012). Even though development programs are aimed at the poor and specifically at ethnic groups, the regime does not actually tolerate any political pressure from these groups and ethnic minorities.

The majority (Kinh) have been observed to discriminate against ethnic minorities. Indigenous ethnic groups such as the Montagnards and Hmongs have especially suffered due to discrimination. Imai et al. (2007) found that minority groups lived in poverty at rates four times higher than majority groups. In the northwest of Vietnam, Hmong and Yao farmers argue discrimination and anti-ethnic bias put them in inexpedient positions (Tugault-Lafleur and Turner, 2011). Discrimination is carried out towards ethnic minority groups that voice their demands in attempt to preserve their heritage and land. The government has effectively kept oppositional voices out of mainstream communication channels while seizing land from minority groups. Similar to the AKP in Turkey, the ruling regime in Vietnam has cleverly articulated a cohesive bloc and logic of equivalence based around the support of a majority its population and symbols of democratic engagement, while at the same time, it has effectively differentiating and antagonizing minority groups.

Of the three countries under attention in this study, the Vietnamese ruling groups' antagonization of ethnic minority groups manifests itself in the most severe of forms. Roughshod practices of land expropriation and population displacement have left millions of ethnic group members in dire circumstances. The state has also sponsored mass migration of the majority Kinh group into once minority inhabited areas. Along with these migration processes have come arrests and civilian disappearances. Land grabs are frequent in the north-west and central-highland areas of

the country. Here state-sponsored organizations force ethnic minorities to concede their property for the purposes of developing mines, hydropower dams, and plantations (The Economist, 2015). During these processes of economic contestation, ethnic minorities have reported that they have experienced beatings and human rights violations. Religious minorities such as Protestant Christians also have voiced similar concerns. The Vietnamese government has continuously been attempting to realize its vision of high economic growth that has been supported by a new business elite which has flourished due to state privatization. This brings us back to our earlier claim – that when there is no room for a market or a given market has been used up, expansion into resource and land rich unfettered areas are the next necessary steps of capitalistic production cycles. In its justification, the ruling elite argue that the state has to be competitive in a globalized world (Balme & Sidel, 2016, p. 110). As Malesky et al. (2011) observe, ethnic minority groups in Vietnam are not only poorer, but also more vulnerable to negative shocks than those in the majority groups. This is because market-based processes are entrenched in networks of corruption – with political elites enjoying the spoils of both mass privatization as well as large scale economic growth year on end. For example, a senior government official diverted one billion dollars to his family member who now runs 20 different businesses (Davies, 2015).

Income levels of the poor are decreasing in Vietnam while the richest segment of society is prospering. What's more, nearly a third of the population has lost its land over the last two decades as a result of formerly state-owned enterprises getting privatized and seeking capital expansion. This has resulted in what Tran (2013) describes as a massive tide of peasants moving to cities in attempt to feed themselves and their families. In turn, a large informal sector has arisen in cities, specifically in sweatshops that are located in industrial parks as well as export zones. The neoliberal impact here is not only evident in the Vietnamese capitalist sector's necessity of industrializing for the goal of profit seeking, but in a new found absence of regulations and workers' rights. Tran notes that Vietnam once possessed progressive labor laws. In recent decades however, private interests have dictated state regulations on labor. The role of external actors is relevant here as the US Chamber of Commerce has also lobbied the Vietnamese state in order to offset state-sponsored unions and their ability to strike (Tran, 2013).

As one would expect, this collection of adverse occurrences that have arisen over the last several decades are ripe for the spawning of collective action. Dissent arose four different times in 1997, 2001, 2004, and in 2011. The protests of 1997 were waged by tens of thousands of farmers and peasants in Thai Binh. This prompted the state to engage in anti-poverty policy (Nguyen, 2014), which led to the creation of a state-led initiative based around "grass roots" democracy (GDD). This policy, interestingly enough, was widely discussed by international donors who coalesced with the Vietnamese state in order to offset severe poverty in rural areas. For example, most rural ethnic minority groups live on an average of 100 US dollars per year income. The impact of GDD led to more inclusive forms of governance on the local level that in the end, legitimated the interests of the state and its affiliated development donors (Larsen, 2011, p. 328). What's more, increased public participation did increase in local governance, but this nurtured a status quo of a participatory format that specifically could not challenge the central assumptions and power structures that rendered it existent in the first place.

