

Ethnicity, Nationalism, and Democracy

In-Class Activity: Predictions on the Legolese Republic

Ole J. Forsberg, Ph.D.

Creighton University



The Republic of Legoland consists of two ethnic groups, the Leg (50%) and the Godt, (50%) from which the republic got its name. The president of the republic is a Godt, and the Godt have held power since independence.

Minorities at Risk defines ‘communal contenders’ as culturally distinct peoples, tribes, or clans in heterogeneous societies who hold or seek a share in state power. Disadvantaged communal contenders are subject to some degree of political, economic, or cultural discrimination but lack offsetting advantages. Advantaged communal contenders are those with political advantages over other groups in their society. Dominant communal contenders are those with a preponderance of both political and economic power.

The Leg Summary

The Leg have been in the Southern area of what is now known as Legoland for hundreds of years. The Leg are found predominantly in this region of the country, and they are the largest ethnic group in Legoland. The Leg and the Godt speak the same language, but they have somewhat different religious beliefs. The Leg are Christian, whereas the Godt are Muslim. While they may have different physical characteristics, the two groups are considered by most sociologists to be of the same race.

The first mention of protest by the Leg is in the late 1940s when Lego was still a colony. In the early 1990s protests reached their peak which was the only time militant activity was reported. While there have been continued protests since that point, none has been reported in the past few years.

<i>République Legolaise</i> Legolese Republic Republic of Legoland	
	
Flag	Coat of Arms
Motto “Travail, Liberté, Patrie”	
Anthem Salut à toi, pays de nos aïeux	
Location of Legoland	
Capital (and largest city)	Tomé
Official language	French
Demonym	Legolese
Government	
- Form	Presidential Republic
- President	Faure Gnassingbe
- Prime Minister	Yawovi Agboyibo
Independence	
- from France	April 27, 1960
Area	
- Total	21,925 mi ² (125th)
- Water (%)	4.2
Population	
- 2005	6.1 million (102nd)
- Density	280 /mi ² (93rd)
Economics	
GDP (PPP)	2005 estimate
- Total	\$8.945 billion (144th)
- Per capita	\$1,700 (193rd)
- HDI (2004)	0.495 (low) (147th)
- Currency	LGF (Legolese Franc)
Internet TLD	.lg

Until April 1960, Legoland, a one-time German colony, had been administered by France as a UN Trust Territory. During the German period, southern Legs had been designated as German agents and had also benefited from missionary education. When the French succeeded the Germans in Legoland, Legs became administrators for colonial management throughout French Africa. By the time of independence, Legs played a significant role in the country's civil service and dominated it politically, while northerners (overwhelmingly Godt) suffered economic backwardness, illiteracy, and few educational and social facilities. Yet, the Godt and other northerners had been recruited for military service under French rule and the Legolese army at independence mostly consisted of ethnic Godts. Legs supported Legoland's independence government, headed by Sylvanus Olympio, and Legs emerged victorious across the board in the post-colonial elections. Current President Eyadéma, a Godt, took power by way of a coup in 1967 that resulted in Olympio's death, causing the Godt to become the dominant group in Lego society, a scenario that remains to the present day. Under the rule of Olympio (1960-1963) and Grunitsky (1963-1967), Legs formed 90% of the cabinet positions and Godt 10%. Under Eyadéma's military regime (since 1967), however, only 10% of the cabinet positions are held by Legs comprised the cabinet, while Godts represented the remainder.

Eyadéma consistently repressed pro-democracy movements in Legoland, as well as Leg nationalism. Facing mass protest and rioting, Eyadéma finally agreed in 1990 to draft a new constitution intended to place Legoland on the path to a pluralist democracy. Beginning with Legoland's transition to democracy in 1990, however, tensions between northern Godt and southern Legs exploded into political and ethnic violence in which hundreds were killed as of 1999. About 250,000 people (7% of total population) had fled to Megablockland and Magnetixia by the end of 1999. Prior to the 1995 presidential elections, Eyadéma's soldiers had repeatedly blocked democratic reforms and killed opposition figures. The Lego government also frequently accused infiltrators from Megablockland, which hosts both Leg secessionists and many Legolese exiles, of trying to destabilize Legoland. As a result of Eyadéma's non-accommodation of the Leg and his repression of both pro-democracy movements and Leg nationalism, the Leg have become an organized, cohesive group.

