DIGITAL COMMONS
@ UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA

University of South Florida

Digital Commons @ University of South Florida

USF Tampa Graduate Theses and Dissertations

USF Graduate Theses and Dissertations

March 2023

Violence, Rents, and Elites: Institutional Determinants of Political Order in Ethiopia, Rwanda, and South Sudan

Kaleb Demerew
University of South Florida

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/etd

Part of the International Relations Commons

Scholar Commons Citation
Demerew, Kaleb, "Violence, Rents, and Elites: Institutional Determinants of Political Order in Ethiopia, Rwanda, and South Sudan" (2023). *USF Tampa Graduate Theses and Dissertations.*
https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/etd/10432

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the USF Graduate Theses and Dissertations at Digital Commons @ University of South Florida. It has been accepted for inclusion in USF Tampa Graduate Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ University of South Florida. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@usf.edu.

Violence, Rents, and Elites: Institutional Determinants of Political Order in Ethiopia, Rwanda, and South Sudan

by

Kaleb Demerew

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
School of Interdisciplinary Global Studies
College of Arts and Sciences
University of South Florida

Major Professor: Steven C. Roach, Ph.D.
Jongseok Woo, Ph.D.
Earl Conteh-Morgan, Ph.D.
John Ishiyama, Ph.D.

Date of Approval
March 9, 2023

Keywords: State-building, Political Development, Africa, Institutions, New Institutionalism

Copyright © 2023, Kaleb Demerew

Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I thank the Almighty for giving me the resilience, fortitude, and wisdom to pursue this project to its culmination. I am grateful for my loving wife, Michelle, who kept me sane through arduous periods of research and writing. During this process, we were tremendously blessed to welcome our wonderful son, Haaile, to our family. I thank my parents, Demerew Aberra and Messaiwork Eshetu, for their unyielding support of all my educational pursuits, and my resourceful sister, Hanna Aberra, for always providing prudent advice. I would not have been able to conduct this work without the guidance and mentorship of my advisor, Dr. Steven C. Roach. I am grateful to my committee members Dr. Jongseok Woo and Dr. Earl Conteh-Morgan for assisting with the initial stages of developing my theoretical framework, and for providing feedback throughout. I also thank Dr. John Ishiyama who provided valuable advice on some of the empirical applications of my work, as well as the overall framing of my dissertation. Dr. Edward Kissi generously shared his experiences doing fieldwork in Ethiopia. I enjoyed the time spent brainstorming, sharing ideas, and debating with my colleagues and friends, Angela El-Fayez, Anaol Dalle, and Murid Partaw. My friends, Hussien Samad, Mariam Hamdan, and Richard Sutton, brewed some of the best tea in Tampa, and kept me motivated and encouraged through the process. Finally, I thank the interview participants for taking time to speak with me for this research; their insights and experiences contributed substantially to this work.

Table of Contents

Abstract ii

Introduction 1
Political Development in Africa: Analytical Gaps 5
Hypotheses, Variables, and Definitions 17
Methodology and Cases 21

Chapter One: Explaining Political Development 28
1.1 The New Institutionalism: A Political Economy Approach 29
1.1.1 Competing Institutionalisms: History vs. Bounded Rationality 34
1.1.2 Institutional Equilibria and Violence 41
1.2 The Violence Trap: Elites, Rents, and Institutions 45

Chapter Two: Political Development in Ethiopia 52
2.1 Discussion of Interview Methods 55
2.2 Competing Narratives of Ethiopia's Political Development 57
2.3 Analytic Narratives of Ethiopia's Historical Transitions 70
2.3.1 Haile Selassie's Ethiopia: At the Doorstep of a Mature Natural State 72
2.3.2 Violent Revolutions and Socialist Legacies: The Dergue and the TPLF 79
2.4 Current Institutional Transitions and Ethiopia's Future Prospects 99
2.4.1 Antecedent Conditions and Proximate Causes for Prosperity Transition 100
2.4.2 Outcomes of Prosperity Transition and Future Prospects 108

Chapter Three: Political Development in Rwanda 119
3.1 Narratives of Political Development in post-genocide Rwanda 120
3.2 Analytic Narratives: Political Development in Contemporary Rwanda 129
3.2.1 Elites, Rents, and Institutions in Rwanda's Historical Transitions 130
3.2.2 Elites, Rents, and Transitions in Contemporary Rwanda 147
3.2.3 Prospects for Further Transition and Political Development 160

Chapter Four: Political Development in South Sudan 165
4.1 Political Development in South Sudan: Failure to Launch? 166
4.2 Analytic Narratives of South Sudan: Institutional Logic of the Fragile State 175
4.2.1 Elites, Preferences, and Rents in South Sudan 177
4.2.2 Credibility, Perpetuity, and the Role of Civil Society 197

Conclusion 202

Bibliography 209

Appendix A: IRB Exemption Letter 217

Appendix B: IUP Article Republishing Rights 218

Abstract

This dissertation aims to investigate why some African states make progress in political development while others remain stagnant or regress. The study adopts a political economy approach within the new institutionalism tradition, focusing on the agency of domestic elites and the impact of violence constraints on institutional outcomes. Specifically, the study employs the violence trap framework, which identifies developing countries as fragile states, basic natural states, and mature natural states. The research applies this framework to case studies of Ethiopia, Rwanda, and South Sudan using an analytic narratives methodology that combines elite interviews with primary and secondary source analysis. The findings suggest cyclical periods of success and reversal in Ethiopia's modern state-building, transitions towards a mature natural state in Rwanda in the decades since the genocide, and a fragile state underpinned by continued private provision of violence and lack of elite bargains in South Sudan, illustrating the different outcomes that can result from elite preferences and violence constraints. Overall, the framework of the study combines rational choice and historical institutionalism and provides both rationalist and culturalist accounts of elite choice, making it a valuable contribution to the field. The main policy implication is that for lower access orders, development efforts should focus on codifying and broadening elite bargains and increasing commitments to constitutionalism, rather than top-down, standardized efforts at democratization.

Introduction

Political development is the process by which states incrementally create more stable rule-of-law orders with strong independent institutions and credible commitments to protect them.[1] Beyond providing stability, political development also provides the institutional conditions for sustainable economic development. Assessing political development and rule-of-law in the African context has proved difficult from this institutionalist perspective. This raises an important research question that is adopted in this dissertation: *Why do some African states incrementally achieve political development while others experience stagnant or regressing political orders?* In this dissertation, I argue that evading what institutionalists refer to as 'the violence trap' allows states to incrementally achieve political development, marked by impersonality, perpetuity, and inclusivity. This requires states to efficiently and credibly institutionalize rents-based bargains between ruling and contending elites, share benefits of economic specialization among a broad group of elite coalition members, and, eventually, standardize all elite privileges as a 'rule of law or elites.'

This argument, which I develop through an examination of three country case studies, is rooted in the rational choice institutionalism tradition in comparative politics. There are several other perspectives on political development that are reviewed in this introduction. Post-colonial scholars attribute the difficulties of African political development to the violent nature of state construction

---

[1] Weingast, "Resistant to the Rule-of-Law."

and the social fractures that have persisted after decolonization.[2] Some have prioritized the influence of external systemic constraints, such as vulnerability and dependency, particularly given the perpetuation of power imbalances in the international economic system.[3] Historical institutionalists have pointed to path-dependent mechanisms that perpetuate vicious circles of extractive institutions long after colonial powers have left.[4] Still, these high-level models of political development do not often provide a systematic framework for explaining why some African states do, in fact, achieve significant levels of political development, nullifying the expectations of path-dependent and post-colonial theorists. Although some of these theories are highly influential in development policy, they do not pay enough attention to the most significant drivers of institutional transition in any state context: institutional incentives and elite choices. In other words, processes of strategic interaction among different elite groups, the incentives guiding these preferences, and the mechanisms of institutionalization all lead to highly varied outcomes, even among states that are considered, in technical terms, undeveloped.

To answer my research question, I pursue a comparative case analysis between three countries in Eastern Africa: Ethiopia, Rwanda, and South Sudan. Ethiopia, which serves as the primary case study, has a long history of independent statehood, owing to a monarchy that fought off European colonialism. Rwanda had a similar experience with pre-colonial statehood; though Rwanda did not evade European colonialism, it has reconstituted a homegrown political order in decades since the genocide. Both Rwanda and Ethiopia have experienced political tensions arising from ethnic politics and violence. These ethnic contestations also play out in the case of South Sudan but in

---

[2] Mamdani, *Neither Settler Nor Native*.
[3] Caporaso, “Dependence and Dependency”; Baldwin, “Interdependence and Power”.
[4] Acemoglu and Robinson, *Why Nations Fail*.

more personalistic and indeterminate forms. Indeed, South Sudan, the newest sovereign state in Africa, has a short, tentative, and tumultuous history that contrasts sharply with that of Ethiopia and Rwanda.

Before analyzing these cases, I begin by reviewing present literature on the historical institutional transitions in the region as a whole. In this introduction, I examine these perspectives and the prevailing narratives about impediments to political development. This includes a brief review of the political and history of the three cases for this study. This review will help reveal analytical gaps addressed through this research, which contributes to the study of African political development, and, more broadly, to the field of comparative politics. The theoretical framework proposed to address these analytical gaps is then detailed in Chapter 1.

The theoretical framework is based on the 'violence trap' framework, rooted in the new institutionalism in political science. As outlined in Chapter 1, political development in this framework is marked by the extent to which states can progress through the violence trap, a condition wherein rents are the only means by which ruling elites can maintain political order.[5] Incremental achievement of three conditions in state institutions: impersonality, perpetuity, and inclusivity, results in higher levels of political development.[6] In this vein, political development involves processes through which informal, personalistic networks are incrementally negotiated, codified, and institutionalized. Conflicts, trades, wars, negotiations, and treaties, phenomena that were instrumental in the creation of modern states in Europe, are all assumed to be a part of the state-building process. Indeed, violent conflicts among different elite groups vying for power are

---

[5] Cox, North, and Weingast. "The Violence Trap"; North, Wallis, and Weingast, *Violence and Social Orders*.
[6] Ibid.

a predictable outcome of strategic interactions in state-building; the nature by which these conflicts are resolved determines the degree to which states develop or regress.

In Chapter 1, I also provide the rationale for adopting this violence trap framework, by considering the uses of a political economy approach centered on incentives, constraints, and elite preferences. In building up to this framework, Chapter 1 illustrates variants of political economy approaches within the new institutionalism, particularly those that center on the concepts of violence and rents. I compare the two 'new institutionalisms' to formulate an approach centered on agent-actors rather than one centered on structural coalitions and path dependence. Despite the focus on agency, the violence trap framework is not strictly a rational choice approach; it relies on logical interpretations of historical events and on 'thick description.'[7] In this vein, it helps reconcile rationalist approaches centered on agent choices with culturalist approaches centered on contextual interpretation.

More broadly, the goal is to develop the application of the new institutionalism as a systematic and policy-relevant framework for analyzing the varying dynamics affecting political development in African states. While Chapters 2, 3, and 4 use an analytic narratives methodology, these chapters will also engage seriously with critical junctures in history, an approach associated with historical institutionalism. An agent-centered new institutionalism approach moves us beyond the limits of historical institutionalism by explaining *why* elites choose certain paths over others during times

---

[7] See Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures*. This is the earliest reference to the concept of "thick description," which entails the gathering of rich, qualitative data interpreted within the localized and contemporaneous context from which the data was derived. When applied to the new institutionalism, thick description thus provides for a 'bounded rationality' necessarily bounded by informal institutional constraints such as socio-cultural preferences and understandings.

of critical juncture. In this way, it becomes possible to pose plausible arguments in response to the bigger question about impediments to development in African states.

By combining the violence trap framework with an analytic narratives methodology, I will elucidate institutional mechanisms and impediments to political development in the three cases selected for this study, allowing for more generalizable claims for other states in Africa - a task for which the violence trap framework, I argue, is well suited. The mechanisms of the violence trap explain similarities and divergences in development outcomes among the cases analyzed here, presenting a framework that may be applied to assess development levels in other African states. The central hypothesis in this work is that evading the violence trap allows states to incrementally achieve political development, marked by impersonality, perpetuity, and inclusivity.

Political Development in Africa: Analytical Gaps

Prevailing narratives about the politics of Eastern Africa present a critical gap between high-level theories on state formation and sometimes-idiosyncratic empirical insights; many accounts of political development in this region center on aspects of state violence, corruption, or structural inequality as uniquely localized impediments to development. However, these accounts rarely provide a cohesive framework that can be used for systematic comparative analysis, especially through a qualitative research design. Some accounts accurately capture the exclusionary and nativist nature of post-colonial nation-building and discourse in African states but without necessarily linking these processes to institutional equilibria, constraints, and incentives.[8] In this reading, violence is problematized as a mechanism that seeks to build the modern state at the

---

[8] Mamdani, *Neither Settler Nor Native*.

expense of the nation in the developing world.[9] Some highly nuanced assessments of this region have also sought to incorporate greater explanatory depth of state-building and institution-building processes through deep historical inquiry but without providing parsimonious analytical tools for comparative analysis.[10] Still, others have provided well-documented accounts of the pervasive nature of rents-patronage relations that maintain political-military order in this region; here, these rents-based orders are considered impediments to institution-building.[11] No systematic accounting is made of how rents-based relations constitute an institution in and of themselves, and how comparative assessments of more and less efficient patronage regimes or inter-elite networks may explain divergent development outcomes.

In other words, examining political processes such as rent seeking and violence through the prism of the political marketplace allows for a systematic framework that avoids an idiosyncratic treatment of development challenges. Indeed, such frameworks are often applied to analyses of European states but rarely to African states, begging the question of whether African nations are uniquely unsuited for organic, gradual transitions toward modern statehood.

In short, analyses of African politics, especially Eastern Africa area studies, exhibit manifestations of the oft-cited lament that 'comparativists are sitting at different tables, eating from different menus, and not speaking to each other.'[12] Existing works, particularly on Ethiopia, Rwanda, and South Sudan, fail to provide theory-driven narratives that can be used for systematic cross-case comparison. I provide a more detailed and thorough review of these three cases in

---

[9] Ibid.
[10] Clapham, *State Formation and Decay*.
[11] De Walle, *Real Politics of the Horn*.
[12] Almond, *A Discipline Divided*.

Chapters 2, 3, and 4. In this introduction, I seek to identify the analytical gaps in each case to which this study responds. This includes a brief review of political development in Ethiopia, Rwanda, and South Sudan.

Except for debates over the developmental state, the history of Ethiopia's political development has been inseparably linked in scholarly literature with competing narratives on 'the national question.'[13] To the extent that scholars have engaged with the role of rents, they have been overly willing to take for granted the idea of 'centralization of rents' that ruling elites propagated for strategic purposes under Ethiopia's developmental state.[14] Beyond the debates over the developmental state, scholars have interpreted historical junctures, from Emperor Haile Selassie's reforms to the 1974 revolution to the 1991 overthrow of the Dergue, based on the narratives they have found most convincing.[15] In effect, the contemporary study of Ethiopian political development has become an aesthetic rather than an analytical exercise. Most contemporary works on Ethiopia have almost over-compensated for the early focus on state formation in early Ethiopianist works by obsessing over the question, *what of the nation?* In doing so, they have failed to analytically consider, *what of the state?* In other words, by taking for granted structuralist notions of ethnic grievance or economic ideologies adopted only for instrumental purposes, they have mostly ignored the historical and contemporary institutional pillars of Ethiopian state-building.

---

[13] Mekonnen, "Nationalities in Ethiopia"; Gudina, "Competing Ethnic Nationalisms"; Tareke, *The Ethiopian Revolution*; Zewde, *Quest for Socialist Ethiopia*.
[14] De Waal, "Theory and Practice"; Vaughan, "Revolutionary Democratic State-building"; Berhe, *Laying the Past to Rest*. For more critical perspectives on Ethiopia's developmental state, see: Clapham, *Horn of Africa*; Bach, "Abyotawi Democracy"; Lefort, "Response to Alex De Waal."
[15] For opposing viewpoint to the nations and nationalities perspective, see: Ullendorf, *Country and People*; Pankhurst, *The Ethiopians*; Isaac, *Ethiopian Orthodox Tawahido Church*.

Similarly, scholars have often chided post-conflict state-building processes in Rwanda for exclusionary institutional design, misplaced political agency, and resistance to exogenous change.[16] Reviewing these critiques reveals a proliferation of narratives constructed through a 'cultural' (or culturalist) approach to comparative politics.[17] However, with a decidedly society-centric analysis of state-building processes, such critiques fail to accurately grasp the comparative levels of political development inherent in Rwanda's contemporary institutions. In South Sudan, institutional analysis has sometimes appeared idiosyncratic, wherein interactions between a 'Troika' of international partners seeking to aid the country and the South Sudanese political elites are examined in terms of dialectical opposition.[18] The conclusion one may draw from such examinations is that the Western powers, the Troika in this case, are responsible, well-meaning, and capable actors, and that the South Sudanese elites are simply irresponsible, erratic, and incapable. For this reason, policy responses are often framed as coercing South Sudanese political elites into instituting good governance or introducing additional constraints, whether in the form of sanctions or prosecutions.

While such framing is informed by strong empirical evidence, it also ignores the challenges of inter-elite interactions with regard to violence and rents. A singular focus on international constraints ignores the underlying strategic logic of elite behavior in South Sudan, whereas providing new incentives may orient elite preferences and strategic choices toward more socially optimal outcomes. It becomes important to engage with thick description to properly situate the

---

[16] Thompson, *Whispering Truth to Power*; Thompson, *Genocide to Precarious Peace;* Dawson, "Leaving no-one behind"; Eramian, "Ethnic Boundaries in Contemporary Rwanda"; Clark, "National Unity and Reconciliation"; Buckley-zistel, "Dividing and Uniting."
[17] *See:* Munck, "Past and Present of Comparative Politics."
[18] Johnson, *The Untold Story*.

incentives that guide elite preferences in this case. Accordingly, the analytic narratives method employed here accounts for the 'bounded rationality' that governs decision-making among elites in states like South Sudan. Indeed, a counter-argument may be made that South Sudan, like many other African countries, is plagued with the institutional dilemma that ruling elites face: whether to choose prosperity or security.[19] Thus, bounded rationality, which guides the methodological individualism adopted in this dissertation, accounts for the norms, interpretations, capabilities, and heuristic 'rules of thumb' that guide decision-making under incomplete information and where transactions are costly.[20]

Bounded rationality explains the preference of South Sudan's ruling elites to securitize their political program, relying on personalistic patronage links with actors that pose violent threats. As demonstrated in the case study chapters, the formation of these preferences in South Sudan parallels the formation of similar preferences among the military junta that ruled Ethiopia from 1974 to 1991. In this sense, it is boundedly rational, for instance, for South Sudan's ruling elites to prioritize regime security over development; these incentives guide institutional outcomes that undermine perpetuity, impersonality, and inclusivity. Indeed, these analyses often lead to counterintuitive policy implications, such as the possibility of providing greater assurances of regime security to actors deemed undemocratic in exchange for more inter-elite cooperation. These discussions are explored further in the case analytical chapters, as well as in the conclusion. I will try to illustrate how the concept of bounded rationality helps produce more compelling analytic

---

[19] Bates. *The Development Dilemma.*
[20] Ostrom, *Understanding Institutional Diversity*; Ostrom, Cox, and Schlager, "Institutional Analysis and Development Framework"; Levi, "Reconsiderations of Rational Choice".

narratives than overtly moralizing assessments of elite decision-making in South Sudan and in the other cases selected for this study.

Regardless, without adopting the methodological individualism of bounded rationality, some nuanced and critical assessments of international interventions in South Sudan have identified how international engagements and pressures can sometimes introduce overly simplistic and sometimes counter-productive measures to internally complex and agent-centric institutional accountability dynamics in South Sudan.[21] Here, it is clear that foreign interventions in South Sudan have often ignored the competing public and private logics of accountability that undergird elite decision-making. What is left unaddressed here is whether institutional dynamics contain an inherently rational (or 'boundedly rational') logic, more specifically, the logic of rents and the security paradox. If such a logic exists, then institutional analysis of South Sudan would need to focus more on these dynamics through an endogenous lens, that is, by looking at institutional incentives from within and accounting for the bounded rationality that drives decision-making.

This is not to say that development policy prescriptions centering on strengthening auditing and judicial mechanisms are unnecessary; instead, it is to stress that such provisions are unlikely to be effective if underlying incentives driving institutional decisions are not first addressed. Beyond testing accountability mechanisms inherent in highly bureaucratized institutions, it may be equally important to ask how institutional preferences at lower stages of political development may result in institutional equilibria that are far from socially optimal. In simple terms, seemingly rational provisions for accountability provisions and bureaucratic professionalization do not

---

[21] Roach, "Accountability and Peace."

automatically result in beneficial institutional outcomes from a socioeconomic perspective.[22] A prime example of this is the reluctance of the American South to take advantage of opportunities for trade, innovation, and creative destruction, since reliance on slave-driven agrarian production prompted Southern elites to maintain a socially sub-optimal political economy.[23] Herein lies the new institutionalism's distinction between rationality, which would dictate greater overall gains for both elites and society, and bounded rationality, which limits economic gains for elites, and to a larger extent, the broader society.

In short, most accounts of state-building in Eastern Africa ignore the political economy of rents and violence in historical state-building processes, particularly the state's provision of violence as a public good rather than a private enterprise.[24] One analytical gap is a focus on rents purely as impediments to development rather than in terms of the role that rents play in solving the problem of violence and political order.[25] In comparative studies of other regions, there have been attempts at employing more nuanced conception of rents, for instance, distinguishing between how rents operate in neo-patrimonial states, multi-class fragmented states, and cohesive-capitalist states.[26] Here, the state's effectiveness in allocating rents is assessed by the quality rather than the degree of intervention; cohesive-capitalist states are efficient at catalyzing capitalist development by providing rents meritocratically to efficient producers, whereas other types of states are not.[27] For instance, multi-class fragmented states have too many elite centers to devise cohesive

---

[22] Ostrom, *Understanding Institutional Diversity*.
[23] North, *Institutions, Institutional Change, and Economic Performance.*
[24] *See also:* Bates, *Prosperity and Violence*; Bates, *The Development Dilemma*.
[25] Cox, North, and Weingast. "The Violence Trap"; North, Wallis, and Weingast. *Violence and Social Orders.*
[26] Kohli, *State-Directed Development.*
[27] Ibid.

developmental states. In contrast, more personalistic neo-patrimonial states have ruling elites who use rents to reward allies.[28]

These neo-patrimonial states have especially been the subject of much scholarly inquiry, especially when applied to most African polities. African states may be conceptualized in terms of a co-existence of two parallel political orders, one based on "steeply hierarchical, informal networks of patron-client relations that draw their symbolic and emotional glue from ethnic bonds" and the other based on "democratic impulses, principles, and institutions."[29] In this reading, neo-patrimonial states use state resources and investments to sustain personal rule.[30] For instance, in states such as Burma and Nigeria, neo-patrimonial networks purpose private investments and development aid into economic rents to maintain different forms of personal rule or patronage-based rule.[31] Along these lines, "[p]atron–client networks compete for state power and then bleed its resources away until there is far too little left for real development or state building […] and punish efforts by democratic actors […] to transform the system in a better direction".[32] These conceptualizations classify political orders in which clientelist or patronage networks pervade as neo-patrimonial or 'predatory' and the underlying political systems as either pseudodemocracies or competitive authoritarian systems.[33]

These conceptualizations diagnose the symptoms impeding development, clientelist and patronage-based orders, correctly, but are analytically incomplete. Further, a framework

[28] Ibid.
[29] Diamond, "Progress and Retreat in Africa," 138.
[30] Diamond, *In Search of Democracy*.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Ibid, 15.
[33] Diamond, *In Search of Democracy*.

distinguishing between democracies, pseudodemocracies, and non-democracies results in flawed development policy prescriptions centered on standardized notions of democracy. The logical policy prescriptions arising from these conceptualizations, often in line with the dominant neoliberal development paradigm, are broad and idealistic, aiming at political reform, professionalization, or accountability provisions. Distinctions between democracies, pseudodemocracies, competitive authoritarian systems, electoral democracies, and democracies have sometimes obfuscated rather than informed; the violence trap framework developed in Chapter 1 replaces these with four stages of political development: fragile states, basic natural states, mature natural states, and open access orders. These orders engage seriously with the productive elements of violence and rents-based patronage systems, identifying how these mechanisms result in elite choices that may result in different political development outcomes.