In 2001 mobilization turned out to be the largest in the country's history since reunification in 1975. Here dissent arose in the country's central highlands where indigenous minorities unified into a peaceful campaign that sought independence, religious freedom as well as a return of their ancestral lands. The state responded with severe repression – utilizing both its police as well as armed forces who arrested, tortured, imprisoned and ultimately quarreled activists – thousands of which fled the country to Cambodia (Human Rights Watch, 2002). Afterwards, the state was observed to attempt

to “pacify” opposition groups under the prism of coercion and repression (Duncan, 2008). As these case-specific examples go to show, the recipes that scholars have spelled out for overcoming diversity debit problems have empirically been adopted by activists and regular people that have suffered from market forces and elite-led antagonization, exploitation, and discrimination, yet adverse outcomes have still been brought about.

Discussion

The three case studies on the US, Turkey, and Vietnam present us with a glimpse into how complex configurations of structure and agency interact with economic, political, historical, and cultural forces that place minority groups in adverse positions. The most salient of these dynamics are without doubt, economic in nature as the impact of capitalistic processes is overarching on societies, particularly in our contemporary neoliberal age of governance. It is crucial to also consider that minority groups are not the only segments of a population that suffer under a capitalistic system – middle classes have been all but left behind since the rise of the neoliberalist market entanglement with governance structures. In many liberal democratic states, including the U.S., beacons of free market capitalism no longer shine bright and offer little to the rest of the developing world in terms of policy making and societal progress. In the US growth in real wages has stagnated for 50 years – it is estimated that in 1970, the average family income was \$45,852 and by 2012 it had risen to only \$51,179 (Schubert, Dye & Zeigler, 2015). During this time, the participation of women in the workforce went from 40% to 70%, which entails that families hardly raised their incomes, even in light of greater workforce participation. What’s more, in 1970, the average wage was \$7.50 per hour then by 2014, it grew to only \$9.30 per hour. Meanwhile, unionization all but died off. In 1945, more than a third (35.5%) of the workforce were members of a union, by 2010 this number dwindled down to 11.9% (Schubert, Dye & Zeigler, 2015, p. 80). Unionism did not shrink because of ethnic-cleavages, but rather, was crushed by the onset of neoliberalism.

Although only one example, this stark illustration reveals how ideas of political and economic progress, as proxied by ideological presuppositions about democracy and free market capitalism, can bring about coercive conditions that ultimately disable populaces from achieving positive social change. In accounting for adverse outcomes experienced by ethnic groups cross-nationally (diversity debit), Western-centric scholarship has tended to place fault on the hands of individuals, which retrospectively, is an expected point of argumentation if we consider that the economic and political paradigms of knowledge frequently compliment, rather than contradict, the hegemonic order of the countries they arise in. The now “classical” Western international organizations in the age of neoliberalism have increasingly sought to use the issue of poverty reduction as a new way to achieve global governmentality. Such strategies, reasons Joseph (2010), ultimately serve as a means of regulating states and their behavior. These are key observations if we consider the rise of BRICS and the pending potential that this international institution has to provide populations (which number to nearly half of the world population) with a different set of social, economic, and political opportunities. In accounting for the highly skewed distribution of scholarly research which has long been dominated by Western-oriented paradigms of knowledge, de Albuquerque and Lycarião (2018) point out that, “the imbalance toward the West is not a topical phenomenon; rather, it is related to more general circumstances affecting the production and circulation of scientific knowledge related to the process of neoliberal globalization. This happens in two ways. On the one hand, as neoliberal globalization sets the rules of the game for international scientific publishing, it provides certain views (from the United States and United Kingdom, especially) with a structural advantage over others. On the other hand, neoliberal globalization is also a social agenda, which has been actively promoted by myriad agents interested in directly or indirectly influencing the academic debate” (de Albuquerque & Lycarião, 2018, p. 2875).