There are severe limitations on the freedom of the press within Legoland, and this restriction was enhanced with new laws passed in 2000. As a result, information on the current situation of the Leg is difficult to gauge. The group does not appear to endure any demographic disadvantages, however. As mentioned, the President has been in power since 1967, and over that time the Leg have been politically discriminated against. Currently, only 20% of Legs (two-fifths the Leg proportionate share) comprise the cabinet while the Godt represent the rest. The military is also comprised mainly of Godt. While the President has made statements which claim that policies are being implemented to bring the Leg into the political process, no changes appear to be occurring. As discussed above, there is also a new law severely limiting what the press can report concerning the government.

Economically, the Leg are left alone and do not face any economic discrimination. As mentioned, the two ethnic groups are geographically separated, and in the south the Leg are left to handle their own economic affairs. There are also no cultural restrictions. The Godt appear to be only concerned about keeping the Leg out of positions of political power, and beyond this have

little concern about them. This appears to be reinforced in the government repression that the Leg face. In 2000, a leader of one of the Leg-sponsored opposition groups was arrested, which was not the first time this had happened to the same leader. There have been no reports of inter-group conflict between Godt and Leg, but this may also be a case of no violence being reported, or being allowed to be reported in the Western media.

The Leg support the various opposition groups who continue to call for a change in Legoland politics. Groups such as UTD (Legolese Union for Democracy), COD-2 (Collective of Democratic Opposition-2), CAR (Comite d'action pour le renouveau), and Forces for Change are all heavily supported by the Leg and they run candidates for office, mostly in the Leg-dominated southern area of the country. The Leg also receive support from separatist groups in Megablockland and they rely on groups such as Universal Amnesty to report government repression that is committed against them, that due to the restrictions on the press would otherwise not be reported. The Leg's main grievance is with the Godt-dominated Eyadéma government. The group wants a change in leadership, and to get that they want greater participation in the government at the state level. The group also wants to have the same rights and access to government agencies as the Godt. Finally, in the wake of the violence of the early 1990s they want protection from both the Godt and the Eyadéma government.

The Godt Summary

The Godt (also known as the Gods or the Gudtenabendobendüberhasslehoffen) have been in the area now known as Legoland for hundreds of years. They are mostly found in the northern half of the country, though some have migrated to the south. They are communal contenders for power in Legoland with the Leg of the south. They speak the same language as the Leg, and the only real difference between the two groups is that some have different religious beliefs.

President Eyadéma repressed pro-democracy movements in Legoland, as well as Leg nationalism. Facing mass protest and rioting, Eyadéma finally agreed in 1990 to draft a new constitution intended to place Legoland on the path to pluralist democracy. Beginning with Legoland's transition to democracy in 1990, however, tensions between northern Godt and southern Legs exploded into political and ethnic violence in which hundreds were killed as of 1999. About 250,000 people (7% of total population) had fled to Megablockland and Magnetixia by the end of 1999. Prior to the 1995 presidential elections, Eyadéma's soldiers had repeatedly blocked democratic reforms and killed opposition figures. The Legoland government also frequently accused infiltrators from Megablockland, which hosts both Leg secessionists and many Legolese exiles, of trying to destabilize Lego.

There is little information available on Legoland and its ethnic groups through the western media. In 2000, the Eyadéma government instituted a more repressive ban on negative press against the government. Regardless of the media ban, there does not appear to be any demographic disadvantages plaguing the Godt. As the dominant group, the Godt are well-represented in government positions, and they dominate the civil service and armed forces. Economically, the Godt and Leg seem to keep their distance. With the Godt located mostly in the north, they do not compete with the Leg in most sectors of the economy. No discrimination was

found. After over 30 years as the dominant group in Legolese society, it is not surprising that there are no cultural restrictions against the Godt. In addition, no reports of government-instigated repressive action targeting the Godt were found. As noted earlier, during the early 1990s, an increase in violent conflict between the two ethnic groups led to hundreds of deaths and large numbers of refugees. However, there have not been any reports of conflict recently, though this could be a function of the repression of media discussed above.