In this framework, political development would likely result in democracy, but only much later in the final transition from mature natural states to open access orders, when codification of elite privileges results in a broader basis for a societal-based rule of law.[34] The question then is not necessarily whether states are predatory; in natural states, there are always incentives to monopolize political positions as political rents and economic inflows as economic rents. In the interim, various stages of natural states may function at varying levels of political development, depending on the efficiency and nature of patronage networks. In this violence trap framework, only about twenty-five countries in the world can be classified as open access orders,[35] far fewer than the number of countries that may be considered democracies or pseudodemocracies. In this

[34] Cox, North, and Weingast. “The Violence Trap”; Weingast, “Resistant to the Rule-of-Law.”
[35] North, Wallis, and Weingast. *Violence and Social Orders*.

perspective, China, for instance, would be considered a mature natural stage, functioning at a far more advanced stage than fragile states or basic natural states; while China may achieve the doorstep conditions towards an open access order, it may also function under present institutional equilibria unless underlying incentives continue to change. In other words, then, a large swath of countries that may be classified as either pseudodemocracies or non-democracies are categorized under the different categorizations of the natural state, allowing for more nuanced comparison.

The distinction between the three levels of natural states and open access orders is preferred here because it provides more robust analytical depth, as shown in Chapter 1. A prominent critique of this model is that it undermines bottom-up efforts at democracy building that focus on transforming civil society and social norms.[36] While this is a fair critique, recent research has shown that public participation is not nearly as important as elite coordination and cohesion at lower stages of political development;[37] indeed, with respect to the cases in this study, interventions based on standardized notions of democracy, accountability, and bureaucratic professionalization have thus far proven ineffective. Counterintuitive to the prescriptions of this interventionist development paradigm, the violence trap acknowledges that socially sub-optimal actions such as orderly corruption or electoral manipulation can preserve social peace and order and allow for rule-based relations among elites.

While unsatisfying from the perspective of democracy promotion, such a framework may provide more promise in adequately assessing the bounded rationality underlying elite decision making. By contrast, side-lining the dynamic and nuanced role of state violence and rents-

---

[36] Diamond, "Progress and Retreat in Africa"; Diamond, *In Search of Democracy*.
[37] Saati, *The Participation Myth*.

patronage mechanisms has led to an ignorance of institutional incentives and constraints that drive elite preferences and decisions. Private investments, development aid, and political appointments are indeed appropriated as rents in natural states; however, as will be examined in Chapter 1, this rents-based political economy is an institution in and of itself, warranting careful inquiry and investigation. Rents-based institutional mechanisms that sustain political order are vital to understand because they reflect outcomes of interactions in the political marketplace in any given order. These mechanisms are critical for explaining political development outcomes and assessing political development variances across different closed access orders, particularly in Africa. Therefore, one of the goals of this research is to develop a more nuanced understanding of the political marketplace in Eastern African states.

By providing a novel political economy approach drawing from the new institutionalism, this dissertation engages with the institutional pillars of state-building: the incentives and constraints that drive elite behavior and the resulting outcomes.[38] The benefit of adopting a framework rooted in the new institutionalism is that it allows for a systematic and objective comparison of different cases in African political development. This study defines institutions as "the humanly devised constraints that structure political, economic, and social interaction, consisting of both formal and informal constraints."[39] In bringing 'the state' and its constitutive bodies, its institutions, back into the fold, this project will put aside, for a moment, nation-building constraints and the role of social norms. This is not to say these ideational issues are unimportant; indeed, ideas, while not causally determinant, will always factor into the constraints of state actors. Understandably, ideology will

---

[38] Ostrom, Cox, and Schlager, "Institutional Analysis and Development Framework."
[39] North, "Institutions," 97.

always lurk in the background of any discussion of the African state; to the extent that ideas can influence institutional constraints, these mechanisms may still be considered from the vantage point of the state apparatus.

More importantly, this is perhaps the first body of work that seeks to compare, from a broad perspective, the historical junctures and present conditions of three African states from a new institutionalist perspective. For this reason, theory parsimony will sometimes take precedence over ideological nuance. While the investigation will thus focus on empirically measurable outcomes, such as decisions, choices, and institutional design, the goal is not to shut off ideology completely from research on African political development. It is hoped that scholars, especially those versed in historical and constructivist institutionalism, will engage with this work, critique its shortcomings and move the discussion of political development in Africa toward more productive ground.

To sum up, Chapter 1 develops a political economy approach that takes into serious account the causal significance of institutions and violence. This approach, rooted in the new institutionalism, applies and develops the violence trap framework through an analytic narratives methodology. The central hypothesis for this study is that evading the violence trap allows states to achieve political development, marked by impersonality, perpetuity, and inclusivity. States do this through standardization of elite privileges, consolidated state control of political-military apparatus, and strong contracts enforcement.[40] In other words, the mechanisms of the violence trap, that is, the interaction between elites, rents, and violence, determine whether states incrementally achieve political development, stagnate, or regress. In applying the violence trap

---

[40] Weingast, "Resistant to the Rule-of-Law."

framework to the case studies, it is assumed that organic state-building processes begin from the condition of a fragile state. That a fragile state exists in South Sudan is, therefore, not entirely puzzling from a new institutionalist perspective; it is the mechanisms and the organizing logic of the South Sudanese fragile state that the violence trap framework helps to illuminate.

In this vein, Chapters 2, 3, and 4 will apply the violence trap framework to empirical evidence from three country cases to investigate two additional sub-hypotheses: First, a basic natural state emerges when rents-based interactions are efficient, and benefits of economic specialization are shared among coalition members of the ruling elite. Second, a mature natural state emerges when all groups of elites, not just the ruling elites, receive the benefits of economic specialization, and all elites share a standard set of privileges. There is also a third hypothesis which is assumed but not tested in this particular work. This is the idea that an open access order emerges when elite privileges are codified as a rule of law for the entire citizenry, and barriers to political and economic access are entirely removed. This final hypothesis has been tested in various empirical cases in Europe, including England and France.[41] Thus, adding a fourth case study to test this final hypothesis may result in derivative work or diminish the importance of examining the different stages of a closed access order. It is hoped, however, that scholars may expand applications of the violence trap to cases of African states that may indeed be close to achieving an open access order.

Hypotheses, Variables, and Definitions

The central hypothesis of this dissertation is that evading the violence trap allows states to incrementally achieve political development, marked by impersonality, perpetuity, and inclusivity.

---

[41] North, Wallis, Weingast, *Violence and Social Orders.*

States do this through standardization of elite privileges, consolidated state control of political-military apparatus, and strong contracts enforcement. Thus, the mechanisms of the violence trap, that is, the interaction between elites, rents, and violence, determine whether states incrementally achieve political development, stagnate, or even regress. When applying the violence trap framework to the three case studies in this work, it is assumed that organic state-building process begin from the condition of a fragile state. To help guide analysis for these case studies, two sub-hypotheses are suggested for how higher stages of political development emerge. First, a basic natural state emerges when rents-based interactions are efficient, and benefits of economic specialization are shared among coalition members of the ruling elite. Second, a mature natural state emerges when all groups of elites, not just the ruling elites, receive the benefits of economic specialization, and all elites share a standard set of privileges. Although outside the scope of this work, an open access order later emerges when elite privileges are codified as a rule of law for the entire citizenry, and barriers to political and economic access are entirely removed.

It is important to define some causal variables and mechanisms discussed in this study: institutions, elites, preferences, constraints, rents, and violence. First, as mentioned earlier, institutions are defined as humanly devised formal or informal constraints that set the 'rules of the game' and govern political-economic transactions.[42] Along these lines, institutions manifest equilibria of agent preferences and constraints, though these endogenous equilibria may not always produce socially optimal outcomes.[43] Here, endogenous refers to processes occurring within the institutional body itself. The agents referenced are the different groups of elites involved in

---

[42] North, *Institutions, Institutional Change, and Economic Performance*; North, "Institutions."
[43] North, *Institutions, Institutional Change, and Economic Performance*.

institutional politics. There is a general distinction between ruling elites, who monopolize and allocate rents, and sub-elites classified by region or function. For instance, distinctions may be made between different regional or ethnic elites, or educated, political, and economic elites. Thus, preferences refer to the preferred institutional outcomes of a particular group of elites. Economic elites may prefer greater levels of specialization and fewer restrictions on commerce; educated elites may prefer more liberal concessions; ethnic elites may prefer policies that increase the political salience of ethnic identity, and so on. Constraints refer to social and institutional mechanisms that prevent elites from enacting part of their preferred institutional outcomes. Constraints may be socially conditioned, but institutional outcomes often produce a new set of additional constraints on future elite interactions.[44] In addition to constraints, institutional outcomes also produce incentives. In other words, elites respond to opportunities provided by new institutional rules, creating new sets of preferences and social norms.

Next, the classical liberal definition of rents entails limitations on setting prices through the free market. In this vein, rents are generally artificial economic constraints that stifle efficiency, although rents may be used to protect or incentivize special innovations in some instances.[45] More critical assessments of rents classify them as illegal or extra-legal instruments by which extra-institutional relations between patrons and clients are maintained.[46] Although the use of rents in this study encompasses both of these dynamics to some degree, the concept of rents used here is much broader. More specifically, rents are defined as privileges that circumvent deliberate barriers

---

[44] Ibid.
[45] Tullock, *The Rent-Seeking Society*.
[46] De Waal, *Horn of Africa*.

to economic or political access.[47] Thus, although this definition may account for mechanisms by which ruling elites garner support from military elites, for instance, it goes beyond these extra-institutional relations to examine how patron-client relations may be institutionalized. Rents is used here in terms of institutional or extra-institutional privileges provided by ruling elites where barriers to open access exist. Conceived in this way, rents may be extra-legal, but they may also be codified as part of the institutional rules that give rise to a particular political order.

Finally, violence is sometimes conceptualized as a sub-optimal outcome, or a state-building mechanism in the Weberian sense, that is, the state's monopoly on the use of violence. For instance, violence may be seen as the means by which ruling elites suppress non-elites constructing artificial national polities, or as outcomes of domestic aspirations and international pressures.[48] On the other hand, violence may be conceptualized as a public good, a means by which the state produces comparatively more peaceful outcomes by dismantling private provisions of violence capability.[49] Here, the state's provision of violence is an equilibrium response to the greater social demands of industrial activity.

In the violence trap framework, violence refers to the means by which contending elites acquire their preferences through extra-institutional means when institutional rents fail to ameliorate relations with contending elites who pose the threat of violence. In other words, when faced with elite actors that, for whatever reason, cannot be controlled through rents, the state's capabilities are assessed by the degree to which it can consolidate control of political-military forces, in opposition to contending violent elites. On the other hand, and more importantly, the state's ability

---

[47] North, Wallis, and Weingast, *Violence and Social Orders*.
[48] *See:* Mamdani, *Neither Settler nor Native*; Conteh-Morgan, *Collective Political Violence*.
[49] Bates, *Prosperity and Violence*; Bates, *The Development Dilemma.*

to evade rents-based interactions without soliciting a violent response from competing elites is the productive element that actually makes political development possible.

Accordingly, in terms of dependent variables, the violence trap focuses on achieving perpetuity, inclusivity, and impersonality as conditions for an open access order. Perpetuity may refer to the guarantee that contracts or rules of the game that are set in place today will remain the same tomorrow. Thus, perpetuity may be operationalized in terms of regime durability. Second, inclusivity refers to the extent to which non-ruling elites have access to political and economic resources. In a pluralistic system, this would provide a measure of pluralism. However, given that all three case studies here are closed access orders, inclusivity will primarily refer to the degree of elite mobility as well as the extent to which different groups of elites garner similar levels of institutional access. This inclusivity variable is operationalized in terms of elite consensus and mobility. Finally, impersonality is the degree to which individuals can garner similar rights and privileges, without regard to personal identity. Again, since all three cases in this study are closed political orders, impersonality is operationalized in terms of levels of economic freedom and administrative efficiency.

Methodology and Cases

While applying a political economy approach, this dissertation relies on analytic narratives to elucidate shifting incentives, preferences, and constraints that govern interactions and equilibria between different groups of elites through periods of historical transitions. Analytic narratives involve the deployment of a new institutionalist framework accounting for both agent-actor

incentives and historical transformations.[50] Analytic narratives integrate historical analysis with rational choice arguments, which may involve theory-driven historical analysis or formal modeling. This methodology provides distinct and compelling narratives about the causal links between institutional equilibria and social reality.[51] These narratives rely on rich case studies as they consider cultural contexts of subjective preferences, institutional equilibria, organizational change, and mechanisms leading to endogenous changes.

Analytic narratives are stories drawing from theory-driven analysis of primary and secondary data; they help to identify institutional incentives and constraints, and postulate how elite behavior responds to these institutional contexts at different periods of history.[52] In other words, analytic narratives rely on logical extrapolation of real-world data and thick description of the historical contexts in which these data are constructed.[53] Applying this methodology to the violence trap framework, institutional equilibria may be oriented either towards incrementally addressing the violence trap, or, alternatively, towards perpetuating it. Thus, analytic narratives of each of the three cases are tested against the hypotheses derived from the violence trap.

For Ethiopia, the primary case for this research, primary data was gathered through online interviews with political elites, party documents, as well as open-source archives. The elites chosen for these interviews include high-level public sector executives, prominent business leaders, political party members, and academic leaders. Secondary data consisted of scholarly analyses of political transitions and events in recent Ethiopian history. For Rwanda and South Sudan cases,

---

[50] Thelen, "Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Politics"; Bates *et al*., *Analytic Narratives*.
[51] Bates *et al*., *Analytic Narratives*.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Ibid.

which serve as secondary case studies for comparative checking, analytic narratives relied on analysis of secondary sources as well as primary documents such as party documents, open-source archives, and government communiques. Analytic narratives in each case will illuminate the causal mechanisms leading from rents-based interactions and violence mechanisms to institutional equilibria. In other words, this dissertation seeks to uncover how elite preferences and constraints factor into institutional outcomes, and how these outcomes create new incentives that impact future decisions.

It is worth noting that the new institutionalism is also compatible with other qualitative methodologies that were not employed in this study. One of these that is widely used by historical institutionalists is process tracing. A key component of process tracing is identifying permissive and productive conditions. Permissive conditions can be defined as "conditions that represent the easing of the constraints of structure and make change possible," whereas productive conditions are conditions that "in the presence of the permissive conditions, produce the outcome or range of outcomes that are then reproduced."[54] Permissive conditions are thus framed as necessary but insufficient conditions for institutional transitions, whereas productive conditions effect the transitions. This approach is well-suited for within-case analysis of institutional transitions. Indeed, some of the analytic narrative-building employed in Chapter 2 will resemble some of the methods used in process tracing.

However, process tracing is not the main methodology employed here for two reasons. First, process tracing does not do particularly well at identifying the agent-centered mechanisms by which productive conditions bring about change, or why certain paths are taken and not others. In

---

[54] Soifer, "Causal Logic of Critical Junctures," 1574-75.

other words, whereas process tracing provides insight into the loosening of constraints that act as permissive conditions for certain institutional transitions, it does not specify the productive conditions that effect change. Second, and equally relevant for this study, process tracing is not well suited for cross-case comparison as the permissive conditions in each case may be construed quite differently. By contrast, analytic narratives, the methodology of choice here, centers on the agent-centric preferences and constraints that effect institutional change in each context, allowing for more systematic cross-case comparison.

Ethiopia, Rwanda, and South Sudan were selected as cases for this study because their relative proximity within Eastern Africa, sometimes called the Greater Horn of Africa region, allows for more generalizable claims about impediments to political development. A qualitative case analysis is most useful in this case because this reveals a thick description account of strategic interactions within the violence trap framework.[55] The selection of Ethiopia for this case examination is also apt, given that the country's status as the sole African state to evade European colonial invasion provides more credence to the need to examine domestic institutional agency. Furthermore, the pace and dynamism of recent political transitions in Ethiopia, as well as the unique institutional experiment in ethnic federalism, make this a distinct case for applying the violence trap framework.

The addition of two country cases follows the two main strategies for case selection in comparative politics: most-similar systems (MSS) analysis and most-different systems (MDS) analysis. First, Rwanda and Ethiopia both have culturally similar polities, with long histories of statehood, monarchical traditions, and ethnic rivalry. Therefore, if these two countries find

---

[55] See Geertz, *Interpretation of* Cultures. As noted earlier, this refers to the method of interpreting data through a localized, context-specific, and contemporaneous lens rather than applying contemporary understandings.

themselves on diverging development trajectories, then variations in outcomes may be explained by variations in a common causal mechanism or variable. In this vein, this first Rwanda-Ethiopia dyad serves as a most-similar system case design. Second, Ethiopia and South Sudan serve as a most-different system comparative case, wherein these two countries have vastly different social, historical, and cultural contexts. Thus, if these two countries are on similar development trajectories, examining relevant causal mechanisms in the South Sudan case will allow for rigorous comparative checking. More specifically, if the causal mechanism identified in the Ethiopia-Rwanda dyad serves as a common explanatory variable here, this will strengthen the explanatory power of the underlying theoretical framework.

Prevailing narratives about political development in these three states cannot assess why these states present such different development trajectories, or how institutional design produces critical similarities and divergences in political order. This study addresses this gap with a focus on institutional interactions between different groups of elites, as well as the mechanisms of the violence trap. In doing so, the present-day conditions of these three countries are assessed from an institutional perspective. First, the contemporary political order in these three countries is profiled, drawing on key metrics. Rwanda emerges as an increasingly more stable living and investing environment, while Ethiopia exhibits an increasingly unstable and contentious environment. Rwanda, with its stable polity, strong elite consensus, and strong protections of economic freedoms, thus emerges as a mature natural state. With its privation of violence, elite fragmentation, and increasingly unstable political-economic climate, Ethiopia is regressing towards a fragile state. Likewise, South Sudan emerges as a fragile state from the moment of its inception, due to an even more pronounced presence of these conditions. While Ethiopia is a centuries-old state with vastly different cultural contexts from that of the relatively new state,

South Sudan, both countries are today plagued with unstable and un-investable political environments.

Since assumptions are made about the respective stage of political development immediately observed in each of the three cases, it is useful to review these stages here. The three classifications of closed access orders are as follows: i) fragile state, where the only organization is the state and very little differentiation and specialization exists in the economy; ii) basic natural state, which features specialization of tax collection, religious activity, and economic functions, as well as the dominance of state-run enterprises and rules for secession; and iii) mature natural state, which features sophisticated independent enterprises, along with basic private and contract law, and periodic elite coalition re-adjustments, but with some remaining barriers to access through rent-creation.[56]

As mentioned above, the central hypothesis for this study is that evading the violence trap allows states to incrementally achieve political development, marked by impersonality, perpetuity, and inclusivity. In other words, the violence trap explains variations in outcomes within the MSS comparison between Ethiopia and Rwanda, and the similarities in outcomes within the MDS comparison between Ethiopia and South Sudan. In Ethiopia, the main finding is that the transition from the Socialist regime of the Dergue towards the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) resulted in stronger state consolidation of the political-military apparatus, resulting in a more efficient rents and patronage regime. During this period, Ethiopia transitioned from a fragile state to a basic natural state. However, by setting ethnicity as the basis of rents, patronage, and elite status, the EPRDF also induced a handicap that precluded any transitions towards a

[56] Weingast, "Resistant to the Rule-of-Law."

mature natural state. Later, these conditions would result in a reversal of Ethiopia's gains, and transitions towards the fragile state that it is emerging as today.

In Rwanda, the main finding is that the policies of Rwanda's governing authority, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), particularly its commitment to protecting property rights, diminishing ethnic politics, and by extension, the value of ethnic rents, has allowed it to emerge from a fragile state to a mature natural state in the three decades since the Rwandan genocide. Finally, in South Sudan, the main finding is that continued private provisions of violence, the central government's incapability to monopolize it, and unwillingness by the ruling Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) to share rents with non-ruling elites have precluded transition toward a basic natural state. Chapters 2, 3, and 4 will proceed with a more elaborate discussion of these findings, based on applying the violence trap framework to the empirical evidence from the three cases.

Chapter One: Explaining Political Development

As stated in the introduction, this dissertation conceptualizes political development as a process of incremental institutionalized transitions toward a more stable political order. Much of the literature on African political development identifies structural challenges by taking ethnic or class identities and grievances for granted, crediting them for hindering development processes. While some works have identified some of the institutional impediments to development, much of the analysis in this regard also seems idiosyncratic. Responding to these shortcomings, I highlighted in the introduction the importance of causal mechanisms directly impacting successes and failures in state-building and political development. These mechanisms involve the network of interactions among different groups of elites within a state, and the strategic use of rents and violence in these interactions.

A political economy approach jointly considers mechanisms of violence and institutions, providing a more nuanced framework for assessing political development. More specifically, a new institutionalist political economy framework that addresses institutional intra-elite interactions and violence allows for systematic comparisons that elucidate whether states are experiencing political development or regressing. This means that elite-mediated institutional outcomes cause states to move towards higher or lower levels of political development. For instance, reversals toward a lower-order natural state will be demonstrated in Chapter 2; the Dergue inherits a mature natural state from Emperor Haile Selassie and reverts the country's institutions towards a fragile state.

This chapter develops a political economy approach that critically examines the causal significance of institutions and violence and addresses important political and economic factors. It is important to specify what is meant here by 'political economy' since scholars often use the term to mean different things.[57] Political economy may refer to: interactions between states and markets, interactions between markets and society, the relationship between politics and economics, or the use of economic methods to analyze political outcomes.[58] This research, for the most part, affirms this last definition of political economy. By centering on strategic interactions and agent-actor choices, the analytic narratives methodology for this study employs economic concepts to analyze political choices that affect institutional outcomes.

Furthermore, the violence trap framework also provides an insight into how economic incentives factor into political decisions, by accounting for institutional outcomes of political and economic transactions among various elite actors with capabilities for violence. The transactional mechanisms through which institutions are formed and maintained can provide an incisive lens into their likely durability. The framework developed in this chapter is thus intended to capture the dynamics of the political marketplace in the cases under investigation. It requires an accounting of institutional constraints and incentives, in line with the new institutionalism, as well as elite group interactions with violence and rents.