The rise of BRICS has offered a much-needed alternative to the IMF, World Bank, and other international institutions that have their origin in the Bretton Woods system and its hegemonic and ideational structures. BRICS' strategic abandoning of political clauses in economic development projects (such as in infrastructure planning and funding) may offer a future route that proves to be more adaptable to problems that are arising in a rapidly changing global economy and in turn, may present previously discriminated populations with more opportunities to climb up the ladder of equality. This is precisely where scholars have a role to play in identifying why problems such as diversity debit exist in some countries and not in others, or in some contexts, regions, and levels of social organization when compared to others. Although inequality is a variant but persistent problem in BRICS states, a key component of BRICS is that it presents countries with development opportunities to step away from cultural universalization and processes of norm setting that are embedded in the neo-colonial roots of Bretton Woods system institutions. As Maiorano and Manor (2017) note, in 1990 1.95 billion people across the world lived in extreme poverty. This number dropped to 896 million by 2012 and China, India, Brazil, and South Africa are responsible for much of this drastic reduction (Maiorano & Manor, 2017, p. 278). Social programs and government led initiatives (such as India's Food Security act or China's tax-for-fee imitative) played a significant role in spurring poverty reduction.

A major difference in these dynamics can be observed in the fact that programs for development and poverty reduction were not carried out with the ideological presupposition that failures of groups are down to their lack of individual utility as is present in the Western-based conception of economic development. The last century of history has shown that free-market capitalism in conjunction with liberal democracy cannot solve all political and economic issues in a given society, especially those that are akin to the diversity debit phenomenon. An aim of scholars working out of critical politically economy traditions is to continue to question and problematize theoretical premises that underlie the diversity debit problem. Porton, Rhee, and Gibson's (2022) recent inquiry into public good provision in South Africa demonstrates that ethnic heterogeneity does not undermine public good provision and that ethnic targeting may not be the most feasible or effective political strategy in increasing the quality of public goods services. Public good provision is actually more effective in municipalities that are more ethnically diverse which leads the authors to argue that the diversity debit literature undervalues the role that institutions have in shaping politicians' decision making during public good distribution. Identifying different mechanisms and processes that lead to effective public good distribution in ethnically diverse societies must done on a comparative basis. This study has shown how the US, Turkey, and Vietnam have suffered from adverse outcomes due to a complex interplay of structural and agency-based processes that feature capitalistic logics and qualitative discriminatory practices. In South Africa however, it appears that on municipal levels, legislative levels generate positive conditions for the formation of ethnic coalitions which then contribute to strong public service provisioning (Porton, Rhee, & Gibson, 2022).

Conclusion

Throughout this paper, I have problematized the diversity debit hypothesis and offered an alternative approach to investigate this widely studied phenomenon. To date, accounts of the diversity debit problem have been rooted in Western-centric modes of thought including rational choice theory. Scholars working out of this tradition have justified the empirical salience of diversity debit through reverting back to a hegemonic worldview that places fault on individuals while simultaneously discounts them due to their supposed failure in being able to organize themselves properly and pressure leaders to obtain public goods. The implications of this viewpoint are critical for our understanding of contemporary development policies. Since markets are considered to be free and to possess all necessary ingredients which can enable a given population to thrive and excel, significant

societal drawbacks or failures are thus intrinsically linked to the individual and his/her unification (or lack thereof) with a larger ethnic group's failure to overcome collective action problems. Repression, discrimination, and subjugation too often get concealed as being "natural" outcomes of economic practice. There is no greater evidence to support these facts than the theoretical and discursive articulations that surround the diversity debit hypothesis. The case studies carried out in this study reveal that in all three contexts, minority groups did in fact achieve rates of collective mobilization and posed threats to governmental status quos, but nevertheless, dissent failed to bring about favorable outcomes. For these reasons, scholars must abandon the claim that diversity debit is a result of individual faults or lack of democratization. Further investigation of the diversity debit problem is necessary to carry out through alternative and critically-oriented approaches. There is much to be learned in future ideologically transparent comparative social inquiry on these topics in other countries.

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