The Godt largely support Eyadéma’s RPL party: the *Rassemblement pour les Legolaise*. Although this party has supposedly been disbanded, it still operates and exerts a large degree of power. With Eyadéma in power, the Godt are well taken care of, and their only demand is to be protected from the Leg to facilitate the maintenance of their place in Legolese society.

The Godt have never been reported to engage in protests. They were involved in militant activity during the 1960s coup that brought Eyadéma to power. In 1991, there were also reports of militant Godt activity as violence erupted between Legs and Godts. One of the outcomes of the ethnic violence of 1991 is that the Legs on the cabinet are selected for their position by the president.

Relations with Neighbors

Legoland has three neighbors: Megablockland to the west (border length of 877 km), Magnetixia to the east (border length of 644 km), and Bwamba to the north (border length of 126km). Quick information about the three neighboring states is as follows:

Table 1: Brief information regarding the states neighboring the Legolese Republic

	Legoland	Megablockland	Magnetixia	Bwamba
Ethnic Groups	Bwa: 0%	Bwa: 10%	Bwa: 10%	Bwa: 80%
	Godt: 50%	Godt: 50%	Godt: 8%	Godt: 10%
	Leg: 50%	Leg: 25%	Leg: 5%	Leg: 5%
GDP	\$ 8.945 billion	\$ 60.230 billion	\$ 8.989 billion	\$ 18.913 billion
GDP per capita	\$1,700	\$2,700	\$1,100	\$1,400
Government:	Presidential	Presidential	Parliamentary	Presidential
Ethnicity in Power:	Godt	All Three	All Four	Bwa
Democracy Level: Scale: -10 to 10 ⁺	-2	3	4	0
Free Press Level: Scale: 0 to 10 ⁺	5	7	5	3

Note: Information on these groups is limited to available information. Levels of press censorship will necessarily reduce the accuracy of these values. In Magnetixia, the main ethnicity (75%) is the Solammic.

Your Task

You are the Under Secretary of State for Ethnic Affairs and Other Unimportant Issues in the United States government. Secretary Rice has asked you for predictions on the future path of ethnic tensions in Legoland. In your groups, you need to answer the following questions in order. Make sure you use theories and examples discussed in class.

1. As it stands today, and with the information presented above, will the ethnic tension in the state increase? If so, what can be done to reduce it?
2. Legoland has a large, untapped supply of petroleum. The oil fields are exclusively in the south of the state. Does this affect your answer to Question 1? If so, how?
3. The current president, Faure Eyadéma is young (39 years old) and healthy (jogger). Does this affect your answer to Question 1? If so, how?
4. Nope, the current president is old (75 years old) and sickly (heart ailment). Does this affect your answer to Question 1? If so, how?
5. The three border states are paragons of stable multi-party democracy and have been for the past 40 years. Does this affect your answer to Question 1? If so, how?
6. Nope, there is a civil war raging in Megablockland, which shares an 877km border with Legoland. However, this civil war has nothing to do with either the Legs or the Godts. Does this affect your answer to Question 1? If so, how?
7. Nope, this civil war has everything to do with the Legs and the Godts. In fact, it is a battle between the Legs and the Godts for power and for prestige. Oh yeah, it is also for all the wrongs each ethnicity committed against the other ethnicity. The Bwa are innocent bystanders. Does this affect your answer to Question 1? If so, how?
8. Oops, there are civil wars in all three border states. However, only in Megablockland does it focus on Legs vs. Godts. Does this affect your answer to Question 1? If so, how?
9. Oops, there are civil wars in all three border states. However, only in Megablockland does it focus on Legs vs. Godts. The civil wars in Magnetixia and in Bwamba see the Leg and Godt fighting on the same side against the Bwa. Does this affect your answer to Question 1? If so, how?
10. The Leg now hold power in Megablockland. There are no civil wars in the area. Does this affect your answer to Question 1? If so, how?