1.1 The New Institutionalism: A Political Economy Approach

Other specifications must be made on the political economy approach adopted in this dissertation. First, political economy is sometimes framed as an agenda rather than as a method

---

[57] Staniland, *What is Political Economy?*
[58] Ibid, 7.

since it draws from both explanatory deterministic theories and from abstract interpretive theories.[59] The framework here clearly follows a deterministic theory-building approach. Rather than adopt a strict culturalist framework for understanding state-society interactions, it proposes a framework for explaining institutional outcomes. Second, it is worth noting that some scholars have abandoned methodological individualism, the classical approach to political economy, in favor of a methodological collectivism that encompasses sociological factors.[60] In a discipline driven by structuralist explanations that credit, to varying degrees, international corporations, powerful states, and colonial legacies for underdevelopment in Africa, methodological collectivism has provided a somewhat appealing lens for sweeping impediments to development in broad strokes.[61] Agency has emerged as the biggest victim of this analytical turn to methodological collectivism. By stripping African institutions and their elites of the power of agency, methodological collectivism has also absolved them of responsibilities for development.

This is not to say that methodological individualism is without flaws. Indeed, neoclassical economics, which dominates economics textbooks, adopts the crudest form of methodological individualism, which assumes perfect rationality and complete information. However, logical rejection of these perfect rationality assumptions does not necessitate wholesale rejection of methodological individualism; instead, methodological individualism can be tempered by adopting a 'bounded rationality' mediated through specific cultural, social, and political contexts.[62]

---

[59] Staniland, *What is Political Economy?*
[60] Ibid.
[61] *See:* Caporaso, "Dependence and dependency"; Baldwin, "Interdependence and Power."
[62] North, *Institutions, Institutional Change, and Economic Performance*; Ostrom, *Understanding Institutional Diversity;* Ostrom, Cox, and Schlager, "Institutional Analysis and Development Framework*";* Levi, "Reconsiderations of Rational Choice".

To be 'boundedly rational' thus means that one is strategizing to secure gains that can only be understood by accounting for constraints and incentives from specific informal and formal institutional contexts. In this regard, what appears to be neo-patrimonial or parochial, as in the decision to maintain personalized transactions over formally institutionalized ones, may appear to be strategic in context. This insight is gained from using economic concepts to explain political choices and outcomes. Therefore, while the framework used here will be oriented towards methodological individualism, it does so only in the context of imperfect, locally negotiated institutions, with elites engaged in boundedly rational strategic decision making.

A key challenge to analyzing institutions in African states is the hesitation by many scholars to ascribe agency to institutional actors. Because of colonial legacies, and the technocratic imposition of the international economic system, scholars often view these states and their institutions as being causally dependent on external forces. For instance, scholars discuss the importance of separately assessing dependence, net reliance on others, and dependency, the level of reliance on systems of interactions among political and social forces; others discuss the relevance of vulnerability dependence, or the possibility of losing something important, as opposed to a softer 'sensitivity dependence'.[63] Interestingly, many of these works acknowledge the difficulty of dependency as a unit of analysis, given the complex web of relations existing in international economic engagements. Although dependency analysis may indeed reveal interesting insights, it will not achieve the objective of arriving at a more parsimonious, scientifically sound assessment of the contemporary African state. Thus, unlike the dependency approach, the political

[63] Caporaso, "Dependence and dependency"; Baldwin, "Interdependence and Power".

economy approach employed in this dissertation ascribes agency to local elites interacting within specific institutional contexts.

This approach of 'bringing back agency' to competing local elites and institutional stakeholders corrects for the narrow empirical emphasis on structuralist and external mechanisms pervasive in the literature on political development in Eastern Africa. For instance, dependence analysis in the Rwandan context would engage in more historiography than political analysis, going back to relations between Rwanda and its successive bouts of colonization by Germany and Belgium. Likewise, in the Ethiopian context, dependence analysis would rely on historical ethnic rivalries and resulting impediments to nation-building, rather than on institutional transformations from a political economy perspective. Such research is likely to be derivative and unlikely to reveal anything new about the nature of the Rwandan or Ethiopian state. Instead, the goal here is to develop a framework that assumes the agency of institutional actors, in this case, in Ethiopia, Rwanda, and South Sudan. This is not to say that external actors do not matter; external actors played strong causal roles in creating antecedent conditions for the subsequent Rwandan genocide.[64] However, before institutions face intervention from or interact with the outside world, they are formed through transactions in the domestic political marketplace. Thus, before one can assess the potential effects of the international economic system or foreign intervention, it is important to devise a *ceteris paribus* picture, however imperfect, of the African state apparatus.

The new institutionalism emerges as a fitting theoretical framework for this political economy approach. The emergence of the new institutionalism in response to the limitations of the rational choice paradigm and the behaviorist revolution has provided an analytical bridge between the

---

[64] Uvin, *Development Enterprise in Rwanda*.

rational choice paradigm and the more interpretive-oriented traditions of the culturalist paradigm.[65] Culturalist approaches are marked by an emphasis on societal actors, classes deemed 'excluded,' and a commitment to understanding political phenomena in a cultural context.[66] However, like most rationalist works in neoclassical economics, culturalist approaches neglect the crucial intervening role of institutions and the agency of the state and its elites.

Again, institutions are defined as "humanly devised constraints that structure political, economic and social interaction, consisting of both formal and informal constraints."[67] In this vein, the analysis must be centered on *why* and *how* elites devise formal and informal constraints to sustain a given type of political order. The second layer of analysis then centers on the conditions under which elites are incentivized to devise new constraints, invariable resulting in new types of political orders. It is only through these institutionally mediated transactions that political development or stagnation, can occur. Arguably, it is important to begin with the institutions and the state, rather than its society, at the center of the analytical framework to reach any generalizable claim about political development. This is the gap that the new institutionalism seeks to address. The core of what makes an approach institutionalist is its scientifically oriented framework toward explaining institutional outcomes. In other words, whether through purely deductive theory testing or a mix of deductive hypothesizing and inductive narrative building, the new institutionalism establishes, qualifies, and assesses specific claims about how institutions emerge, how they affect political order, and how they change.

[65] Hall and Taylor, "Three New Institutionalisms."
[66] *See:* Munck, "Past and Present."
[67] North, "Institutions," 97.

1.1.1 Competing Institutionalisms: History vs. Bounded Rationality

Responding to debates in three social science disciplines, three 'new institutionalisms' have emerged over the last three decades: sociological institutionalism, historical institutionalism, and rational choice institutionalism. Since sociological institutionalism is not very influential in political science, the focus here will be on comparing the other two new institutionalisms, namely, historical institutionalism and rational choice institutionalism. Historical institutionalism is the dominant new institutionalist approach in comparative politics. The approach positions itself as a 'new' institutionalism in that it moves away from legalist, descriptive early works in comparative politics that explained institutions in functional terms without adopting frameworks for comparison.[68] Historical institutionalism also emerged from a rejection of behavioralist, structural-functionalist, and group theories of conflict prominent in the 1960s and 1970s, and the strictly rationalist theories that emerged thereafter.[69]

Most importantly, historical institutionalism rejected functionalist assumptions that psychological or cultural dynamics guided the transformation of political systems, instead centering considerations of power in institutional design and polity; thus, for historical institutionalists: institutions are "formal or informal procedures, routines, norms and conventions embedded in the organizational structure of the polity or political economy."[70] Furthermore, historical institutionalism conceptualizes path-dependent or path-contingent models whereby each subsequent decision is made more likely by an institutional path adopted early on through

[68] Spindler, "Neoinstitutionalist Theory."
[69] Koelble, "The New Institutionalism"; Hall and Taylor, "Three New Institutionalisms."
[70] Hall and Taylor, "Three New Institutionalisms," 6.

historical events.[71] For instance, the grassroots orientation of a social movement will likely influence policy long after party institutionalization if a movement-based party directly adopts the movement's goals into its platform early on and appoints its leaders directly from the movement.[72]

Early works in historical institutionalism affirmed the principle of institutional determinism, constructing temporally restricted path dependence models showing how and why institutions produced specific outcomes under a specific set of conditions. This entailed the identification of critical junctures, branching points in historical development, especially economic crises and military conflict, which cause path-dependent outcomes. For instance, institutions may be conceptualized as path-dependent structures highly responsive to initial coalition structures established through historical processes.[73] Although critical junctures are important for setting new paths, institutional coalitions may prove 'sticky' enough in this regard to withstanding exogenous shocks.

In short, for historical institutionalists, institutions emerge through initial coalitions conditioned by exogenous shocks, adopting a path dependency in which subsequent outcomes depend on the outcome of the initial shock. However, historical institutionalism later rejected this institutional determinism in favor of a more agent-centered institutionalism conceiving of path contingencies rather than dependencies.[74] This meant the adoption of 'soft' models, in which certain elite choices might derail paths and chart new ones, even in the absence of a critical juncture. This was mainly due to critiques that historical institutionalism had grown unable to

---

[71] Ibid.
[72] Anria, *When Movements Become Parties.*
[73] Thelen, *How Institutions Evolve*.
[74] Bell, "Explain Institutional Change".

account for institutional change; indeed, some historical institutionalists who accepted this critique moved on to an idea-centered constructivist institutionalism, whereas others seemed to move closer to rational choice institutionalism.[75] Historical contingency thus refers to a variety of past choices that influence the path of political transitions, without necessarily professing a strict path dependence.

A variety of recent works have stayed within the historical institutionalism framework while adopting more path-contingent frameworks to explain processes of change. This includes the seminal work of Darron Acemoglu and James Robinson, which traced the emergence of inclusive and extractive institutions through processes stemming from historical contingencies that emerged during periods of exogenous change.[76] This also includes a more recent work by Santiago Anria, who pursued a 'soft path dependency' model to account for the continued grassroots responsiveness of Bolivia's movement-based ruling party even after the maturation of institutionalization and bureaucratization processes.[77]

In contrast to historical institutionalism, rational choice institutionalism envisions institutions as equilibria of interests and constraints of elite stakeholders responding to institutional and social incentives.[78] There are two main differences between these two new institutionalisms. First, historical institutionalists conceive of institutions as outcomes of structurally determined coalitions, rather than as equilibria outcomes of agent-driven negotiations. Second, rational choice institutionalists, unlike historical institutionalists, envision institutions as the mechanisms for

---

[75] Ibid.
[76] Acemoglu and Robinson, *Why Nations Fail*.
[77] Anria, *When Movements Become Parties*.
[78] Ibid.

endogenous change.[79] This means that institutions have their own logic, and not necessarily one that reflects the preferences of the broader society. In fact, considered exogenously, institutions are not necessarily in social equilibria, and may produce sub-optimal social outcomes.

In this regard, institutions are nothing more than an outcome of engagements among individual agents with diverging preferences; thus, societies change when organizations change to take advantage of institutional incentives, resulting in new rules and norms that, in turn, come back to influence the preferences of institutional agents.[80] This is not to say that historical institutionalism does not engage with preferences; indeed, historical institutionalism builds on the foundations of historical materialism in highlighting the importance of temporality and space in terms of shaping preferences.[81] Rational choice institutionalism adds a focus on agent-centered strategic interactions, moving institutional outcomes away from path-dependent explanations towards more dynamic, purposive structures for institutionalizing elite preferences.[82] This rational choice institutionalism emerged out of economics, primarily challenging the neoclassical assumptions of perfect information and rationality of prevailing economic theories.[83] Here, institutions play an essential role as intervening variables, constraining the scope of individual behavior.[84]

It is important to note here that this dissertation both applies and builds on the violence trap framework, which will be explained in much more detail later in this chapter. The reason that the new institutionalism theories are being reviewed here is because the violence trap framework used

---

[79] North, *Institutions, Institutional Change, and Economic Performance.*
[80] Ibid.
[81] Katznelson and Weingast, "Historical and Rational Choice Institutionalism."
[82] Ibid.
[83] Boettke et al., 'Hayek's Political Economy'; North, *Institutions, Institutional Change, and Economic Performance.*
[84] Koelble, "The New Institutionalism.'

in this work is categorized as a new institutionalism, more broadly, rather than, more strictly, a rational choice institutionalism or a historical institutionalism. For instance, applications of the violence trap often involve elaborate thick description and historical narratives that seek to uncover some of the underlying preferences and constraints involving elite decision making.[85] Nevertheless, many of the assumptions and narrative methods of the violence trap framework rely on assumptions of the rational behavior of elites within a set of institutionally induced constraints. Thus, it is important to briefly review the merits of opting for a framework more in line with the agency-centered assumptions of rational choice institutionalism rather than path dependence assumptions of historical institutionalism.

First, historical institutionalism and rational choice institutionalism are commensurable approaches in many respects. Theorists in both camps have sometimes adopted methodological frameworks from the other camp.[86] Indeed, scholars have noted,

> *Many of the putative differences separating historical institutionalism (HI) and rational choice institutionalism (RCI) diminish, or even disappear, when they ask how institutional situations shape and help constitute and induce preferences people use to make judgments and choices about the present and the future at particular moments in time*.[87]

Analytic narratives, the methodology adopted in this study, is a core example of a methodology that diminishes the boundaries between historical and rational choice institutionalism. Analytic narratives combines fundamental theory assumptions of rational choice institutionalists with the problem-driven, outcome-oriented historical narratives that usually emerge in historical institutionalism.[88] The specific way in which analytic narratives will be employed in this work will

---

[85] North, Wallis, and Weingast. *Violence and Social Orders*.
[86] Thelen, "Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Politics."
[87] Katznelson and Weingast, "Historical and Rational Choice Institutionalism," 1.
[88] Thelen, "Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Politics." Bates *et al.*, *Analytic Narratives.*

be discussed in detail further below. The point here is that the two new institutionalisms are commensurable, as they provide two different vantage points of the same phenomenon. However, it is impossible to pursue both theoretical approaches in the same study; thus, the choice of theories in this study is largely driven by the agent-centered nature of the research question: why do some states incrementally achieve political development while other states experience stagnant or regressing political orders?

Second, there are advantages and drawbacks to adopting historical institutionalism. Historical institutionalism can help to elucidate the 'stickiness' of early institutional design, examining how rules govern behavior and interactions between and among elites, as well as with the society at large. Indeed, this research agenda even presents a potential commensurable with culturalists since institutional effects on social behavior and cultural modifiers on instrumental strategy are all shared areas of concern. In other words, historical institutionalism's focus on institutional coalitions may provide interesting insights into the coalitional or policy arrangements likely to exhibit institutional inertia.

However, as stated above, historical institutionalism's biggest drawback is its inability to explain changes in preferences and norms. Often, these changes occur due to agent-actors responding to institutional constraints and incentives, and then the subsequent use of these same institutions to pursue these new sets of norms and preferences. Historical institutionalists have identified this gap and attempted to formulate more change-responsive accounts of path dependence:

> *If the primary goal of institutional theory is to explain the gap between social change and institutional change, then we should be at least as concerned about theorizing the conditions under which institutions enable or constrain social and political actors to advance institutional stability—*

> *how institutions can empower the reactionaries, not in the ideological sense of the term but in the more neutral sense of "opponents of institutional change.*[89]

This means that beyond identifying how institutions reproduce themselves, it is important to account for elite choices that significantly alter the course of historical transitions contrary to path dependence explanations. Similarly, it is important to pay greater attention to the institutional factors that make such choices more likely, moving from a structural towards a more agentic explanation of institutional outcomes. One way of doing this is by paying attention to the comparative benefits and costs of path reversal to different groups of agents.[90]

The implication then is that historical institutionalism can provide a useful lens for seriously analyzing the path contingencies inherent in the three cases adopted for this study, but fails to account for why these mechanisms emerged or how they are transformed. Path dependence and path contingence explanations account for groups of elite coalitions that make use of critical junctures, and how their decisions affect future institutional outcomes. However, they do not explain why certain paths are taken and others are not, particularly during times of critical juncture. By contrast, rational choice institutionalism explains why elites choose certain paths, what institutional incentives they respond to, and how their preferences and constraints are institutionalized in the first place. Furthermore, this approach can also capture impending changes in the political economy of institutions, that is, preference changes responding to new incentives, that can be used to predict the type of order that may emerge in the future.

In this sense, the upshot of rational choice institutionalism is that it conceptualizes institutions as a means of addressing collective action and rent-seeking problems, and lowering transaction

---

[89] Capoccia, "Politics of Institutional Change, 1115.
[90] Pierson, "Increasing Returns, Path Dependence".

costs for political-economic agents.[91] Its core assumptions in fixed preference setting by exogenous actors, instrumental and strategic behaviors, and focus on institutional politics as collective action problem-solving distinguish it from historical institutionalism.[92] Thus, rational choice institutionalism's biggest differentiators, its focus on identifying new institutional equilibria, the role of agent-actors, and processes of institutional change marks its greatest contribution to comparative politics.[93]

Rational choice institutionalism could be criticized for excessive parsimony, but unlike historical institutionalism, it embraces scholarly engagements with endogenous institutional change. Indeed, adopting rational choice institutionalism does not necessitate complete rejection of path dependence. Instead, it conceptualizes institutional choices in terms of increasing returns and costs of reversal.[94] In other words, rational choice institutionalists represent change as an outcome of changing exogenous preferences of agents and shifting equilibria, and strategic calculations about the costs and benefits of institutional change or reversal. As rational choice institutionalism is re-adapted to explain the political economy of institutions and violence in the framework for this study, it is important to address these concepts in the next sub-section.

1.1.2 Institutional Equilibria and Violence

The threat of violence from contending elites can shape institutional outcomes, and this is certainly highly evident in case studies of African states. For instance, Posner notes that institutional arrangement and incentives, more so than elite mobilization or collective grievance,

---

[91] Hall and Taylor, "Three New Institutionalisms."
[92] Ibid.
[93] Koelble, "The New Institutionalism."
[94] Pierson, "Increasing Returns, Path Dependence".

emerge as the primary determinant of ethnic conflict in African countries.[95] Still, to devise a framework that accounts for interactions between violence and institutions, it is important first to assess a variety of perspectives on the political economy of violence. In other words, *from different scholarly viewpoints, how do incentives and capabilities for violence influence institutional outcomes?* Here, interactions between the violence variable and the institution-building process may be considered broadly. First, it is important to consider variations in how institutionalist frameworks assess the state's relationship with violence. In a causal sense, violence may be considered either as an independent variable or as a dependent variable. For instance, in Bates' examination of the links between prosperity and violence, violence emerges in state-building processes as the mechanism by which the means to prosperous enterprise is ensured.[96] In early societies, private provisions of violence capability meant that unpredictable non-market forces impeded economic transactions; consequently, the state's assumption of exclusive capabilities for violence emerges as a key tool for facilitating efficient economic transactions and protecting private property rights.[97] Incentives to engage in new commerce opportunities created demands for peace; the state's provision of violence as a public good thereby created a more peaceful order, relative to the prior era dominated by factional interests and private provisions of violence.

On the other hand, violence may also be thought of as a dependent variable that signifies levels of security. Tensions between two outcome variables in particular, prosperity and regime security, present institutional impediments to development in African states. In present-day developing nations, prosperity and regime security emerge as tradeoffs, often due to internal competition,

---

[95] Posner, *Institutions and Ethnic Politics*; Posner, "Political Salience of Cultural Difference."
[96] Bates, *Prosperity and Violence*.
[97] Ibid.

whereas historically, states such as France and England were able to achieve both because their leaders took political institutions away from families and placed them in the hands of central bureaucratic powers.[98] By contrast, colonial legacies in Africa create incentives for 'regionalism,' here referring to the creation of adverse incentives against leaders pursuing universal prosperity policies, as a result of territories too large to govern and fragmented polities.[99] For this reason, leaders in power in socially fragile, post-colonial contexts often find that they cannot achieve both prosperity and security, but rather as trade-offs. Rather than seek policies to enhance growth, they seek to advance policies that stifle political competition, often through violence.

Violence also receives a normative treatment, for instance, in the works of postcolonial thinkers such as Mahmood Mamdani, where the criterion for state formation is not capability or efficiency but the extent to which state violence against minority communities results in the construction of an undesirable state apparatus.[100] Mamdani's conception of violence inspires a deconstruction and rethinking of the very means by which the African state is constructed; to his credit, he does not absolve European states of these same 'original sins.' But he acknowledges that discursive outcomes of these original sins, particularly in so far as they create permanent communities of 'settlers' and 'natives,' only serve to perpetuate more violence.[101] The institutional outcomes of politicizing such post-colonial discourse will be examined a bit more in Chapter 2. Here it should be stressed that a violence trap framework engages with the productive elements of violence and outcomes that depend on how institutions respond to threats of violence.[102]

---

[98] Bates, *The Development Dilemma.*
[99] Ibid.
[100] Mamdani, *Neither Settler nor Native*.
[101] Mamdani, "Beyond Settler and Native."
[102] Bates, *Prosperity and Violence;* Bates, *The Development Dilemma*.

Under the violence trap framework, then, violence is assessed empirically rather than normatively. First, violence as a variable determines the course of political transactions among elites; these transactions then result in institutional equilibria that reflect the political marketplace relevant to each case. Second, violence is also assessed in terms of how the state is able to redirect it toward providing stability for more credible political and economic transactions. Importantly, in line with the new institutionalism's emphasis on productive utilities of state power, the state's ability to navigate the violence trap emerges as a transformative tool, in terms of orienting institutions towards greater or lesser political development.

The policy implication of this framework, of course, is that state-directed institutional reform aimed at shifting political incentives is the solution to political development in African states.[103] However, genuine institutional reform is necessarily localized and organic, rather than externally directed as is common in contemporary development practice. Thus, to understand the types of institutional reform that are feasible in the case of any one African state, it is important to devise parsimonious frameworks that help to elucidate incentives and constraints to institutional reform. Such a framework does much to influence sound development policy provisions; more importantly, from an academic standpoint, it does much to bring the new institutionalism research agenda forward by applying it to African state-building experiences. For this reason, the violence trap framework, which will be addressed below, is well-suited to address the theoretical gaps within the new institutionalism, as well as the analytical gaps in systematic comparisons of the political development of different African states.

---

[103] Bates et al., "The New Institutionalism and Africa".

1.2 The Violence Trap: Elites, Rents, and Institutions

In response to the gaps in prevailing approaches to analyzing political development in African states, this dissertation applies the violence trap framework to help address the research question on political development within the scope of the three cases, Ethiopia, Rwanda, and South Sudan. As mentioned above, the violence trap framework adopts a political economy approach that draws from the new institutionalism in comparative politics.[104] The violence trap is a phenomenon introduced by the interaction between violence, rents, institutions, and different groups of elites within an undeveloped polity. Effectively, states in which ruling elites use rents, that is, barriers to economic and political access, to control contending elites that pose a threat of violence are closed access orders or natural states.[105] By contrast, states that are able to monopolize violence and maintain order without resorting to rents are open access orders.[106] This contrast between closed and open access orders may be conceptualized in terms of polities with extractive and inclusive political institutions.[107] The delineating lines between closed and open access orders are the levels of impersonality, perpetuity, and inclusivity enshrined within a given order.

Depending on the extent to which these features are apparent in a state, four types of states can be identified: fragile states, basic natural states, mature natural states, and open access orders.[108] The pre-open access state orders can be described as follows: i) fragile states persist when the only institutional organization is the state and very little differentiation and specialization exists in the

---

[104] This is generally considered more in line with rational choice institutionalism, although the authors of this theory do not identify it as such and make ample use of historical reasoning. As will be explained below, the analytic narratives methodology adopted in this work can help to augment rational choice institutionalism assumptions with more historical context and 'thick description'.
[105] Cox, North, and Weingast. "The Violence Trap"; North, Wallis, and Weingast. *Violence and Social Orders.*
[106] Ibid.
[107] Acemoglu and Robinson, *Why Nations Fail*.
[108] Weingast, "Resistant to the Rule-of-Law."

economy; ii) basic natural states feature specialization of tax collection, religious activity, and economic functions, as well as the emergence of state-run enterprises and organizing rules for hierarchy within the state apparatus; iii) mature natural states feature sophisticated independent enterprises, along with basic private and contract law, but with barriers to access through rent-creation, and periodic coalition adjustments.[109]

Natural states may alternatively be referred to as closed access (or sometimes, limited access) orders; these are states in which informal contractual agreements continue to exist, as do varying levels of restrictions on political or economic access. The first three ideal types are at different stages of a closed access order but are all plagued by the violence trap, and, consequently, rents-based political orders, whereas the fourth type, the open access order, is not. Importantly, this does not mean that rents do not exist in open access orders; indeed, mechanisms such as patents or intellectual property law are the clearest examples of rents in open access orders.[110] However, rents are adopted in these cases to incentivize economic innovation, creative destruction, and growth. By contrast, political and economic rents in natural states (or closed access orders) are actually used to sustain a given political order and control actors with the potential for violence.

States that fail to incrementally address the violence trap fail to progress across these successive stages, or may revert towards a lower stage.[111] States progress towards open access orders by incrementally meeting three doorstep conditions: standardization of elite privileges as a 'rule of law' for elites (serving as a blueprint for a more pluralistic rule of law regime), consolidated control of political-military apparatus, and credible property and contract laws that

---

[109] Ibid.
[110] Tullock, *The Rent-Seeking Society.*
[111] Weingast, "Resistant to the Rule-of-Law.".

affirm state perpetuity.[112] In the absence of these conditions, the political economy of a closed access order or a natural state is characterized by personalized (rather than institutionalized) commitments, lack of credible legal arrangements, severe limitations on economic activity, and absence of specialized and differentiated economic activity. Personalized commitments may take on many forms, both formal and informal. For instance, personalized commitments may exist between the president and the governor of a particular region. These dynamics will be explored in the case-based analysis chapters. Effectively, the violence trap effectively impedes political and economic development, elucidating causal mechanisms that can help address the research question I posed in the introduction.

In addition to impeding political development in closed access orders, the violence trap impedes economic development due to rents-based inefficiencies that stagnate economic specialization and bureaucratization processes. Indeed, economic specialization and bureaucratization are always associated with the natural state's transition towards an open access order, since this entails a move away from a rents-based political order. Specialized economic investments rely on capital markets, consistent rules, and open access to thrive, features that are near-impossible to implement in closed access orders.[113] Instead, state control of access to organizations and enterprise, and absence of consistent rules that apply equally to all citizens impede specialization. Bureaucratization also becomes difficult if administrative offices are seen as another mechanism for allocating rent. Specialization is what allows a nation, in turn, to continue to reform its institutions towards a more open access order. Without specialized economic

---

[112] Weingast, "Resistant to the Rule-of-Law."; Cox, North, and Weingast. "The Violence Trap"; North, Wallis, and Weingast. *Violence and Social Orders;* Ober and Weingast, "Is Development Uniquely Modern?"
[113] Cox, North, and Weingast, "The Violence Trap".

investments, a nation's political economy relies on personal ties and simple market transactions, exemplary markets of a natural state.

In the process of transition toward open access, state regulation becomes increasingly important, as the maturing institutions of the state are now tasked with governing more complex and formal political and economic transactions. Laws that were simply meant to restrict access would have to give way to laws that stimulate competition and open access, such as antitrust. Thus, these economic transformations serve to continue to adjust institutional incentives, prompting elites to respond by changing laws and adopting responsive policy measures. This is, in other words, how a developing state 'learns.'

It should be noted here that economic norms theory provides an important alternative means of conceptualizing these transitions in a nation's political economy.[114] In this view, contractualist systems emerge when formal, legal systems of exchange with third-party enforced agreements replace informal market interactions; the violence trap framework's natural state could take on many forms, but contractual exchanges cannot be considered 'contracts' because they lack third-party enforcement. By contrast, in the violence trap framework, systems of political and economic transactions are considered to be agreements in the pre-contract phase; the state cannot replace these networks if it seeks perpetuity; rather, it codifies existing contracts and subsumes them into formal contracts and property rights regimes. Thus, unlike economic norms theory, the violence trap framework conceives of a more gradual, organic progression into perpetual, impersonal regimes. Here, the state does not replace existing personal links; it gradually codifies them as institutional equilibria.

---

[114] Mousseau, "Social Market Roots of Democratic Peace".

Furthermore, in the violence trap framework, economic specialization is a key mechanism by which transitions away from rents-based orders towards more open access orders are achieved. It is easy to imagine how the rents-based economic interactions within closed access orders perpetuate the violence trap. First, when the benefits of economic specialization are restricted to members of the ruling elite, coups, and revolts are both likely. When the benefits are available to a broader coalition of elites, coups are unlikely, because those with the power to overthrow the government will have no incentive to void their rent.[115] Popular revolts, however, would be expected, as broad sections of the population may become dissatisfied with the status quo.

Along these lines, in a nation of competing ethnic interests, elite groups and coalitions would be carved along ethnic lines, exacerbating the salience of the rents distributed by the natural state. For instance, where one ethnic group dominates, intra-ethnic economic specialization would serve to create some dynamism and security in a national economy, although such dynamism would be much more inefficiently balanced than it would be in a society where inter-ethnic economic interactions and specializations are also prevalent.[116] I shall add these ethnic modifiers to the rents-based interactions to expand the violence trap framework, particularly when applying it to case studies of Ethiopia, Rwanda, and South Sudan.

As mentioned above, states achieve political and economic development in tandem, by moving from lower to higher levels of natural states (closed access orders) and then gradually towards an open access order. These processes require standardizing elite privileges as a 'rule of law' for elites (serving as a blueprint for a more pluralistic rule of law regime). They also require consolidated

---

[115] Ibid.
[116] Ibid.

control of political-military apparatus, and credible property and contract laws that affirm state perpetuity.[117] Lack of continuity or perpetual state means that rules and laws that are set forth by a regime in power are subject to change with a change of regime. More importantly, the criterion of the consolidation of the political-military apparatus is cited as the most crucial condition, since it facilitates the emergence of the other two but is also the most difficult to achieve.[118] This mechanism does not mean that the military and political elites are intertwined; rather, this criterion refers to the emergence of a professional, ordered, cohesive military under full control of a civilian bureaucracy led by the executive. Finally, it is necessary to institutionalize relations among elites so that privileges are standardized to resemble rights.[119]

The gradual institutionalization of the rule of law for elites produces a culture of continuity, and an expectation that rules in society will remain consistent, even with a change of regime. Institutionalizing the rule of law for elites will also put in place the institutional frameworks through which the expansion of access and privileges to the masses can emerge. Providing key historical support to this argument is the fact that in the eleventh century, one of the main sociopolitical reforms enacted under the British monarchy was that heirs to a plot of land could buy back rights to the land from the king for a standard fee. In contrast, the right to buy back from the king had previously been reserved for powerful nobles.[120]

Similarly, in Ancient Greece, from the sixth to the third century BC, transitions towards an open access order transformed a society based on personal commitments into a society based on

---

[117] Weingast, "Resistant to the Rule-of-Law."; Cox, North, and Weingast. "The Violence Trap"; North, Wallis, and Weingast. *Violence and Social Orders;* Ober and Weingast, "Is Development Uniquely Modern?"
[118] North, Wallis, and Weingast. *Violence and Social Orders*.
[119] Weingast, "Resistant to the Rule-of-Law.
[120] North, Wallis, and Weingast. *Violence and Social Orders*.

commercial venture ties and democratic institutions.[121] These transitions were catalyzed by the standardization of elite privileges as rule of law for a group of citizen-soldiers known as the Hoplites.[122] As Hoplites gained the right to capitalize on property, retain surplus, and purchase arms for protection, institutional incentives provided new opportunities for wider citizen participation in all aspects of governance by the end of the third century BC.[123] In this vein, political development is conceived here in transactional, organic, and natural terms, allowing this framework to be applied in pre-modern contexts of political transactions. An analogy may be made here to the use of neoclassical economic theory to analyze free market transactions that occurred in pre-capitalist societies.

In short, then, the violence trap framework accounts for the agency of contending elites, how ruling elites manage relations, and how agreements codified as institutional equilibria provide new incentives and opportunities for social change. The new institutional equilibria may then create conditions for evading, or alternatively, for perpetuating the violence trap. The violence trap framework can thus be considered a political economy approach that parsimoniously accounts for the interaction between violence and institutions in a domestic context. In particular, the framework identifies the institutional mechanisms that shift elite preferences, showing how different elite groups use strategic interaction to secure their privileges or rents. These strategic interactions result in new equilibria, with new sets of opportunities and constraints, orienting systems either towards more fragility or towards greater levels of open access.

---

[121] Ober and Weingast, "Is Development Uniquely Modern?"
[122] Ibid.
[123] Ibid.

Chapter Two: Political Development in Ethiopia

This chapter applies the violence trap framework developed in Chapter 1 to the primary case study of Ethiopia. As I stated in the introduction, contentious narratives of Ethiopian political history have centered on the historiography of Ethiopian state-building, as well as on the ideological foundations of state-building under the regime led by the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (hereafter, TPLF), under the auspices of a nominal coalition called the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (hereafter, EPRDF). The brief review of this case in the introduction illustrated how contested narratives in Ethiopian historiography lead to skewed assessments of the country's political development.

The violence trap framework conceptualizes political development as a process of institutional transitions that begin at the foundational stages of the fragile state, where the only institutional organization is the state and specialized or differentiated roles are virtually non-existent.[124] At the early stages of the state-building process, ruling elites monopolize the political and economic marketplace, then distribute rents, that is, special privileges, to different groups of contending elites.[125] Often, the incentive is to distribute rents first to those contending elites who pose the greatest threat of violence, gradually encompassing a wider group of elites. At the crudest stages, rents-based agreements are highly personalized and tentative, perhaps akin to simple conceptions of clientelism or corruption. At more sophisticated stages, however, rents are institutionalized, and

---

[124] North, Wallis, and Weingast. *Violence and Social Orders.* Weingast, "Resistant to the Rule-of-Law."
[125] Ibid.

elite relations are codified, allowing for the springing of perpetual institutional orders with specialized elite roles in a country's political, economic, and social spheres. Thus, rents-based arrangements, while socially suboptimal, serve as the basis by which violence is managed and political order is established. Accordingly, this chapter analyzes how each transition from Emperor Haile Selassie's constitutional monarchy to the Communist Dergue regime, and subsequently to the ERPDF and the current Prosperity Party (hereafter, Prosperity) have created new institutional equilibria, through rents-based violence-driven inter-elite interactions.

As already discussed in the introduction, an analytic narratives methodology allows for the deployment of logical narratives about elite decisions and institutional outcomes, drawing on both primary and secondary sources. Consistent with the subsequent comparative cases, this chapter's analytic narratives rely primarily on applying the violence trap framework to primary and secondary sources relating to elite decisions and institutional transitions in Ethiopia's recent political history. Moving further, this chapter triangulates the data from primary and secondary sources using data gleaned from interviews with elites conducted between May and July 2022. Interview participants included leaders of public institutions, business associations, and civil society organizations, all of whom had in-depth knowledge of institutional interactions in Ethiopia.[126] The interviews consisted of seven open-ended questions relating to past and recent institutional transitions, successes and failures of successive administrations, causes of institutional change, and prevailing challenges to political development in Ethiopia. In addition to the analysis of the coded data, relevant interview excerpts are quoted in this chapter, when

[126] To ensure the safety of elite interview participants, all private information and institutional affiliations are kept confidential. Where participants are quoted, only the date of the interview will be identified.

necessary, to provide additional context for the argument constructed through the analytic narratives.

Since the analytic narratives in this chapter are constructed through the violence trap framework, it is useful to restate the hypothetical implications here. It is assumed that states begin at the stage of a fragile state with very little differentiation of elite roles and functions, then progress through successive stages of a closed access order through standardization of elite privileges, consolidated state control of political-military apparatus, and strong enforcement of formal contracts. Thus, a basic natural state emerges when rents-based interactions are formalized, and benefits of economic specialization are shared among coalition members of the ruling elite. A mature natural state emerges when all groups of elites, not just the ruling elites, receive the benefits of economic specialization, elites share a standard set of privileges, and periodic elite coalition adjustments are observed without the outbreak of violence.

In line with this framework, this chapter shows how institutional transitions under the regime of Emperor Haile Selassie brought Ethiopia to the doorstep of a mature natural state. Subsequently, the country reverted toward a fragile state under the Dergue, whereas the EPRDF later reconstituted a basic natural state. Although it may be too early to properly assess the country's current level of political development, much of the qualitative data here indicates that the Prosperity-led regime has reverted the country to near-fragile state conditions. In fragile states, political-economic interactions are highly personalized and unpredictable, elite privileges and bargains are uncodified and tentative, and the political-military apparatus resides outside the control of the state, conditions which were observed under the Dergue regime and are re-emerging in the current Ethiopian polity. In developing these arguments, this chapter is divided into three sections. Section 2.2 explores prevailing narratives of Ethiopia's political development, whereas

section 2.3 draws on the violence trap framework to analyze institutional transitions from Emperor Haile Selassie to the Dergue and from the Dergue to the EPRDF. Finally, section 2.4 analyzes the ongoing institutional transitions from the EPRDF to the current Prosperity-led regime. The short section below briefly illustrates how elite interviews conducted for this case helped support this dissertation's broader analytic narratives methodology.

2.1 Discussion of Interview Methods

Interview data was coded through Dedoose software, with analysis centered on co-occurrence of specific codes. A total of 97 codes were strategically applied, with specific care taken to ensure that codes emerged from the interviews and not from the questions. For instance, the code 'ethnicity' emerges as an important component of institutional explanations, although the word was not used in any interview questions. Other relevant codes include party names, 'elections,' institutional bodies, and concepts such as 'extremism' and 'diversity.' Code co-occurrence was the main analytical tool used to triangulate the primary and secondary interview data. Co-occurrence was classified into three tiers—high co-occurrence, medium co-occurrence, and low co-occurrence. The high co-occurrence codes were then compared with emerging narratives to ensure that the mechanisms of institutional change appeared consistent. Accordingly, the analysis revealed seven code pairings that registered high levels of co-occurrence in this study; Dedoose established the criterion for high co-occurrence as 15 or more pairings within all available interview data. These pairings, along with the numbers of co-occurrences in parentheses, were as follows:

- Prosperity Transition – Competition / Division (19)
- Prosperity Transition – Elites (15)
- Prosperity Transition – Ethnicity (15)
- EPRDF Transition – Ethnicity (17)

- Constitution – Ethnicity (17)
- EPRDF Transition – Prosperity Transition (17)

Although the analytical implications of these code co-occurrences will be explored in much more detail in the sections below, it is useful to introduce some of the contexts behind these codes here. First, the code 'Prosperity Transition' relates to data points discussing the reasons for the most recent institutional transition from the EPRDF to Prosperity in 2018, a transition which, by some accounts, may be considered ongoing. This code is in high co-occurrence with three codes: 'Ethnicity,' 'Elites,' and 'Competition / Division.'

A potential sub-hypothesis derived from this may be that the transition to the current Prosperity-led regime in Ethiopia had much to do with competition between ethnic elites. Another may be that a continued division between different groups of ethnic elites marks the ongoing transition. In fact, as will be shown much later in this chapter, both of these sub-hypotheses are consistent with the narratives of institutional change that emerge in this analysis. The pairing of 'EPRDF' with 'Ethnicity' also shows that ethnic questions, perhaps grievances or competition, were key to the transition from the Dergue regime to the EPRDF in 1991. This is also consistent with the high co-occurrence of 'Constitution' with 'Ethnicity,' given that the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (hereafter, FDRE) Constitution was established by the EPRDF in 1995, based on the revolutionary manifesto that the party's dominant force, the TPLF had put forward in 1983. These data points indicate that the logic guiding the analytic narratives in this chapter should focus on whether and how ethnicity emerges as a source of competition and division, especially among elites, through successive institutional transitions in the country's history, and how it continues to operate as an institutional mechanism under the current PP-led regime. These discussions of ethnicity begin to emerge through examining competing narratives of Ethiopia's political history, discussed below.

2.2 Competing Narratives of Ethiopia's Political Development[127]

The study of Ethiopian political development is highly contested terrain, due mainly to competing narratives informing, influencing, and predicting how historians, scholars, and analysts interpret successive political transitions in the country's modern history. These competing narratives can be broadly referred to as the 'pan-Ethiopianist' narrative and the 'nations and nationalities' narrative. The debate between them is often framed as 'the national question.' In this section, a short analytical review will highlight how these two narratives inform competing perspectives on historical political transitions. The focus will be mainly on the transitions from Emperor Haile Selassie's coronation in 1930 to the ouster of the TPLF-EPRDF (ethnic party coalition in 2018.

Ethiopia maintained a long history of independence from European colonization by defeating invading forces. The competing narratives interpret this fact in contrasting ways. In the nations and nationalities narrative, Ethiopia's history of state formation begins with Emperor Menelik's annexation of vast territories south of the Ethiopian highlands. In this view, the Ethiopian imperial project was crude and primitive, not markedly different from processes of tribal conquest in other parts of Africa.[128] Proponents of this narrative also tend to characterize the entire period from Menelik to the ouster of Haile Selassie in crude feudal terms. In this view, modernization could never commence while the Solomonic Crown remained at the helm of Ethiopia; the ouster of the monarchy in 1974 is thus seen as the first real opportunity for a progressive transition.

---

[127] Section 2.2 is derived, in part, from an article published in Africa Today (2022) © Indiana University Press, available at: DOI:10.2979/africatoday.68.3.04.
[128] Woolbert, "Rise and Fall."

It is important to provide some context on the nature of Ethiopia's ancient empire, and the reasons behind the ethnic contestations in Ethiopian historiography. The Ethiopian Empire was built on two pillars, the ancient Ethiopian Orthodox Church, which dates back to the third century, and a Solomonic Dynasty that claimed direct descent from King Solomon of Israel and the Queen of Sheba.[129] The 'Abyssinians' credited with building this empire are comprised of ethnic Tigrayans and Amharas, and to a lesser extent, the Gurage, the Agew, and the Beja.[130] These ethnic groups are likely a mix of Cushitic and Semitic heritage; their ancestry is rooted in a long period of intermingling among the peoples of the Horn of Africa and Southern Arabia.[131] The Aksumite Kingdom, the precursor to the Ethiopian Empire, ruled much of this region until its eventual demise in the tenth century, and the subsequent Ethiopian Empire ruled vast portions of present-day Ethiopia until the fifteenth century.

In the sixteenth century, two phenomena forced the Empire to retreat and fortress itself in what is today northern Ethiopia. First, a period of brutal invasions by the Islamic Adal Sultan, Ahmed Gragn, resulted in large-scale destruction and decimation of the empire's cultural heritage.[132] Gragn's army pushed the empire's frontiers further and further north, before Ethiopia repelled the invasion with the help of an alliance with the Portuguese Empire, another Christian kingdom. At the same time that the Ethiopian Empire faced the Adal incursion, the Oromos, a Cushitic people who likely inhabited the tip of the Horn of Africa, faced incursions and pressure from the Somalis off the coast of the Horn of Africa.[133] This resulted in what is widely known as the sixteenth-

---

[129] Isaac, *Ethiopian Orthodox Täwahïdo Church;* Ullendorf, *The Ethiopians: An Introduction.*
[130] Ullendorf, *The Ethiopians: An Introduction.*
[131] Ullendorf, *The Ethiopians: An Introduction*; Pankhurst, *The Ethiopians: A History.*
[132] Pankhurst, *The Ethiopians: A History*; Ullendorf, *The Ethiopians: An Introduction.*
[133] Ullendorf, *The Ethiopians: An Introduction.*

century Oromo migration, the large influx of the Oromo into the southern and central parts of present-day Ethiopia.[134] Through this migration, the Oromo invaded many of the inhabitants of the southern and eastern parts of the region, including the independent Emirate of Harar, and gradually settled in the areas they were able to conquer.[135] This seminal piece of history lays the foundation for the fault lines of Ethiopia's contemporary nation-building, and the competing narratives that frame the underlying debates.

By the time Emperor Menelik re-annexed the southern territories in the nineteenth century, the Ethiopian Empire had reconsolidated itself in the north and embarked on a period of slow modernization.[136] This sustenance of state continuity and early modernization allowed Ethiopia to serve as what many scholars refer to as the 'exception' to the African colonial experience.[137] When Italy, a late entrant to the European scramble for Africa finally invaded Ethiopia, Menelik was able to call up an army of around 100,000 men, armed with modern rifles.[138] After defeating the Italians in 1889, Emperor Menelik subsequently expanded the frontiers of the Amhara Shewan plateau, his homeland, and also annexed vast swaths of southern territory in an attempt to stave off European colonial invasions completely.[139] In the pan-Ethiopianist narrative, Menelik's conquest mirrored many of the state-formation experiences of European countries, and was necessary to maintain the independence of the Ethiopian state. In the nations and nationalities narrative,

---

[134] Pankhurst, *The Ethiopians: A History*; Ullendorf, *The Ethiopians: An Introduction.*
[135] Ullendorf, *The Ethiopians: An Introduction*, 76.
[136] Isaac, *Ethiopian Orthodox Täwahïdo Church*.
[137] Clapham, *Horn of Africa*; Mamdani, "Ethiopia's Ethnic Federalism".
[138] Clapham, *Horn of Africa*; Pankhurst, *The Ethiopians: A History*.
[139] Clapham, *Horn of Africa.*

Menelik's conquest amounted to colonization of the ethnic groups that had come to inhabit the southern territories.

To understand this nations and nationalities narrative, it is important to begin by addressing the infamous treatise of Walleligne Mekonnen. Walleligne, a student activist in the 1960s, serves as the intellectual godfather of many of the subsequent Marxist-Leninist movements that came to define Ethiopia's contemporary history.[140] 'Walleligne's thesis,' as it is often referred to, claimed that the Ethiopian Empire was really a prison for 'nations and nationalities' and that pan-Ethiopianism was a 'fake nationalism.'[141] In this view, as it was carved out at the time, Ethiopia only represented the Semitic-speaking populations, the Amhara and the Tigrayans, with all other ethnic groups effectively colonized by a Semitic Empire. Walleligne's thesis was not particularly well-supported. In fact, it has been characterized as a "famous but unhistorical and superficial paper, which was not an analysis but ideological position taking."[142] Still, the Walleligne thesis remains relevant to at least one perspective of Ethiopian political development.

The pan-Ethiopianist narrative does not necessarily dispute that the Amhara and the Tigrayans were dominant in the initial carving of the Ethiopian Empire. Indeed, some historians claim the 'Abyssinians' (as Amhara and Tigrayan highlanders are sometimes called) were the true Ethiopians, and that Amhara culture was predominant in the empire's patterns of social organization.[143] Yet, the Oromo who settled in the Central areas were gradually assimilated into the Empire's political organization, even leading up to the coronation of the first half-Oromo

---

[140] Tadesse, *Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party.*
[141] Mekonnen, "Nationalities in Ethiopia."
[142] Abbink, "Plan B in Progress," 340.
[143] Ullendorf, *The Ethiopians*: *An Introduction*.

emperor, Iyo'as, in 1755.[144] Along these lines, historians have characterized the Ethiopian Empire as a distinctly African civilization, initially encompassing the Semitic ethnic groups, but with the Cushitic Oromo later integrated into the Empire's nation-building processes in the seventeenth century.[145] In fact, despite official discouragement, the Oromo language was as widely used as Amharic in the Empire by 1960.[146] In short, the pan-Ethiopianist narrative acknowledges Amhara and Tigrayan dominance in the early makings of the Ethiopian Empire, but also perceives a gradual reorganization of political and social orders following Menelik's annexation of the southern territories. More importantly, the pan-Ethiopianist narrative acknowledges a loose continuity of Ethiopian statehood from the pre-modern era to the present.

Having established the context for the competing narratives on Ethiopia's political development, it is now possible to identify competing interpretations of the reign of Emperor Haile Selassie I (1930-1974). In the nations and nationalities perspective, as mentioned earlier, there was nothing remarkable about the political transitions of this entire period, except for the emergence of the social movements that emerged in the 1974 revolution. In the pan-Ethiopianist perspective, Haile Selassie was a great modernizer. He inherited an empire carved up as a federation of kings on the one hand, and a balance of power between the nobility, the Crown, and the Church on the other.[147] The Ethiopian Crown had allowed regional kings such as the Sultan of Jimma to reign over their territories, so long as they submitted to the 'King of Kings.'[148] Such arrangements were

---

[144] Ibid, 79-81; Pankhurst, *The Ethiopians: A History.*
[145] Pankhurst, *The Ethiopians: A History.*
[146] Ullendorf, *The Ethiopians: An Introduction,,* 75.
[147] Isaac, *Ethiopian Orthodox Täwahïdo Church*; Ullendorf, *The Ethiopians: An Introduction*; Clapham, *Horn of Africa*.
[148] Clapham, *Horn of Africa.*

also made with the Sultan in Afar, in the northeastern part of the Empire. When Haile Selassie came to the Throne, he embarked on a mission to codify some of Ethiopia's customary laws through a national constitution, and to reconnect Ethiopia with the outside world. Nevertheless, Haile Selassie's early reforms were quickly interrupted during the second Italian invasion and the subsequent Italian occupation of Ethiopia (1936-1941).

Emperor Haile Selassie returned from exile in 1941, aided by an alliance with Great Britain. Thereafter, he embarked on an aggressive modernization and centralization campaign, setting the bureaucratic foundations for the contemporary Ethiopian state.[149] The next section will analyze many of Haile Selassie's reforms and their effects on elite composition and state inclusion. Here, to continue exploring the two narratives, it is enough to note that many segments of society were dissatisfied with the pace of Haile Selassie's reforms. For instance, the modern Ethiopian Empire, unlike post-Meiji Japan, which it was often compared to, failed to conceptualize radical reform as a means of preserving the ruling elite.[150] By the 1960s, Ethiopia appeared to be in a state of paradox, as many students emerging from modern educational institutions in the country and abroad perceived a 'backward' society. The result was a proliferation of student activism and the *en-vogue* global ideology of this period, Marxism-Leninism. In fact, virtually all members of the 60s student movements were committed to Marxism-Leninism.[151]

The student movements gained consciousness in 1958 and intensified after 1960, when Haile Selassie's government reversed some of its own commitments to reform in response to an

---

[149] Ibid.
[150] Kebede, "Japan and Ethiopia".
[151] Clapham, "Imperial Leadership in Ethiopia"; Zewde 2014

attempted *coup.*[152] By 1965, the student movements were fully radicalized, proclaiming populist slogans like 'land to the tiller.'[153] The subsequent period, from 1969 to the end of the 1970s, can be conceptualized as an era of 'competing Marxisms.' The first group articulated Ethiopian historiography in terms of a peasant and intellectual class grievance against the Solomonic aristocracy and the nobility; the second did so in terms of a narrowly construed ethnic grievance against a perceived dominant group. This was when Walleligne's thesis articulated 'the national question' and introduced deep divisions among the many leftist camps vying for state power. These competing Marxisms gave rise to the country's first modern political parties, as a military socialist government captured the state from the Ethiopian monarchy in 1974. This new government, led by the Dergue, vaguely articulated an ideology of 'socialism with African characteristics,' an 'Afrocommunism', that would promote socio-economic collectivization and state stewardship over 'communal' resources.[154] In the new Socialist Ethiopia, the Dergue was forced to initially contend with two new political parties, Meison and the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP).

Meison and EPRP, staffed by veterans of the student movements of the 1960s, grew increasingly uncomfortable with the emerging authoritarianism of the new Dergue regime. However, 'the national question' emerged as the main point of division between these two leftist groups. Meison, like the Dergue, adopted the pan-Ethiopianist narrative and was committed to a unitary socialist state, whereas the EPRP was willing to accommodate the concerns of the nations

---

[152] Zewde, *Quest for Socialist Utopia.*
[153] Abbink, "Plan B in Progress"; Zewde, *Quest for Socialist Utopia.*
[154] Ottaway and Ottaway, *Afrocommunism*.

and nationalities perspective.[155] Although Meison and EPRP initially attempted to work together, the Dergue quickly exploited the gap between them. Encouraged by the Dergue's early attempts at land reform and commitment to pan-Ethiopian socialism, Meison signaled a new critique-support policy towards the regime.[156] Buoyed by Meison's support, the Dergue launched an urban warfare campaign called 'Red Terror' in 1976, intending to eliminate the EPRP. Meison, which could more easily infiltrate the EPRP, provided critical support to the Dergue in this campaign, before the regime turned against Meison itself and eliminated the party in 1977.[157]

As the Dergue continued to militarize political space, its opposition gradually turned towards armed struggle; the most prominent armed movements to emerge during this period were the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) and the TPLF, both in the north of the country. Although the EPRP was severely weakened by the Dergue, many of its members were not eager to join splintered ethnic movements, attempting instead to launch their own pan-Ethiopianist armed struggle against the regime.[158] Although some EPRP members likely did rush north to join the EPLF and the TPLF, it was here that the reorganization of Ethiopia's body-politic placed EPRP into the pan-Ethiopianist camp, despite its sympathy with the nations and nationalities narrative. It was also here that much of the leftist opposition against the Dergue gradually coalesced around what is sometimes referred to as 'plan B,' that is, the nations and nationalities answer to the 'national question.'[159] With the pan-Ethiopianist opposition weakened, ethnic nationalism

---

[155] Abbink, "Plan B in Progress"; Clapham, *Horn of Africa*; Tadesse, *Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party.*
[156] Clapham, *Horn of Africa*; Tadesse, *Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party.*
[157] Abbink "Plan B in Progress"; Tadesse, *Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party.*
[158] Tadesse, *Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party*.
[159] Abbink, "Plan B in Progress."

emerged as seemingly the only real alternative to the Dergue.[160] The TPLF emerged as the primary beneficiary of this new Ethiopian body-politic, along with its Oromo counterpart, the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF). However, once it successfully captured the Ethiopian state, the TPLF sidelined the OLF, paved the way for Eritrean secession under the EPLF, and instituted a new ethnically federated state. Operating under the auspices of a nominal ethnic-based coalition, the EPRDF, the TPLF fashioned its Marxist sympathies into an ideology known as 'revolutionary democracy.'

Again, here, the competing narratives contour the contrasting interpretations of the TPLF's struggle, rise, and subsequent rule under the auspices of the EPRDF. For proponents of the nations and nationalities narrative, the TPLF launched a virtuous struggle with democratic aspirations, only to fall prey to party decay and *mission creep* once it found itself at the helm of power. Along these lines, supporters portrayed the TPLF revolutionary movement-based party that had no parallels anywhere in Africa.[161] For instance, the TPLF may be unique in that its members had no prior political experience other than with the student movement, and an outside force did not initially sponsor the organization.[162] For advocates of the nations and nationalities narrative, then, the TPLF emerged from a history of democratic decision-making and provided a conclusive answer to Ethiopia's 'national question', by implementing a new ethnically federated state.[163]

In this regard, the nations and nationalities narrative frames the post-1991 experience in Ethiopian political development as a failure in practice rather than a failure of imagination. For

---

[160] Clapham, *Horn of Africa*; Tadesse, *Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party*; Zewde, *Quest for Socialist Ethiopia.*
[161] Tareke, *The Ethiopian Revolution.*
[162] Berhe, *Laying the Past to Rest.*
[163] Ibid.

instance, the body politic of this period is framed in terms of 'competing ethnic nationalisms,' identifying the TPLF's 'revolutionary democracy' and its subsequent bid for hegemony as the main impediment to political development.[164] Similarly, observers note that the TPLF initially observed a fine line between the rigid state apparatus and a more consensus-based party culture, at least until the party split of 2001 in the aftermath of the Ethio-Eritrean war.[165] Subsequently, the regime moved to consolidate a rigid, authoritarian party-state after facing embarrassment during the 2005 elections.[166] In this view, the TPLF's political project failed because it turned 'revolutionary democracy' into a means of consolidating an authoritarian party-state apparatus. Many scholars doubt, however, whether revolutionary democracy, with its adoption of a governance culture of 'democratic centralism,' could even work in principle.[167]

In the pan-Ethiopian narrative, the TPLF failed because it adopted a flawed principle, rooted in Marxism-Leninism and Stalinism, in reinstituting the Ethiopian state as an ethnic federation. The FDRE Constitution essentially sets ethnicity as the basis for citizenship and reimagines Ethiopia as a voluntary union of autonomous ethnic groups. This was despite the fact, of course, that very few of the nine ethnic regions that were newly created had any history of autonomous self-governance. In any case, the TPLF's adoption of this form of federation was probably rooted in the party's lack of objective knowledge about Ethiopia. Having aligned itself with Albanian Marxism in response to a weakening Soviet Union, the TPLF was initially steered by a secretive central committee known as the Marxist-Leninist League of Tigray (MLLT). The TPLF thus

---

[164] Gudina, "Competing Ethnic Nationalisms."
[165] Vaughan, "Revolutionary democratic state-building."
[166] Clapham, *Horn of Africa*.
[167] Lefort, "Response to De Waal"; Bach, "Neither revolutionary nor Democratic".

adopted the Walleligne thesis wholesale, that Ethiopia was a fake creation of the Amhara "feudal classes."[168] Interestingly, this narrative was first deployed in the 1930s by a Nazi collaborator and then by a student at the Istituto Coloniale Fascista to make a 'benign' case for Italy's attempt to colonize Ethiopia.[169]

In any case, this fundamental misunderstanding of imperial statecraft posed a significant challenge to the TPLF's ability to govern effectively. Indeed, the TPLF had almost no knowledge of Ethiopia, and it was not until the Ethio-Eritrean war of 1998-2000 that it even became aware of the existence of a pan-Ethiopian nationalism that extended beyond ethnic identity.[170] Accordingly, the TPLF's attempt to combine its Marxist sympathies with the nations and nationalities narrative proved unproductive because:

> *[…] it has led to Ethiopians being primarily ethnic subjects, not citizens […] Some have noted that the policy may have been "too successful," as it threatens the state. The essentialization of identities that has resulted is difficult to remove and has a self-fulfilling prophecy effect, making national identity secondary. In this respect, Plan B of the revolution may have run out of national glue, so to speak…*[171]

In other words, scholars have identified many internal contradictions in 'revolutionary democracy,', particularly in its selective adoption of elements of liberalism, Leninism, Marxism, and Maoism, all to the effect of excluding groups deemed as enemies to the vanguard mission of the party-state.[172] This ideology would prove an impediment to genuine political development in Ethiopia.

---

[168] TPLF, "People's Democratic Program."
[169] See Prochazka, P. *Abyssinia: The Powder Barrel, A Book on the Most Burning Question of the Day*. British International News Agency, 1935; Woolbert, R. "The Rise and Fall of Abyssinian Imperialism." *Foreign Affairs 14*, no. 4 (1936): 692-697.
[170] Clapham, *Horn of Africa*, 84.
[171] Abbink, "Plan B in Progress," 348.
[172] Bach, "Neither revolutionary nor democratic."

It is also worth noting here that the TPLF-EPRDF periodically repositioned itself during its tenure in response to the governance challenges it encountered. For instance, in the aftermath of the Ethio-Eritrean war in 2001, when the TPLF became aware of the resilience of pan-Ethiopian nationalism, it introduced a new economic program to help anchor the party-state. This ideology, modeled somewhat on the experiences of the East Asian tigers, was known as the 'developmental state' or 'developmentalism.'[173]

Here, competing narratives on Ethiopia's national question give way to contrasting perspectives of the TPLF-EPRDF's developmental state. Some scholars conceptualize Ethiopia's developmental state as a recentralization of economic rents in the hands of a technocratic state. This recentralization has three main pillars: the large party-owned endowment funds, the state-owned enterprises, and the practice of picking winners in the private market.[174] In this regard, the "concept of economic rents is crucial to the EPRDF's self-understanding as the predominant political force in today's Ethiopia."[175] Essentially, the TPLF-EPRDF conceived of an economic climate dominated by rent-seeking and patronage, in the absence of a clear comparative advantage, and envisaged a developmental state that would centralize economic rents and redistribute them more efficiently and equitably.[176] As such, the developmental state is seen as both a practical measure to correct neoliberal market failures and a theoretical rejection of neoclassical economics' conception of rents. For some authors, this sort of state-directed development may result in rapid industrialization, if guided by a technocratic program under a disciplined cohesive capitalist

---

[173] Clapham, *Horn of Africa.*
[174] Weis, "Party, State, and Market," 83-85.
[175] Ibid, 101.
[176] Lefort, "Response to De Waal"; Weis, "Party, State, and Market"

state.[177] However, as shown below, internal contradictions between the developmental state ideology and the TPLF's commitment to an ethno-federal state under revolutionary democracy proved highly detrimental. While it is easy to attribute these challenges to a multi-class order fragmented along ethnic lines, this chapter illustrates that the institutional mechanisms that hindered the long-term success of Ethiopia's developmental state were far more pervasive and complex. Indeed, the problem with the developmental state had much to do with the very idea of state monopolization of rents as its effects on the political marketplace.

At any rate, the TPLF hoped the developmental state would help foster a new nation-building project in ways that 'revolutionary democracy' could not. Still, many scholars were unconvinced by the conceptual pillars of developmentalism. For instance, the coupling of developmentalism with 'revolutionary democracy' meant that all economic decision-making was essentially left up to state elites, and that business stakeholders were excluded rather than empowered.[178] Similarly, it is hard to speak of a dynamic entrepreneurial sector existing under the TPLF-dominated state, since capital was "ruthlessly extracted from the financial system by the state, in order to fund its own initiatives."[179] These extractive processes were aided by three massive, TPLF-owned parastatals: Metals and Engineering Corporation (MetEC), Ethiopian Sugar Corporation, and Endowment Fund for Rehabilitation of Tigray (EFFORT).[180]

While the debates over Ethiopia's developmental state seemed to provide one policy arena in which contestations between pan-Ethiopianist and nations and nationalities narratives could be

---

[177] Kohli, *State Directed Development*.
[178] Lefort, "Response to De Waal."
[179] Clapham, *Horn of Africa*, 100.
[180] Ibid, 99.

elevated to higher ground, the bulk of the evidence shows that the developmental state existed only illusorily. Indeed, the idiosyncrasies of the TPLF's developmental state, laced with ill-fitting ideologies of ethno-Marxism and revolutionary democracy, precluded a replication of the sustained success of the East Asian Tigers.

With the exception of the debates mentioned above over the developmental state, the history of Ethiopia's political development has been inseparably linked with competing narratives on 'the national question.' Scholars and analysts alike have interpreted historical junctures, from Emperor Haile Selassie's reforms to the 1974 revolution to the 1991 overthrow of the Dergue, based on the narratives they've found most convincing. In effect, the contemporary study of Ethiopian political development has become a highly ideological exercise. As already seen, most contemporary works on Ethiopia have almost over-compensated for the early focus on state formation in early Ethiopianist works, by obsessing over the question, *what of the nation?* This chapter will return to conceptions of state formation and state-building to ask, again, *what of the state?* In doing so, this chapter applies the violence trap framework to assess the mechanisms of political transition in present-day Ethiopia.

2.3 Analytic Narratives of Ethiopia's Historical Transitions[181]

To recall, development, in the violence trap framework adopted here, is framed as transition from a closed-access order toward an open-access order. First, all states start off as closed-access orders that solve the problem of violence through rent creation and allocation.[182] Using

---

[181] Section 2.3 is derived, in part, from an article published in *Africa Today* (2022) © Indiana University Press, available at: DOI:10.2979/africatoday.68.3.04.
[182] Cox, North, and Weingast. "The Violence Trap."

personalized patronage networks, closed-access orders allocate political and economic access as rents to political factions demonstrating the potential to inflict violence.[183] A state that has solved the problem of violence without resorting to rent creation in this manner is an open-access order. Closed-access orders, also known as natural states, can be considered to have different stages, with each higher stage indicating increased developmental progress. Accordingly, this framework presents three stages through which natural states or closed-access orders transition before developing into open-access orders: (i) fragile state, where the only organization is the state, and very little differentiation and specialization exists in the economy; (ii) basic natural state, which features rules for secession, specialization (of tax collection, religious, and economic functions), and dominance of state-run enterprises; and (iii) a mature natural state, which features sophisticated independent enterprises, along with basic private and contract law, but with barriers to access through rent creation and periodic coalition readjustments.[184]

States move along these levels of a natural state toward an open-access order through a three-step process involving (i) standardization of elite privileges as "rule of law for elites," (ii) consensus-based institutionalization of a perpetual state, and (iii) consolidation of political-military control.[185] The degree to which the state monopolizes political-economic access to create rents determines the extent to which the conditions for transition—impersonality, perpetuity, and

---

[183] North, Wallis, and Weingast, *Violence and Social Orders*; Carugati, Ober, and Weingast, "Is Development Uniquely Modern?"
[184] Carugati, Ober, and Weingast, "Is Development Uniquely Modern?"; North, Wallis, and Weingast, *Violence and Social Orders*; Cox, North, and Weingast. "The Violence Trap"; Weingast, "Resistant to the Rule-of-Law."
[185] Cox, North, and Weingast. "The Violence Trap"; North, Wallis, and Weingast, *Violence and Social Orders*, 10.

inclusivity—are impeded, and development is incrementally achieved through the three-step process outlined above.[186]

Analysis of Ethiopia's historical political transitions reveals development transitions toward a mature natural state under Emperor Haile Selassie and regression towards a fragile state after the 1974 Dergue Revolution. With the second revolution of 1991, the EPRDF's new regime reconsolidated a basic natural state, maintaining a closed access order excluding competing elites by monopolizing rents through ethnic patronage. The legacies of these historical transitions may thus illuminate institutional mechanisms impeding development in present-day Ethiopia. The following section will use the violence trap framework to examine transitions under Emperor Haile Selassie.

2.3.1 Haile Selassie's Ethiopia: At the Doorstep of a Mature Natural State

Ethiopia's development transitions from 1930 to 1974, under Emperor Haile Selassie, reveal a country that incrementally met the doorstep conditions for addressing the violence trap through institutional means. Although the emperor remained autocratic in managing the higher rungs of administrative decision-making, he nonetheless laid the foundation for a modern, bureaucratic state with functional institutions. By all accounts, he enacted major political and economic reforms in Ethiopia that were considered unthinkable by previous Solomonic monarchs, propelling the Ethiopian Empire into the modern era.[187] An analytic narratives approach allows for a critical and objective analysis of the transitions under the last Solomonic monarch, potentially revealing how these transitions were institutionally reversed after the 1974 revolution.

---

[186] North, Wallis, and Weingast, *Violence and Social Orders*.
[187] Clapham, "Imperial Leadership in Ethiopia"; Vestal, *Lion of Judah.*

Ethiopia's institutional transitions under Emperor Haile Selassie incrementally addressed the conditions for transition from a closed-access order to an open-access order. More specifically, Haile Selassie inherited a basic natural state and transformed it into a mature natural state. Both basic and mature natural states function as closed-access orders that create and allocate rents to create an order based on patronage systems; however, these systems differ in the levels of perpetuity, impersonality, and inclusivity represented within the patronage networks.

Ethiopia before Haile Selassie can be loosely classified as a basic natural state. Dating back to the overthrow of the Zagwe king in 1270, it was dominated by land-owning nobles and patronage systems reliant on the person of the emperor. Contractual commitments were personalized, rather than codified. Provincial kings could call up their own armies, and the country had no standing army. Thus, there was no basis for centrally consolidating political-military control. These conditions made it difficult to create a perpetual state, although the empire was by no means a fragile state.

However, the Ethiopian empire's institutional evolutions leading up to the modern era had already begun to orient the system toward higher levels of perpetuity and inclusivity in some important ways. No codes existed for secession, but the empire was run as a *de facto* federation with the emperor ruling as *king of kings*, and each province was self-administered through a local king.[188] A long-held balance of power between church and state helped specialize religious and societal functions. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church played two roles: as a perpetual institution that allowed social mobility through various administrative posts and educational training, and as a

---

[188] Gamst, "Peasantries and Elites"; Clapham, *Horn of Africa*.

powerful check on abuses by the monarch.[189] No Ethiopian monarch could rule without the genuine blessing of the Ethiopian Church. Indeed, the Church forced at least two Ethiopian emperors to abdicate the throne: first in 1630 with Susenyos I, and then in 1916 with Lij Eyassu.[190] This shows that the Church manifested specialized levels of independent administrative functioning.

The Church was not the only institution through which the Ethiopian Empire successfully administered a basic natural state. In the late nineteenth century, Emperor Menelik embarked on an ambitious institutional bureaucratization project, providing the framework for Haile Selassie's more comprehensive bureaucratic reforms in the later modern era.[191] Haile Selassie inherited an empire that functioned as a basic natural state. It exhibited specialized patronage networks amounting to a federation of kings, with a king of kings at the center, and with specialized rules for tax collection, social hierarchy, and religious functioning. It was still very far from institutionalizing an open-access order; however, it allowed for the emergence of broad-based elite groups and coalitions through informal patronage networks. Indeed, as one of the interview participants for this study notes, "there were more intra-elite bargains and negotiations, through traditional institutions such as marriage, under the imperial regimes of Haile Selassie and Menelik than there are now."[192] These informal patronage links, especially important in co-opting new groups of elites during Menelik's southern expansion and Haile Selassie's centralized

---

[189] Isaac, *Ethiopian Orthodox Täwahïdo Church*; Milkias, "Traditional Institutions and Traditional Elites."
[190] Isaac, *Ethiopian Orthodox Täwahïdo Church*, 139.
[191] Tesfaye, *State and Economic Development*.
[192] Elite Interview Conducted 4 July 2022.

modernization schemes, served as the basis by which perpetuity, impersonality, and inclusivity were incrementally achieved.

Moving beyond such informal links, Haile Selassie enacted institutional regimes that resulted in the empire's near-transition into a mature natural state, taking the three necessary steps: the standardization of elite privileges, creation of a more perpetual state, and consolidation of political-military bureaucracy. Shortly after being crowned, Haile Selassie issued Ethiopia's first constitution, a largely symbolic document, yet significant for its progressive conception of sovereignty and nationhood.[193] He introduced a parliamentary body that would serve an advisory role to the emperor. In 1955, an even more progressive constitution created a lower house of parliament, with members to be elected through universal suffrage, providing an independent judiciary and a free press.[194] Thus, Haile Selassie embarked on a more ambitious bureaucratization project, although patronage networks still characterized these new bureaucracies.[195] Even so, the emperor was determined to reduce the influence of the hereditary elites in the new bureaucracy. To professionalize the military, he instituted a state-of-the-art training facility known as Holeta, with the initial assistance of a Swedish regiment.[196] The Ethiopian military later received more extensive professional training due to the emperor's diplomatic engagements with successive US administrations.

Haile Selassie contributed to perpetual institutionalization of the state by modernizing Ethiopia's education system. Initially, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church guarded its monopoly over

---

[193] Isaac, *Ethiopian Orthodox Täwahïdo Church*, 27.
[194] "Ethiopians to Get the Vote."
[195] Tesfaye, *State and Economic Development*, 83.
[196] Pearce, *Prevail*, 66.

education against royal encroachment, vetoing some of the monarchy's attempts to secularize education administration.[197] However, by co-opting the church in his institutionalization scheme, Haile Selassie avoided its ire: education was modernized, and a newly educated elite came to the fore.[198] The culmination of educational reform was the establishment of Haile Selassie University, with English being the medium of instruction and an abundance of American professors among its faculty.[199] Such efforts did not just increase the empire's levels of political development, but attracted greater economic engagement with the West.

Land-tenure reforms under Haile Selassie, aimed at effecting greater standardization of elite privileges as law. Ethiopia had formerly functioned under a land-tenure system called *Rist*, which gave lords the right to tax peasants but without expropriating their land.[200] A parallel system called *Gult* allowed for granting nonhereditary land titles to members of the church or the military.[201] *Gebbar*, another system, allowed for land ownership, in some cases, by individuals who paid tax for that land.[202] Under Haile Selassie, landowners were gradually granted more protection against expropriation of their land by more powerful nobles or by the emperor himself. In a continuation of a land tenure arrangement put in place by Menelik, military veterans who had distinguished themselves in battle were awarded land over which they could exercise their rights. For better or worse, the imperial government focused on developing large commercial farms, directing up to 61 percent of capital expenditures in agriculture toward these pursuits.[203] However, in pursuing more

---

[197] Milkias, "Traditional Institutions and Traditional Elites," 86.
[198] Ibid, 87.
[199] Colburn, "Tragedy of Ethiopia's Intellectuals."
[200] Kebede, "Decentering of Ethiopia."
[201] Hoben, "Ethiopian Land Reform Policy," 564.
[202] Cohen, "Ethiopia after Haile Selassie," 368.
[203] Lambton, "Approach to Land Reform," 231.

ambitious reforms, Haile Selassie was often thwarted by land-owning nobles in parliament, who fiercely resisted drastic change.[204] The land-tenure reforms did not occur at the pace that the newly modernizing society demanded, and the gradualist approach was a condition that precipitated the socialist revolution.

Nevertheless, Haile Selassie's modest land reforms introduced a measurable degree of social mobility and inclusivity. For instance, an interview participant notes, "my grandfather was a small landowner; he had 40 acres. He leased his land to tenants. Some of them became richer than us."[205] More broadly, the regime's focus on property rights and contracts attracted specialized forms of foreign and domestic investment, much of which was directed toward agriculture. This paved the way for specialized industries, such as textiles and shoe production, although they remained few in number and limited in scale.[206] The establishment of Ethiopian Airlines and the country's first modern agricultural training program at Alemaya University highlighted the increasingly specialized economic climate during this period.[207] Thus, the state's institutional framework featured increasingly sophisticated enterprises, along with codifying basic contract and property laws. As another interview participant explains, it was clear that the monarchy was orienting itself toward supporting capitalist production.[208] In effect, Haile Selassie's Ethiopia incrementally achieved the doorstep transitional conditions of perpetuity and inclusivity through professional bureaucratization and gradual standardization of elite privileges in the economic sector.

---

[204] "Haile Selassie Presses Ethiopian Land Reform."
[205] Elite Interview Conducted 8 June 2022.
[206] Tesfaye, *State and Economic Development*, 47.
[207] Vestal, *Lion of Judah.*
[208] Elite Interview Conducted 7 December 2022.

This codification of elite privileges—a core component of transition in closed-access orders—resulted in notable readjustments in elite coalitions, with three new groups of elites emerging: commercial elites, military elites, and the Ethiopian intelligentsia. The new intelligentsia, in particular, were highly influential, as they aggressively pressured the monarchy to enact additional institutional reforms.[209] They were known as the *Japanizers* for believing hybridized modernization would preserve Ethiopia's cultural capital while enacting a more open societal order.[210] They believed that post–Meiji dynasty Japan benefited from balancing the adoption of a Western curriculum and teachers with the preservation of Japanese and Confucian motifs.[211] They were unable to implement radical reforms, possibly because, unlike post-Meiji Japan, they failed to conceptualize radical reform as a necessary means of preserving the traditional ruling elite.[212] Nevertheless, their influence is evident in the emperor's decision during the second Italian invasion to seek refuge in England and litigate his case at the League of Nations rather than dying at the front in the tradition of Ethiopia's warrior-kings.[213] The emergence of new elites democratized the basis for elite power sharing and political-economic access that had previously been restricted to hereditary lords, the church, and the monarchy.

Haile Selassie's Ethiopia had the markings of a rule-of-law-for-elites system, which would guarantee a perpetual state and increase consolidation of political-military control. Such a system alleviates the risk of the violence trap and ensures continuity and predictability. Furthermore, Haile Selassie propelled Ethiopia toward more open access through a series of reforms, including

---

[209] Wolde Giorgis, "Ethiopian Modernity and Modernism."
[210] Strang, *Collision of Empires,* 233; Zewde, *Pioneers of Change*.
[211] Kebede, "Decentering of Ethiopia," 830.
[212] Kebede, "Japan and Ethiopia."
[213] Pearce, *Prevail*, 304-307.

specialized economic ventures, two modern constitutions, a bicameral parliament, the professional bureaucratization of administrative units, and standardization of elite privileges. These changes resulted in the transition to a mature natural state, as the doorstep conditions for transition to an open-access order—perpetuity and inclusivity—were incrementally achieved.

Two main impediments prevented Ethiopia from transitioning into an open-access order: first, the benefits of economic specialization were restricted to elites, particularly those residing in cities and the northern territory; second, the final doorstep condition for transition, impersonality, could never be achieved while Haile Selassie maintained autocratic control of the state. Although lower-level bureaucracies functioned independently and efficiently, the emperor maintained autocratic control at the higher levels, particularly in decision-making. Most significantly, the emperor never signaled a clear succession plan that would have bolstered the empire's perpetuity. Thus, despite its transition to the doorsteps of a mature natural state, Ethiopia remained a closed-access order. Haile Selassie contributed to his own downfall and the overthrow of the institutions he had created by refusing to let them function in his absence. These transitions will be explored in the next section.

2.3.2 Violent Revolutions and Socialist Legacies: The Dergue and the TPLF

By the time of the socialist revolution in 1974, Ethiopia was still a closed-access order that relied on the ruling elite's monopolization of rents. The emperor remained incapable of enacting reforms that would threaten his patronage with landowning nobles.[214] Most detrimentally, he insisted on maintaining autocratic control over administrative decision-making at the higher levels

---

[214] Cohen, Goldsmith, and Mellor, "Ethiopian Land Reform," 8; Teferra, *A Military Oligarchy*, 48

of government.[215] This made it impossible to achieve impersonality within Ethiopia's political order—a key requirement for transition to an open-access order. Finally, the pace of reform did not catch up with the pace of social transformation, illustrating the maxim that "ruling monarchical systems bent on modernization sow the seeds of their own destruction."[216] Specifically, a large portion of Ethiopia's educated elite grew enamored by the global currents of socialist ideology in the 1970s. The culmination of these political currents was the revolution of 1974, precipitated by an opportunistic alliance between the socialist intelligentsia and some lower-level military officers in the Imperial Army.

The revolution served as an institutional lapse, presenting the new government with the opportunity to enact a more stable equilibrium. A blueprint for the new regime had already been laid out with a prior attempted coup in 1960, which had sought to enthrone Haile Selassie's son, Crown Prince Asfa Wossen, as a symbolic constitutional monarch. After deposing Haile Selassie, the Dergue similarly promised to retain the monarchy for symbolic purposes; at any rate, the crown prince was widely considered ineffectual. Indeed, many stakeholders believed that the Dergue would temper its ideological impulses and pursue progressive reforms, but the Dergue quickly transformed itself into a military dictatorship.[217] The socialist intelligentsia that advised the military government considered the Ethiopian Empire, somewhat problematically, as a simple feudal arrangement, an *ancien régime* of sorts. Unlike the *Japanizers*, the new socialist elites conceptualized modernization as the antithesis of traditional culture.[218] Rather than working

---

[215] Levine, "Haile Selassie's Ethiopia."
[216] Koehn, "Prospects for Further Change," 9.
[217] Vestal, *Lion of Judah*.
[218] Kebede, "Decentering of Ethiopia," 826–27.

through existing institutions to maintain the order of the empire, the Dergue grew increasingly determined to upend all vestiges of the traditional elite.

The revolution of 1974 produced one of the bloodiest political transitions in modern history. Although unmarked graves and silent political assassinations made it hard to keep an accurate death toll, civilian casualties of the so-called Red Terror campaign likely numbered in the hundreds of thousands. Political assassinations and arrests were rampant, and few members of the former aristocracy would survive. Indeed, members of the former royal family, including Haile Selassie, were among the first to be executed. The Dergue destroyed any chance of institutional continuity, abolishing parliament and the constitution and setting up a centralized party-state politburo.[219] Thus, the farthest-reaching consequence of the Dergue's obsession with power and ideology was the abolition of Ethiopia's budding institutions.

The effect of the Dergue's policies on existing institutional arrangements made standardization of elite privileges, state perpetuity, or political-military consolidation difficult to achieve. Instead, the regime reoriented Ethiopia's institutions toward greater extraction and reverted the country toward a fragile-state order, a system at the primitive stages of political development. It is characterized by state ownership of all enterprise, severe barriers to access, and lack of reliable political rules.[220] In particular, three of the Dergue's policy orientations were responsible for instituting a fragile state: the militarization of politics, the nationalization of land, and the devaluation of cultural capital.

---

[219] Marcus, *History of Ethiopia*.
[220] Weingast, "Resistant to the Rule-of-Law."

The Dergue's militarization of politics increased elite fragmentation, diminishing the perpetuity of the state. When the regime came to power, it exploited the Ethiopian military to form a military government reliant on heavy-handed repression.[221] Its military apparatus had three divisions: the patriotic militia, the police force, and the armored forces.[222] Thus, the military, the civilian police, and the political leadership were not clearly differentiated. The Dergue sought to monopolize political and economic power through a single-party-military-state regime. With violence, it resorted to repressing its political foes, including competing socialist elites. An internal conflict within its military apparatus even resulted in the purging of intellectuals deemed too close to the aristocracy, leaving the socialist regime without a clear intellectual compass.[223] The Dergue resisted demilitarizing its political structure, instead devising a military solution to every political problem.[224] Ironically, this resulted not just in elite fragmentation and loss of state perpetuity, but also in the regime's inability to monopolize the use of force through political-military consolidation. The attempt to monopolize the political sphere through revolutionary socialism did away with all vestiges of institutional professionalism and bureaucracy, contributing to Ethiopia's reversal toward a fragile-state order.

The Dergue's second consequential policy orientation concerned the issue of land tenure. Responding to populist slogans that championed 'land to the tiller' during Haile Selassie's regime, the Dergue adopted land reform as a policy platform for political engagement. First, it eliminated the concept of private land ownership: it nationalized all private lands without compensation,

---

[221] Berhe, "Tigray People's Liberation Front," 574.
[222] "Ethiopian Military Consolidates Rule."
[223] Ibid, 27-28.
[224] Markakis, "Nationalities and the State," 125–26.

expropriated commercial farms and private industries, and destabilized political patronage networks in the rural areas.[225] It redistributed rural land to working peasants as it deemed appropriate, rather than through local consultation.[226] The ideological foundations of the Dergue's land-reform program threatened to undo the pillars of local political order.

Centralized redistribution programs for implementing land reform had practical shortcomings. First, nationalization bars peasants from access to collateral for loans and investments. Second, effective land-tenure reform codifies existing social contracts and informal arrangements into law, rather than centralizing land distribution through state organs.[227] Nevertheless, the Dergue considered nationalization a convenient ideological tool. Furthermore, when the Dergue was faced with rebellion on multiple fronts, it forced the peasants to feed and sustain its army.[228] Its rural initiatives may have symbolically dismantled "the material foundations of the old order;"[229] in reality, they served to demoralize peasants, doling out modernity without achieving actual development.[230]

The Dergue's nationalization campaign mostly reflected institutional frameworks that undermined perpetuity and inclusivity. The Dergue introduced a national mobilization campaign (*zemecha*), took control of large agricultural holdings, and created peasants' associations to manage small farms.[231] The *zemecha* campaigns sent high school students on rural intervention missions to politicize peasants and participate in development initiatives, such as digging wells;

---

[225] Cohen, Goldsmith, and Mellor, "Ethiopian Land Reform."
[226] Markakis, "Nationalities and the State," 122.
[227] De Soto, *Mystery of Capital*, 147–51.
[228] Colburn, "Tragedy of Ethiopia's Intellectuals," 128.
[229] Markakis, "Nationalities and the State," 122.
[230] Clemens and Demombynes 2010, 5–6.
[231] Wood, "Rural Development and National Integration," 524.

however, the peasants did not grasp the meaning of the campaigns, and many were sympathetic to the students who had been forced to travel far from home and abandon their education. Moreover, the peasants' political agitation sometimes resulted in their disenchantment with the regime and support of rival socialist elites—a dynamic that led the Dergue to abandon the *zemecha* program after eighteen months.[232] The *zemecha* was a pillar of the Dergue's political economy, and the regime clearly intended to establish a longer-sustained program. Instead, the program's abandonment resulted in loss of state perpetuity, as a campaign that mobilized up to 60,000 students was abandoned and not replaced.

Under the Dergue, many of the commercial farms that had thrived in the imperial era drastically reduced their output. The peasant farm holdings were implemented hastily, resulting in highly inefficient production in smaller farms.[233] Thus, the institutional framework within which the Dergue implemented its rural intervention schemes resulted in tremendous losses in economic specialization and unpredictable policy regimes. It was not just the Dergue's agricultural policies that contributed to decreased economic specialization and state perpetuity: in urban areas, the nationalization of private industries resulted in an increase in the number of firms but significantly reduced efficiency.[234] Because of the loss of private and foreign investment, there was likely no incentive for specialization of industry. A new society would emerge in Ethiopia, one where "people demanded things from the government instead of creating wealth."[235] Thus, patronage emerged as a means by which the regime would try to buy legitimacy; rents were no longer just a

---

[232] Teferra, *A Military Oligarchy*, 149–52.
[233] Wood, "Rural Development and National Integration," 537.
[234] Tesfaye, *State and Economic Development*.
[235] Elite Interview Conducted 20 July 2022.

mechanism to control violence from other elites but the very means by which the regime would establish its fragile control over the populace.

Finally, the Dergue contributed to the decline in state perpetuity and impersonality by adopting an externalized socialist ethic that interrupted the progression of institutional cultures. This phenomenon was most evident in educational institutions, which, under the emperor, had become a social ladder for broadening nonhereditary access to elite privileges. Many of the emperor's close advisors, members of the newly educated elite, had come from poor and humble backgrounds. Haile Selassie University and Alemaya University served as institutional avenues for broadening access to higher education, and the church was entrusted with expanding modern education to the peasants. The Dergue initiated a new era in education policy; with successive regimes thereafter, the "Ministry of Education was used for socializing citizens into some form of political identity or ideology."[236] Under the Dergue, Haile Selassie University, later renamed Addis Ababa University, became a hotbed for socialist ideology.[237] The university's culture of intellectual excellence was replaced by academic apathy, as university graduates were assigned to administrative appointments with little regard for academic performance.[238] The Dergue's fragile state introduced a new criterion, ideology, for distributing administrative posts as rents. A system of meritocracy and access in higher education was replaced with a system aimed at minting loyal party cadres. These processes negatively affected impersonality, perpetuity, and inclusivity, contributing in no small part to the construction of the Dergue's fragile state.

---

[236] Elite Interview Conducted 5 July 2022.
[237] Colburn, "Tragedy of Ethiopia's Intellectuals," 136.
[238] Colburn, "Tragedy of Ethiopia's Intellectuals," 138–41.

The Dergue's militarization of politics was likely the most important factor in constructing a fragile state. Specifically, the socialist imperative to eliminate all elite groups except the party-state did not really result in the elimination of elites: rather, violent urban warfare erupted for two reasons. First, many elites never relied on state patronage, since the Dergue was not intent on creating even a nominal political space outside the military-party-state. Second, many elites, such as the EPRP, were purists who occupied the same far-left ideological body politic as the Dergue.[239] In some cases, some of the competing leftist elites had ideological disagreements. The Dergue could not gain a consensus on the nature of the Ethiopian state; furthermore, its militarization of politics prevented political-military consolidation, one of the conditions for progressing from a fragile to a more basic natural state. Eventually, the excessive monopolization of the political space, coupled with an inability to consolidate state control, led to more organized rebel movements in rural areas, which came to take on ethnic dimensions.

In 1991, the Dergue, because it had only a tentative hold on a weak state, succumbed to rebel opposition in a revolution led by the TPLF, an ethnic-based rebel group.[240] The Dergue tried to carve a distinct foreign policy, aligning itself with Cuba, supporting John Garang's rebellion in Sudan (Chapter 4), and even defeating an irredentist war launched by Siad Barre's Somalia. Internally, however, the Dergue's militarization of politics proved untenable amidst increasing urban warfare, and its economic programs drove many peasants into rebellion. Officially, the EPRDF was designated the new ruling party; it was a coalition that included the TPLF and three other ethnic-based parties, including the Amhara National Democratic Movement (ANDM) and

---

[239] Tadesse, *The Generation.*
[240] Berhe, "Tigray People's Liberation Front," 569.

the Oromo People's Democratic Organization (OPDO). The TPLF maintained that the basis of this new coalition was to be found in the revolutionary struggle against the Dergue; however, the TPLF had helped form each of the EPRDF member parties, often staffing their ranks with prisoners of war.[241] It was clear that the TPLF constituted the dominant ruling elite within the EPRDF.

The TPLF's ideology was closely aligned with the ideology of other socialist elites, but it was directed more toward contesting ethnic rather than class injustice. Although the young intellectuals in the inner circle of the TPLF were well-versed in Marxist political theory, their exploitation of the plight of Tigrayan peasants had contributed much to their success at ethnic organizing.[242] Tigrayan ethnonationalism was not a new phenomenon. Tigrayan opposition against alleged Shewa dominance under Haile Selassie had already culminated in the so-called Woyanne rebellion of 1943, when ethnonationalists convinced a few wealthy Tigrayan landowners to turn against the Solomonic monarchy,[243] but consolidated political-military control swiftly ended the rebellion. The emperor subsequently created new patronage networks through royal intermarriages and administrative appointments to forestall further rebellion in Tigray. By contrast, the Dergue's political program fomented conditions for the re-emergence of Tigrayan ethnonationalists, this time culminating in the ascendance of far-left Tigrayan elites to the helm of power.

The rise of the TPLF-EPRDF regime presented yet another institutional lapse in Ethiopia, setting the stage for one of the most dramatic transitions. The new regime sought to monopolize rents while drastically reconfiguring the institutional landscape. Although it was deeply rooted in Albanian Marxism, the TPLF publicly abandoned socialism when its EPRDF coalition took

---

[241] Chanie, "Ethiopia's post-1991 Decentralisation," 362.
[242] Berhe, "Tigray People's Liberation Front."
[243] Ibid, 584–85.

control of Ethiopia, partly reflecting the waning popularity of socialism; however, it concocted an ethnic federal system, often dubbed the Ethiopian experiment by outsiders and revolutionary democracy by the regime itself.[244] This ideology, characterized by far-left authoritarianism and ethnic nationalism, established a stabler political order in the short term, but it instituted a rent-based order reliant on ethnicity.

The TPLF-EPRDF built a more sophisticated patronage network but had no intention of sharing political or economic power with other elites. The regime reconstituted Ethiopia's institutions more effectively than the Dergue, but in a manner that fundamentally changed the nature of the state. The Dergue had constructed Ethiopia as a third-world state, but the TPLF "Sovietized and Africanized Ethiopia."[245] This is not to say that Ethiopia had not been a part of Africa, but that its institutions had long evaded the postcolonial markers of other African states, specifically the proliferation of contentious ethnic politics. In other words, whereas the Dergue decimated the institutional sources of social cohesion and cultural capital that anchored Ethiopia's long history of statehood, akin to the institutional exploitation of the third world, the TPLF sought to rewrite the country's history completely, in sharply ideological terms, as colonial powers did in Africa.

The process of institutional Sovietization and Africanization was set in motion through a constitution that created a federation between the central government and nine new ethnoregional states. The preamble to the new constitution begins, "We, the Nations, Nationalities and Peoples of Ethiopia, . . . in full and free exercise of our right to self-determination," thus establishing an

---

[244] Barata, "Ethiopia's 'Third Way' to Governance," 65–66
[245] Mamdani, "Ethiopia's Ethnic Federalism."

ethnic basis for Ethiopia's federal structure. As one interview participant for this study explains, "the FDRE constitution freezes the concept of ethnicity. It also institutionalizes and territorializes ethnicity. The Constitution only recognizes people through their ethnicity, in my view".[246] In other words, the FDRE constitution incentivized an institutional equilibrium that would privilege an ethnic basis for rents and patronage.

Whether the TPLF's goal in instituting this system was purely driven by patronage, or whether there were higher-order goals involved is important to consider. The goal of the new constitutional arrangement, promulgated in 1995, was to provide ethnically defined territorial units for self-governance.[247] Essentially, then, the new political paradigm may be considered an attempt to deal more thoughtfully with the problem of diversity. More problematic was the TPLF-EPRDF's presupposition of conscious Amhara subjugation of other ethnic groups in Ethiopia during previous regimes (the Walleligne thesis, examined in previous sections). A former senior member of the TPLF politburo admitted that the Amhara subjugation thesis was more of a propaganda ploy than a reality, as few Amharas had been beneficiaries of previous regimes.[248] Some interview participants noted that Ethiopia's imperial statecraft in Ethiopia did indeed privilege the proliferation of some cultures at the expense of others. For instance, an interviewee who grew up in an Oromo-speaking Muslim town witnessed "linguistic and cultural dominance with Amharic-speaking judges and administrators as well as in education, rather than instruction in native mother tongue."[249] Another notes that the FDRE constitution responded to a legitimate grievance, giving

---

[246] Elite Interview Conducted 15 June 2022.
[247] Ayele and Fessha, "Constitutional Status of Local Government," 92.
[248] Berhe, "Tigray People's Liberation Front," 573.
[249] Elite Interview Conducted 15 June 2022.

voice to marginalized groups in political discourse.[250] Thus, on the one hand, the TPLF's articulation of Ethiopia's problems seemed, at least in part, to respond to genuine impediments to greater inclusivity.

On the other hand, all interview participants in this study, including those sympathetic to the constitution's progressive aspirations, noted that the document's language and some of the included provisions represented an extreme response to a genuine social problem. The challenge of managing diversity could have been addressed through strategic revisions of education and legal-administrative policy, whereas the TPLF-EPRDF's new program sought to restructure the entire polity. One interview participant explains that the constitution "frames ethnicity as the only problem in the country's political order, taking a dogmatic approach to ethnicity, [and making] ethnicity a primary, exclusive political identity."[251] Indeed, some challenge the assertion that Ethiopia's problems were ethnic-based *per se*, focusing instead on class identity and the fault lines of modernization. One participant explains, "I don't subscribe to the view that people were forced to speak Amharic. However, the process of modern nation-building, led by Amharic and Orthodox Christianity, led to political exclusion."[252] Many other participants agreed with this class-based economic analysis, including one who noted, "past Ethiopian society privileged certain groups of people because it was beneficial to educated groups who happened to speak Amharic. This was a class issue that became an identity issue."[253] In sum, while many of the patronage networks of the imperial era seemed to privilege northern and urban elites, the TPLF's ethnicized historiography,

---

[250] Elite Interview Conducted 20 July 2022.
[251] Elite Interview Conducted 4 July 2022.
[252] Elite Interview Conducted 15 June 2022.
[253] Elite Interview Conducted 20 July 2022.

far from introducing a progressive body politic, likely served a more instrumental role in cementing a new class of ethnic elites.

The new Ethiopian order created an entirely different set of adverse incentives, guiding bounded rational elite decisions and highly sub-optimal social outcomes. For instance, article 39 of the FDRE constitution granted nations the right to secede from the federation. This is often considered the most controversial provision of the new constitution. A prominent Africanist criticized it, stating, "no constitutional lawyer or commentator can be found who would endorse this principle. . . . Ethiopia is special, but not so special that such a principle is needed".[254] This is due to the article's institutionalization of the adverse incentives of anarchical international politics to Ethiopia's domestic realm. As an interviewee participant notes, one of the constitution's main outcomes was that "neighboring regions have everlasting territorial claims against each other."[255] The emergence of military-style ethnoregional special forces, a dynamic explored later in more detail, is a clear manifestation of these adverse incentives. In effect, the FDRE constitution continues to incentivize both separatism and irredentism, undermining state perpetuity in contemporary Ethiopia.

The FDRE constitution's treatment of minorities living in ethnic regions also resulted in other unintended consequences. On the one hand, according to Article 8, specific ethnic groups were deemed owners of each given regional state, relegating outgroup ethnic groups to second-class status. On the other hand, the practical institutionalization of ethnic federalism resulted in ethnic regions where significant minorities of other ethnic groups were prevalent.[256] The imposition of

---

[254] Abbink, "Ethnicity and Constitutionalism," 171.
[255] Elite Interview Conducted 15 June 2022.
[256] Abbink, "Ethnicity and Constitutionalism," 163.

ethnic identity was particularly problematic in urbanized localities such as Shashemene, Jimma, Hawassa, and Assela, where majority ethnic groups took advantage of the new arrangement to assert their dominance over a largely urbanized and Amharic-speaking populace, whose members were unlikely to return to their ethnic place of origin.[257] As such, as one interviewee attests, the law provides "no structural mechanisms for protecting minority rights at the regional level."[258] Another interviewee adds, even "the government can't protect them."[259] In many ways, then, the institutionalization of ethnic politics created an ethnic-based system for monopolizing and allocating rents and creating patronage networks based on co-ethnicity.

Ethiopia's ethnic federalism allowed the TPLF-EPRDF to maintain a close-knit rents-based network with trusted clients in peripheral regions, while the clients themselves used co-ethnicity and party membership benefits to create patronage networks within their regional states. The new patronage networks were administered centrally by the party-state, which, in exchange for loyal clientelism, provided regional parties with discretion over regional finances, protection in case of local political fallout, and resources for social and agricultural support.[260] Thus, while the stated purpose for ethnic federalism was decentralized governance, in practice, it amounted to a patronage system based on ethnic and party ties. As one interviewee notes, "on most relevant policy issues, the government was still very centralized through the unequal coalition of the EPRDF. Decisions were made within the party, not the parliament, so only 4 of 9 regions participated, and the smallest of these, the TPLF, had the same number of votes as others".[261] For

[257] Ibid, 172.
[258] Elite Interview Conducted 15 June 2022.
[259] Elite Interview Conducted 20 July 2022.
[260] Chanie, "Ethiopia's post-1991 Decentralisation".
[261] Elite Interview Conducted 20 July 2022.

this reason, regional administrative bodies were almost entirely political and rarely met legal and constitutional requirements.[262] Still, this arrangement was far more sophisticated than the fragile-state regime imposed by the Dergue; it likely helped Ethiopia transition from a fragile state back to a basic natural state.

A basic natural state may feature some specialization of socioeconomic activity, a prevalence of state-run enterprises, and rules for secession, but it requires continued impersonality, inclusivity, and perpetuity. The TPLF-EPRDF often undermined impersonality and perpetuity by refusing to allow institutional patronage networks to function autonomously. In effect, ethnic regions did not fully enjoy the freedoms of self-determination that the constitution ostensibly grants. For instance, in Benshangul Gumuz, the TPLF intervened politically in a dispute between ethnopolitical groups, creating a new ethnic party, appointing an affiliate as head of the region and party, and continuing to divide and rule by playing the role of arbitrator among opposing factions.[263] Similarly, in Dawro, the TPLF quickly coopted the political program of a new local movement, created a parallel ethnopolitical organization, pushed out the grassroots movement, and installed its own affiliate as the regional head.[264] The TPLF attempted similar responses to ethnic movements seeking self-administration in Wolaita, only to be met with fierce resistance.[265] These decisions were often rendered through highly personalized networks. The TPLF's commitment to empowering marginalized ethnic groups was strictly rhetorical. The party-state was too paranoid to allow

[262] Ayele and Fessha, "Constitutional Status of Local Government," 104.
[263] Chanie, "Ethiopia's post-1991 Decentralisation," 365.
[264] Barata, "Ethiopia's 'Third Way' to Governance," 70.
[265] Ibid, 71.

legitimate self-governance to even the smallest ethnic groups; Benshangul and Wolaita each constitute less than 3 percent of the country's population.

The TPLF-EPDRF's platform of revolutionary democracy also entailed firm barriers to economic access. For instance, article 40 of the new constitution affirmed state ownership of all Ethiopian land, vesting land rights in "the State and in the peoples of Ethiopia," rather than individuals, and prohibiting "sale or other means of exchange." By implication, land could be leased to individuals and groups only by the government, providing the party-state with yet another resource for rent creation. The TPLF-EPRDF also created barriers to economic access through state-owned corporations or parastatals. As of 2007, the total investment capital of TPLF-owned parastatals was roughly $430 million, compared to a total of $64 million for parastatals owned by all three other members of the EPRDF coalition combined.[266] As a well-known business leader who participated in this study notes,

> *Party-based businesses started flourishing and competing with private enterprise, which was small and lacked the party's coordination, access to finance, and bureaucratic support ... If you wanted to do business, the first thing you were asked was not what you have, but, ethnically, who you are.*[267]

Thus, ethnicity and party, in tandem, remained the primary arbiters of economic rents. Meanwhile, the TPLF-owned parastatals, many of which were organized under the Endowment Fund for the Rehabilitation of Tigray (EFFORT), created a patrimonial economic network across a range of industries, from textiles to large-scale manufacturing.[268] As a result, the TPLF's domination within the EPRDF political coalition extended into the economic arena, making it difficult to envisage the emergence of an economic elite separate from the ruling elite.

---

[266] Chanie, "Ethiopia's post-1991 Decentralisation," 363.
[267] Elite Interview Conducted 20 July 2022.
[268] Weis, "Vanguard Capitalism."

The TPLF monopolized revenue-collection authority and executed its public investment schemes through secretive, centralized decision-making processes. For instance, federal-government-to-region fiscal transfers were allocated *ad hoc* until 1996, and even after the government publicized a formulaic approach, no significant variation in fiscal allocation occurred.[269] Contracts, bids, and strategies for infrastructure investments could not be discussed openly. The Metals and Engineering Corporation (MetEC), a new military-industrial conglomerate, was summarily awarded contracts for large state infrastructure projects. These mechanisms of rent creation and allocation allowed the TPLF-EPRDF's near-monopolistic control of the country's political economy and allowed it to manage the potential for violence through efficient patronage networks. Again, these policies created far more perpetuity than what had existed under the Dergue, but the exclusionary tendencies of the new ruling elite precluded any real progress that could encompass a broader section of elites.

In short, institutional reforms undertaken by the TPLF had two main goals: the nominal recognition of group rights, likely for instrumentalist reasons, and state domination of a quasi-capitalist economy. The first goal was undermined by the party-state's insistence on intervening in the affairs of ethnonational regions, but in effect, institutionalizing ethnic politics backfired to increase ethnic tension; furthermore, the centralization created a newly dominant ethnic ruling elite. The second institutional goal resulted in inconsistent and ideologically driven policy choices.

It is also important to consider how this new institutional equilibrium would drive the decision-making and preferences of other elite stakeholders. As can be recalled from Chapter 1, elite stakeholders react in boundedly rational ways to incentives presented by new institutional orders.

---

[269] Chanie, "Ethiopia's post-1991 Decentralisation," 367–68.

The summation of all these elite decisions then results in new equilibria, but neither the stability nor the socially optimal basis of these new equilibria is guaranteed. Indeed, in this case, the new equilibrium proved neither stable nor socially optimal. First, although it provided for a measure of stability for nearly three decades, it reconfigured social relations in ways that exacerbated rather than ameliorating the violence trap. Second, predictably, violence, not social progress, was the eventual outcome of these reconfigurations. A few examples of these boundedly rational responses are worth noting here before moving on to the current institutional transitions in Ethiopia.

Three boundedly rational responses can be traced to the new constitutional order of the FDRE, each of which will be illustrated briefly here: the proliferation of fundamentalist ethnic parties, the ethnicization and nationalization of local issues, and build-up of violence capabilities by elite contenders. In line with expectations of the violence trap framework, the interview data for this study confirms that all three of these responses were observed in the Ethiopian case.

First, because elites and elite aspirants in murky institutional contexts use *rules of thumb* to make decisions under bounded rationality, the FDRE constitution directly resulted in increased ethnic mobilization. One interviewee notes, the constitution "rewards political mobilization along ethnic lines," explaining that "all ethnic groups felt they had to create ethnic parties."[270] Another explains, "political parties are organized along ethnic lines, though nowhere in the constitution does it say this. It is a logical outcome … None of the supporters know what the economic or social policies of parties are."[271] This shows that using ethnic identity as rules of thumb for guiding

[270] Elite Interview Conducted 4 July 2022.
[271] Elite Interview Conducted 15 June 2022.

boundedly rational decision-making and group behavior went beyond simply incentivizing ethnic mobilization; indeed, "fundamentalism was the main unintended consequence."[272]

Second, and along these lines, ethnic fundamentalism, bolstered by ethnic parties, made it impossible to address issues at the most local and, thereby, efficient level. Instead, small disputes could become national or ethnic disputes. For example, "any administrative question can be framed in ethnic terms, which is why the Addis Ababa Master Plan, which was a farmer's issue, became an entire Oromo issue."[273] This incident, which will be explored further in the final section below, was one of the antecedents of the most recent institutional transition that replaced the TPLF-EPRDF with Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's Prosperity Party. Nationalization of small, local issues can also be seen in border disputes:

> *"a dispute over grazing lands in the Afar-Somali border could have been locally mediated traditionally. Instead, it involved the special forces of the two regions. Ataye is also another flashpoint between Amhara and Oromo pastoralists, which could be solved through traditional means, and instead involves ethnic militias.*[274]

Such conflicts were common in the 27 years of rule by the TPLF-EPRDF. However, the party-state was able to contain them through a strict party discipline that was often referred to as 'democratic centralism.' As I shall show below, the gradual weakening of this tradition was another reason for the fall of the TPLF.

Third, and specifically relating to the point above about ethnic militias, bounded rationality also demanded that mobilized groups move beyond attaining the ability to articulate their interests politically, and toward attaining organized violence capability. This is why by the end of the

---

[272] Elite Interview Conducted 20 July 2022.
[273] Elite Interview Conducted 4 July 2022.
[274] Elite Interview Conducted 15 June 2022.

TPLF's rule in 2018, every region had developed a regional militia or special force (called *Liyu Police*). Provisions for such violent capability were not specified in the constitution; again, this was a boundedly rational response to the prevailing order. Indeed, and perhaps more worryingly, "if the constitution is followed to the letter, then the special forces may at any point refuse to follow the central government."[275] These structural dynamics would lay the foundation for the eventual confrontation of the TPLF and Prosperity in the Tigray War, after the TPLF was ejected from the central government in 2018. This conflict will also be briefly discussed in the final section below. Here, though, it is important to reassert that these three boundedly rational outcomes served as proverbial time bombs threatening to undo the TPLF-EPRDF's basic natural state.

Under the violence trap framework, prospects for political development in basic natural states rely on standardizing the rule of law for elites, establishing state perpetuity, and consolidating political-military control. The TPLF-EPRDF's institution of ethnic federalism and rules for secession did standardize some elite privileges as law, one of the conditions for transition, and the regime-maintained monopoly over power through patronage-based political-military consolidation; however, many of the patronage networks were heavily personalized, and the party-state geared both ideology and practice toward maintaining a monopoly over political and economic access. The party-state often undermined its own institutions by intervening in the functioning of ethnoregional states. Most notably, it never conducted freely contested elections, never allowed for the emergence of elite groups outside the ruling coalition, and never demonstrated interest in standardizing the privileges of its own coalition partners. Thus, although the EPRDF transitioned the Dergue's fragile state into a basic natural state, revolutionary

[275] Elite Interview Conducted 15 June 2022.

democracy and ethnic patronage precluded transition to an open-access order. Rather, as newly empowered elites continued to engage in boundedly rational responses to the new order, such as those outlined above, the TPLF's centralized control would gradually be weakened until it was no longer tenable.

2.4 Current Institutional Transitions and Ethiopia's Future Prospects

The previous section showed how institutional transitions under successive Ethiopian regimes affected political development in Ethiopia. After the socialist revolution of 1974, the Dergue reversed decades of progress, remaking Emperor Haile Selassie's mature natural state into a fragile state. After 1991, the TPLF-EPRDF instituted a new ethnic basis for elite patronage, retaining many regressive institutional remnants from socialist Ethiopia. Most consequential in this regard was the TPLF's refusal, as the ruling elite, to standardize elite privileges and share power with other elite members of the ruling coalition. The TPLF's dominance within the EPRDF coalition and its monopolization of rents meant that its rent-based interactions with the other ethnic-based parties within the coalition were increasingly salient in social and public life.

The FDRE constitutional order also created new incentives that gave rise to boundedly rational responses that gradually threatened to undo the basic natural state. While the regime's efficient patronage systems precluded an outright coup, the new constitutional order produced the conditions for revolt in two ways: first, revolts against the TPLF could emerge from other ethnic parties within the EPRDF coalition as a negotiation ploy to gain more rents or access; second, revolts against the EPRDF may be directed by the masses in ethnic regions represented by the coalition partners.

In fact, both of these dynamics occurred in 2018, as this violence trap framework would predict: first, mass revolts against the EPRDF coalition in the Amhara and Oromo regions meant

the regime faced increasing pressures for deep reform; second, junior members of the ethnic-based coalition, the OPDO and the ANDM, took advantage of this dynamic to undercut the TPLF and increase their own elite positioning vis-à-vis the previous ruling elites.[276] Their coalition catalyzed Abiy Ahmed's election to the coalition party's premiership and created conditions for the critical juncture in which Ethiopia finds itself today. This section will proceed in three parts. The first part will examine, more closely, the antecedent conditions and proximate causes of this most recent institutional transition in Ethiopia. The second part will assess Ethiopia's current level of political development under Prosperity. The final part will provide, by way of conclusion, an assessment of future prospects for the country's development and institutional stability.

2.4.1 Antecedent Conditions and Proximate Causes for Prosperity Transition

As mentioned above, TPLF domination over Ethiopian politics unraveled in 2018 as competition within the EPRDF led to adjustments in elite coalitions and a transition toward a new regime. With the violence trap framework, one of the indicators of the emergence of a mature natural state is the periodic adjustment of ruling elite coalitions without the outbreak of violence. In this regard, had the transition from the TPLF-EPRDF to Prosperity remained peaceful, this would have served as one piece of evidence that Ethiopia had reached a higher stage of political development. As it happens, this was not the case; instead, a diminished institutional order emerged in Ethiopia after the transition, even compared to the problematic equilibrium that persisted under the TPLF-EPRDF. To understand the elite decisions and coalitions that effected this change in the short-term, and why the institutional outcome was more violence rather than

[276] Lyons, *The Puzzle of Ethiopian Politics*.

stability, it is important to go back two decades to trace institutional evolutions within and outside the EPRDF. These evolutions and elite contestations would set the antecedent conditions for the elite decisions that sparked the 2018 transition.

As explained in the previous sections, the TPLF had been the dominant party within the EPRDF coalition since the party's inception in 1991. The TPLF played the role of a ruling elite, monopolizing political and economic rents and then using them to provide rents to the other junior members of the EPRDF ruling coalition. However, serious rifts erupted within the TPLF after the 1998-2000 Ethio-Eritrean war, in which Ethiopia, the perceived victor, granted significant concessions to Eritrea in the Algiers Peace Agreement of 2000. These rifts played out in TPLF Central Committee meetings in 2001. The rifts were likely driven more by questions of power within the Central Committee rather than any serious ideological disagreements; however, there were some clear ideological disagreements as well. For instance, Army Chief General Tsadkan disagreed with Prime Minister Meles over two issues: Meles's refusal to enter Ethiopian forces into Eritrea's capital Asmara, and his decision to cede Assab port to Eritrea, keeping Ethiopia a landlocked state. As a result of these rifts, Meles started purging high-level officials, both from the party and from the military, including General Tsadkan.

To successfully maintain his power amidst these purges, Meles had to move the power base away from Tigray. He did so by providing a greater share of political rents to the Amhara ethnic party member of the coalition, the ANDM, and moved the center of decision-making away from Tigray to Addis Ababa, the capital.[277] These institutional maneuvers had three immediate effects. The first was the elevation of non-TPLF elites within the party leadership, resulting in increasing

---

[277] Elite Interview Conducted 4 July 2022.

significance of the EPRDF party apparatus as a whole; as the TPLF threatened to splinter, the EPRDF party organ became a bit more powerful. Second, counteracting TPLF's reduced internal cohesion, Meles Zenawi emerged as a dominant, unifying figure within the party. Consequently, Meles transformed the country's institutional politics, using personalized rents with non-TPLF elites to enact a party-state governance model. Third, after consolidating his power, Meles would alternate between providing more rents to the ANDM and the Oromo faction, the OPDO, to ensure that neither would be able to threaten the TPLF's monopoly over rents. This allowed for each of these parties to develop into full-fledged cadre parties with coherent bureaucratic structures.

The TPLF-EPRDF's subsequent institutional evolution occurred in 2005, when the party decided to open up Ethiopia's political space to conduct the country's first freely contested election. Two dynamics guided this decision. First, international pressure had mounted on the regime due to its conduct in the Ethio-Eritrean war, and the regime needed to signal to external benefactors that it was willing to pursue progressive reforms internally. Second, Meles was fairly confident that he had eliminated all viable political opposition in the country and believed his party could easily win an election. On the contrary, scattered opposition blocs opposed to the TPLF's ethnic programming, mounted a unified challenge against the regime, coalescing in the formation of the Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD) party. The CUD launched a center-right pro-business platform opposing ethnic politics, and garnered high levels of enthusiastic support from urban localities. After the election was held, results coming from the major cities dealt an embarrassing blow to the TPLF-EPRDF, as the CUD appeared poised to capture a near-majority in parliament. In response, Meles immediately ordered the rural localities to stop counting votes; subsequently, the Election Commission announced that the ruling party won the election, sparking accusations of vote rigging and mass protests across the capital. In response, Meles ordered

military forces to suppress the protests violently, and thereafter placed Addis Ababa under *de facto* martial law.

The tumultuous aftermath of the 2005 elections served as a rude awakening to the TPLF-EPRDF. Party leaders realized that institutional equilibrium did not reflect societal preferences, and that the party could never compete democratically unless it underwent dramatic transformations. To prevent the prospect of any future threat to the regime, the party first quickly closed down the political space, leading to a rapid escalation in violation of basic rights. To ensure its continued regime security, the TPLF then made two important decisions that would serve as antecedent conditions for the 2018 transition.

First, it was clear to the party leaders that the EPRDF needed to create new patronage links with broader masses of people in the various ethnic regions, necessitating the massification of what had been a cadre party. As one interview participant notes, "they said they would turn over the party to the Amhara and Oromo masses, through, for example, university recruitment."[278] In particular, this massification of the ANDM and the OPDO meant that new groups of young ideologues who had not directly participated in the militant struggle against the Dergue were now set to enter the leadership ranks. To maintain these mass patronage ties, the party also expressly gave preference to party members in public sector employment. Party membership, along with ethnic identification, thus became the main criterion for economic rents.

Second, and along these lines, the party's ability to provide these rents was bolstered by a more clearly articulated economic program of state-led development. As outlined in previous sections, a core component of this program was the proliferation of large parastatal industrial bodies that

---

[278] Elite Interview Conducted 4 July 2022.

would be under the direct control of the coalition member parties of the EPRDF. The country's relatively strong macroeconomic performance in the ten years following the 2005 election also bolstered the regime's capacity to provide rents. Although, as stated earlier, the real benefits of specialized economic investment were restricted to the TPLF ruling elites and affiliates, the ANDM and the OPDO were also able to develop their own patronage networks through new economic ties. This increased the levels of bureaucratization in these two parties.

Amidst these two changes in the Ethiopian political economy, the death of Prime Minister Meles served up another important antecedent condition for the transitions of 2018. Meles' dominance had served as an important coordinating function within the EPRDF, somewhat tempering the elite contentions and ethnic divisions that persisted beneath the surface. With Meles gone, and with much of the party's old guard being replaced by younger members who joined amidst the massification of the party, the party's culture of democratic centralism became increasingly difficult to enforce.

The transition from Meles to his successor Hailemariam Desalegn appeared smooth and peaceful on paper. Hailemariam was a member of the Southern Ethiopian People's Democratic Movement (SPDM), a party representing the only multi-ethnic region, with very low political capital; indeed, he was chosen to succeed Meles to prevent party infighting between the Amhara and the Oromo blocs. To constrain the new prime minister's decision-making power, and to ameliorate rivalry between the ethnic parties, the EPRDF then created three new deputy prime minister slots, to be filled by leaders of the TPLF, the ANDM, and the OPDO. The party remained dominant over parliament in terms of passing new legislation; much of the groundwork for new laws would be performed through newly formed 'clusters' or working groups within the executive branch.

This new institutional equilibrium appeared stable on a surface level, signifying a measure of regime continuity that may have indicated a maturity in the country's political order. In reality, the opening up of the party during its earlier bouts of massification had brought forth new interests with new competition for mega-projects between the party parastatals. The awarding of some of these megaprojects to the military through conglomerates such as MetEC forestalled the possibility of a military coup; however, the infighting within the party continued. As an interview participant for this study explains, "the economic wings of political parties allowed for trickling down of benefits and helped them to create jobs. It helped the party but created grievance."[279] This grievance was directed at the party from those who were not members; however, much of it was rooted in the persistence of a hierarchy, perceived or real, of minority domination both within and outside the party. More specifically, despite increased levels of decentralization, the TPLF continued to play a hegemonic role within the party as well as within the security and economic sectors, presumably elevating its co-ethnics to first-class citizens through the ethnic rents that it provided.

As a result of these dynamics, grievance against the TPLF manifested itself in two ways, first socially, then politically. Increased politicization of the masses, coupled with an ethnically oriented political economy, meant that economic interests would now be articulated very clearly in terms of ethnic interests. Thus, when the EPRDF released a blueprint known as the Addis Ababa Master Plan, which would expand the city frontiers into agrarian communities in neighboring Oromia region, the property rights of the Oromo farmers were framed exclusively in terms of ethnic

[279] Elite Interview Conducted 15 June 2022.

territorial encroachment. The Addis Ababa Master Plan was thus the catalyst that ignited what became the Oromo Protests of 2016.

Interestingly, parts of the Master Plan are currently being implemented by Prosperity, but with a focus on prioritizing the benefits of economic specialization to Oromos. It is perhaps for this reason that one interviewee wonders, "Was the [protest against the] Masterplan about incursion or integration? Nobody knows but it didn't matter because it was simply a mobilizing force."[280] Shortly after the Oromo protests, protests also erupted in the Amhara region, galvanizing around grievance over language and self-administration rights to Amhara residents of the Welkait region, which was administered under Western Tigray. Here, as well, the issue was framed exclusively in ethnic terms. Part of the reason for this is that these protests were not simply mass spontaneous eruptions but coordinated signals that were delivered by the Oromo and Amhara elite contingents of the EPRDF. Well before the resignation of Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn set the stage for the transition, it was clear that a coalition of convenience was being formed between the OPDO and the ANDM. The party elites quietly abetted the protests, hoping to use them to undermine the TPLF's grip on power. Shortly after the protests, OPDO leaders visited the Amhara region to initiate dialogue and ameliorate rivalry between the two ethnic groups. The Oromo and Amhara protests of 2016 are thus best understood as an ethnic instrumentalist response to an administrative question, seemingly spontaneous, but, in reality, supported by "hegemonic or equality-seeking elements" within the EPRDF.[281]

---

[280] Elite Interview Conducted 4 July 2022.
[281] Elite Interview Conducted 20 July 2022.

All of the interview participants for this study highlighted the role played by elites in the 2018 transition, as well as in the current state of affairs. Some credit the TPLF's downfall to economic structural factors such as youth landlessness, youth underemployment, or the IMF's downgrading of Ethiopia's credit rating. Some highlight the role of genuine democratic aspirations among the masses, especially given the increasingly salient role that social media played in organizing the protests. All of these likely influenced the transition; however, it is hard to imagine Hailemariam's resignation and the transition to Abiy Ahmed's Prosperity Party in the absence of conscious elite agency.

Thus, in line with the violence trap framework, what appears to be a change driven by the masses in 2018 is really a replacement of one group of elites by a new coalition of elites, reflecting new institutional equilibria. The antecedent conditions for these agent-driven institutional change were put in place in the aftermath of the 2005 elections, when the party resorted to ethnic populism by pushing the ANDM and the OPDO to recruit masses of their co-ethnics. Economic restructuring under state-led development, coupled with the country's tenuous federal structure, then gave elite contenders the "the economic rents and security apparatus to successfully rebel against the center."[282] The death of Meles in 2012 brought these contentions to the fore, leading up to the country's 2015 elections, which elevated new, young members to leadership positions. These new elites then staged a silent coup, instrumentalizing public grievance, and relying on their well-established rents networks to oust the TPLF from power, initiating the 2018 transition.

---

[282] Elite Interview Conducted 20 July 2022.

2.4.2 Outcomes of Prosperity Transition and Future Prospects

The immediate political outcomes of the 2018 transition were the resignation of Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn, the election of Abiy Ahmed, the merging of the EPRDF coalition parties into the newly formed Prosperity Party, and the TPLF's departure from both the ruling party and from government. Prosperity was formed after a series of meetings held by the EPRDF executive committee; although the proceeds of these meetings emphasized continuity and articulated the idea of a merger as a long-held preference of the party, the means by which the merger proceeded amounted to a silent coup against the previous ruling elites. Accordingly, the TPLF found itself outmatched and declined to join Prosperity, setting the stage for the Tigray War.

Interestingly, Prosperity seemed to identify ethnic extremism as one of the failures of the previous institutional order, and sought to position itself as an intermediary between ethnic group rights and national unity.[283] This policy, articulated through the Prime Minister's exposition of the Amharic *medemer*, meaning synergy, and multinational unity, would serve as the pillar for the reforms that the new regime sought to pursue. Among these was a new language policy that allowed for local-level administrators in border regions, such as the Oromo-Somali border, to provide service in two different languages.[284] However, the attempts to re-engineer society through a new party seemed destined to fail for two reasons, prevailing institutional incentives and a rise in ethnic nationalism across all groups.

Prevailing institutional incentives cause bounded rational responses that are contrary to what central planners expect. For instance, Prosperity allows for policy formulation through federal,

---

[283] Prosperity Party Bylaws, 2019.
[284] Elite Interview Conducted 5 July 2022.

regional, and zonal levels of organization, but its by-laws do not mention ethnic organizations.[285] However, the boundedly rational response to this change relied on existing rules of thumb that prioritized ethnic forms of organization; as such, Prosperity is currently divided into ethnoregional subsidiaries. In addition, intra-elite contestations observed in the EPRDF continued, and Oromo-Amhara rivalry, in particular, seems to have escalated, manifesting through the Amhara Prosperity Party and the Oromo Prosperity Party, ethnic wings of a party that was formed to diminish ethnic politics. This new party is even less capable than the EPRDF in managing these rivalries: because: "ambitious actors had to destroy the party to control it. They managed to do that, but they didn't manage to rebuild it."[286] Indeed, Prosperity seems more fragile than the EPRDF, and in countries like Ethiopia that have adopted a party-state model, party fragility often translates into state fragility. These dynamics show that incentives stemming from foundational institutions such as a constitution will always trump incentives of parties and other secondary state institutions.

In the absence of constitutional reform, institutional incentives also privilege continuation of previous policies with a simple change in regime. In this sense, one interviewee notes, "Prime Minister Abiy thought he could expect to go on doing the same things and expect new outcomes. There are no new outcomes and the window of opportunity to bring together progressive Ethiopians was lost."[287] There are a myriad of ways in which Prosperity's activities closely mirror the modus operandi of the EPRDF. For instance, the EPRDF "went unchecked, winning all elections; though autonomous on paper, regional governments were appendages to the central

[285] Prosperity Party Bylaws, 2019.
[286] Elite Interview Conducted 20 July 2022.
[287] Elite Interview Conducted 15 June 2022.

government. It appointed advisors as trusted leaders. This has all continued under Prosperity Party."[288]

Another manifestation of regime continuity has been the decision to remove the infamously corrupt president of the Somali region, Abdi Ilay. In August 2018, federal military forces entered the Somali region, encircling Abdi Ilay's compound, forcing his resignation, and then placing him under arrest. As one interviewee notes,

> *[t]his was not done according to law. There were laws that would have authorized intervention through the House of Federation. Later, federal authorities said they were invited by the interim president, but this was simply giving the appearance of constitutionalism to something already in process. This was the first early indicator that things didn't change. In the past, the federal government controlled the region directly. So, that is what Abiy did and has been doing. You see that in Amhara, Afar, and Sidama.*[289]

It should be noted that Abdi Ilay's removal and his replacement by the popular technocrat Mustafa Mohammed Omar was likely a socially optimal outcome. However, institutionally, it contributed to fragility by undermining credibility and legal contracts.

In the violence trap framework, such actions, even when they lead to socially desirable outcomes, tend to undermine political development in the long term, since they undermine elite cohesion and make bargains more difficult. Indeed, Abiy's actions in Somalia may have cost him significant credibility in his later negotiations with the TPLF, the failure of which contributed to the springing of the Tigray War. Along with this, Abiy's rule has also tended to increase the levels of impersonality within the ruling party. Frequently, "one person drives government and makes decisions. For example, the prime minister directly ordered the repainting of city buildings,"

---

[288] Elite Interview Conducted 15 June 2022.
[289] Elite Interview Conducted 4 July 2022.

although such matters were under the purview of the city administration.[290] Thus, what is evident in the four years of rule by Prosperity is that levels of impersonality and perpetuity have sharply declined, providing *prima facie* evidence for the likelihood that Ethiopia may be reverting to a fragile state.

The other, perhaps more concerning, piece of evidence for the reconstruction of Ethiopia as a fragile state is the clearly observed rise in violence. A lot of this may be due to Prosperity's inability to control ethnic politics; indeed, Prime Minister Abiy's reforms "may have exacerbated the rise of interethnic tensions and the more rapid ethnification of politics."[291] In effect, many of the reform efforts themselves have been "thwarted by ethnonationalists."[292] As part of the early reforms, Abiy had invited exiled political groups back to the country in an attempt to open up political space. With a constitutional structure that has proven unable to accommodate difference, these opening-up processes have also opened up new cleavages, and new contests of power and hierarchy, increasingly articulated in ethnic terms. In the words of one public sector executive, "extreme ethnonational groups like OFC, OLF, TPLF, and Wolayita are trying their best to reduce the success of changes in rebalancing Ethiopian and ethnic nationalism."[293] Thus, the institutional lapse created by the transition to Prosperity created boundedly rational responses that have reversed political development. These include more fundamentalist articulations of political demands in ethnic terms, an increase in the number of elite aspirants articulating these demands, and an increasing demonstration of violence capabilities to garner concessions from the center.

---

[290] Elite Interview Conducted 4 July 2022.
[291] Chanie and Ishiyama, "Rise of Amhara Nationalism," 1033; Ishiyama, "Ethnonationalism Growing in Ethiopia."
[292] Elite Interview Conducted 8 June 2022.
[293] Elite Interview Conducted 5 July 2022.

The Tigray war may thus be understood as a culmination of various factors: increased reliance on ethnic-based rules of thumb where institutional constraints have lapsed, extra-institutional maneuvers that undermined institutions as well as the credibility required to preserve them, a focus on outcomes rather than institutional processes, and an over-reliance on top-down driven change. In terms of the violence trap framework, these dynamics undermined the institutional basis of elite agreements and rents-based equilibria, decreasing the costs of violence, and making it a more boundedly rational outcome. These are predictable outcomes of inter-elite contentions between TPLF and Prosperity. As one interview participant notes:

> *The biggest problem, of course, is the war. That is where the transition failed dismally. Politicians haven't really changed the way they deal with disputes. An intra-governmental dispute between federal and regional governments descended into war. The atrocities that have happened, thousands of civilians have died, I feel like we are in a far worse place than before. Rather than benefit, we have lost our peace and our communal bonds.* [294]

Despite a recent peace agreement signed between the TPLF and the Ethiopian federal government in November 2022, questions remain about how the emerging institutional arrangement will accommodate the TPLF and its affiliates.

Four months before the signing of this agreement, one of the participants for this study, a public sector executive, had cautioned,

> *there is no win-win solution to this conflict. It is only win-lose. The TPLF has nothing to give in negotiations. Given 2-3 months, it will lose political and economic muscle, and may be more willing to negotiate. Its current major demands are breaking the siege, territorial integrity, and reconnecting services. I don't see Amhara region or even the federal government agreeing to 'Tigray territorial integrity.'* [295]

This was in reference to the disputed Welkait-Humera corridor that Amharas claim TPLF illegally annexed in 1993. The area, since administered as 'Western Tigray,' has fallen under Amhara

---

[294] Elite Interview Conducted 4 July 2022.
[295] Elite Interview Conducted 5 July 2022.

regional and federal control after the war. Thus, in line with these predictions, in November, the TPLF seemed to give in much more than expected in terms of sidelining this territorial question in the Pretoria Agreement, as well as agreeing to disarm its defense forces. However, the fact that the TPLF seemed to capitulate should not signal future stability; indeed, institutional bargains that do not truly reflect elite preferences are likely only tentative and unlikely to stick.

Another unintended consequence of the transitions has been an increase in the number of ethnic-based questions and movements, including among groups such as the Amhara and Gurage who have long disavowed ethnic politics.[296] The rise of Amhara ethnonationalism, in particular, has been described as a 'defensive nationalism' borne out of a security dilemma.[297] This is primarily due to the targeting and mass massacre of Amhara minorities living in Oromia and Benshangul regions by ethnic militias, partly driven by institutional structures that incentivize regional nativism. Amhara ethno-nationalists have now organized around a legal political group, the National Movement of Amhara (NaMA), the first expressly Amhara nationalist group to join the Ethiopian government. This is notable given that the TPLF previously discouraged any Amhara nationalism as a form of chauvinism, and would not have tolerated such institutional bargains. More ardent Amhara ethnonational sentiments have also galvanized around a regional militia known as the Fano, who were instrumental in the federal government's military response to the TPLF's attack on a federal base in November 2020. Thus, the animation of both Oromo and Amhara nationalism, within the context of Amhara-Oromo rivalry within Prosperity itself,

---

[296] Ishiyama, "Ethnonationalism Growing in Ethiopia."
[297] Chanie and Ishiyama, "Rise of Amhara Nationalism."

diminishes the perpetuity of the country's present order. Abiy's Ethiopia is thus tragically emerging as a fragile state in many respects.

This is not to say that there have been no beneficial outcomes of Prosperity's reforms. Immediately after taking office, Prime Minister Abiy repealed several laws that severely restricted the political marketplace, including the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation and the Media and Charities proclamation. The new regime also changed the electoral law, enthroning a newly independent electoral commission under a former opposition leader and providing support to an independent human rights commission. Compared to its predecessor's focus on centralized decision-making through executive committees, Prosperity seems, on paper, more democratically oriented, as party decisions are expected to be made through simple majorities (>50%) of member votes.[298] More broadly, however, in the political realm, "the changes led to disgruntlement, and in response to challenges, the government reverted back to authoritarianism."[299] In short, much of the political space that opened up during the transition, especially in terms of media freedom, has since been closed, with a new round of arrests of journalists and politicians.

In the economic sector as well, there has been an increasing effort to move away from the rent-monopolizing tendencies of the EPRDF's state-led development model.[300] Given that its name itself signals an economic priority, the party's changes in the economic realm seem to have been most progressive. Prime Minister Abiy's government seems more open to integrating private capital into key facets of development governance. There is also the question of capital inflow and capital generation. This means it matters whether the main source of capital in the country is

---

[298] Ibid.
[299] Elite Interview Conducted 15 June 2022.
[300] Verjee, A. "Political transitions in Sudan and Ethiopia."

generated through foreign investments and trade, or whether there are domestic sources of capital generation created through specialization and training. Governments in lower-level closed access orders are not incentivized to provide specialized training and education to catalyze economic specialization. Specialized economic activity is hard to monopolize and can reduce the state's importance as the purveyor of rents to elite patrons. By contrast, benefits of FDI, infrastructure development, and export are more controllable. Thus, the combination of a closed-access order and export or FDI-driven development model results in a politically constrained development model. To the extent that the regime continues its efforts in boosting domestic manufacturing along with technology-aided specialization, Prosperity's economic policies may be the only variable standing in the way of Ethiopia's full reversal into a fragile state. The economic reforms, in any case, seem more credibly institutionalized than the short-lived political reforms.

A final point of consideration here is what the future may hold for Ethiopia under Prosperity. Virtually every interview participant for this study concurred that genuine institutional progress in Ethiopia is entirely dependent on elites. The interests of the masses in the Ethiopian case, as well as their proposed solutions, are almost entirely framed by elites. The masses have no voice, and opposition parties remain weak, ethnically divided, and politically splintered. Thus, policy proposals bent on democratization or low-level legal reforms are unlikely to prove effective. Civil society in Ethiopia is also completely decimated. Indeed, as one interview participant explains,

> *the CSOs are mostly after money. For example, in June 2021, many NGOs and CSOs adopted election-monitoring mandates [to receive election-related aid funds]. Now, peacebuilding is the focus so many NGOs and CSOs are moving there, simply following the money rather than a real core mission.*[301]

---

[301] Elite Interview Conducted 5 July 2022.

This is not to say that the masses and their preferences do not ultimately matter. However, given the level of political development of Ethiopia, its problems can only be solved through elite bargains, not through increased participation.

Indeed, as new research on democratization and public participation shows, elite coordination and cohesion are far more indispensable at earlier stages of development in the process of building constitutionalism.[302] This is especially so in the context of an increasingly ethnicized polity, wherein elites remain the most (boundedly) rational actors that may seek to preserve a given order, once they are given a stake in the game. It is for this reason that the recently announced National Dialogue Commission (hereafter, NDC) appears promising at face value.

Nearly all the interview participants for this study had positive reactions toward the Ethiopian parliament's establishment of the NDC in 2021. However, the commission has since been plagued by procedural problems. First, the commission is the third such commission to be established since the Prosperity transition. Two previously-established commissions, the Boundary and Identity Commission and the Reconciliation Commission, have had no real policy influence, although the latter has at least produced some research. Second, the commission was established, and its members chosen, through a parliamentary body dominated by one political party, and likely at the prime minister's discretion. As it stands, "maybe 4 of the 11 commissioners are fit and independent, in terms of having the backbone to say 'no' to Abiy."[303] Third, the commission was established before the ceasefire with the TPLF was established and while fighting was ongoing against the Oromo rebel group, the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA). In this vein, the commission

---

[302] Saati, *The Participation Myth*.
[303] Elite Interview Conducted 5 July 2022.

has excluded armed actors whose participation is likely necessary to solicit any meaningful elite bargains.

This is not to say that the NDC is unhelpful. It can be a genuine exercise in building constitutionalism and in bringing polarized elite voices into an ongoing dialogue. One of the mechanisms for achieving this may be to include the excluded actors, and publicize the commission's operations for greater transparency. This focus on process rather than outcomes is extremely important; as demonstrated above, socially optimal outcomes enacted through extra-institutional means are unlikely to prove tenable. The possible outcomes of such bargains cannot be set as preconditions for dialogue. In other words, given the lack of fundamental agreement among elites on the structure of the state itself, everything should be negotiable.

This includes the adverse constitutional incentives that continue to animate a violent spirit of ethnic politics in the country. Possible solutions that have been proposed to address this constitutional design include fostering intercultural engagement through cohesive national education policies, replacing territorial autonomy of ethnic groups with non-territorial autonomy, and the adoption of international normative standards for protecting the rights of regional minorities.[304] In terms of replicating successful models of multi-ethnic governance, one interview participant points to Rwanda, which is examined as a comparative case in Chapter 3 of this dissertation: "Kagame was a Tutsi leader but he said 'from now on, we are only Rwandans.' Well, he may be authoritarian, but today, it is the most peaceful country."[305] Whether a Rwanda-style ban on ethnic identity is a possible institutional outcome in today's Ethiopia is uncertain. However,

---

[304] Van Der Beken & Dessalegn, B. (eds.). *Ethno-cultural Diversity Management at Sub-national Levels*.
[305] Elite Interview Conducted 8 June 2022.

meaningful proposals may emerge through interplays between a genuine national dialogue and serious scholarly engagement.

Chapter Three: Political Development in Rwanda

As noted in Chapter 1, political development is conceptualized here as a process of incremental, gradual institutional transitions from natural states toward open access orders. This includes transition through stages of natural states, fragile states, basic natural states, and mature natural states. The violence trap framework conceptualizes political development as a process of institutional transitions that begin at the foundational stages of the fragile state, where the only institutional organization is the state and very little differentiation and specialization exists in the economy.[306] Progress towards open access orders is achieved by incrementally meeting three conditions: standardization of elite privileges as a 'rule of law' for elites (serving as a blueprint for a more pluralistic rule of law regime), consolidated control of political-military apparatus, and credible property and contract laws that affirm state perpetuity.[307]

The Ethiopian case study in Chapter 2 illustrated how each transition from Emperor Haile Selassie's constitutional monarchy to the Communist Dergue regime, and subsequently to the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) and the current Prosperity Party created new institutional equilibria, due to violence-driven inter-elite interactions and reallocations of rents. These transitions have seen Ethiopia make progress toward a mature natural state, a drastic reversal toward a fragile state under the Dergue, and eventually, the reconstruction of the EPRDF's

---

[306] North, Wallis, and Weingast, *Violence and Social Orders*; Weingast, "Resistant to the Rule-of-Law"; Cox, North, and Weingast. "The Violence Trap."

[307] Weingast, "Resistant to the Rule-of-Law."; Cox, North, and Weingast. "The Violence Trap"; North, Wallis, and Weingast. *Violence and Social Orders;* Carugati*,* Ober, and Weingast, "Is Development Uniquely Modern?"

basic natural state and the near-fragile state conditions under the Prosperity Party. In fragile states, which have yet to begin achieving any of these doorstep conditions, political-economic interactions are highly personalized and unpredictable, elite privileges and bargains are uncodified and tentative, and the political-military apparatus resides outside the control of the state.

This chapter uses the analytical framework of the violence trap to analyze political development of the second case, Rwanda. Rwanda presents itself as an interesting MSS (most-similar system) case comparison with Ethiopia, given its long pre-colonial monarchical history and statehood as well as its internal ethnic contestations. However, whereas Ethiopia has now succumbed to the violence trap for the second time in four decades, Rwanda has largely evaded the violence trap due to its post-genocide nation-building and state-building efforts. In contrast to structural assessments of Rwanda's persistently unequal political order, the framework here highlights how Rwanda's political order achieves relatively higher levels of perpetuity, impersonality, and inclusivity. This outcome is due to institutional design resulting in strong state control of a specialized political and military apparatus, and the de-ethnicization of intra-elite rents-driven engagements, particularly in sharp contrast to the Ethiopian case study. Section 3.1 below explores prevailing narratives of Rwanda's political development in the literature, and section 3.2 considers the historical evidence through the violence trap analytical framework.

3.1 Narratives of Political Development in post-genocide Rwanda

Historiography of political development in pre-colonial Rwanda has much to do with the nature of relations between a Tutsi-dominated African monarchy and the Hutu and Twa ethnic groups. Prior to the seventeenth century, lord-vassal relationships emphasized mutual responsibilities and duties among dominant Tutsi elites and Hutu laborers; over time, class mobility and inter-

marriages constituted a new elite ruling class with a majority of Tutsis and a minority of Hutus.[308] By the seventeenth century, 'Tutsi' came to denote a class aristocracy, a mixture of the Tutsi monarchs and assimilated non-Tutsis who were part of the ruling class and were primarily cattle-owning pastoralists.[309] Local agriculturalists were classified as non-Tutsi, and, eventually, as Hutu. Indeed, "the vast majority of the Tutsi were commoners who had more in common with the Hutu peasants than with the Tutsi lords, while the Hutu lords, who formed a minority in the elite, had little in common with the Hutu peasants."[310]

Starting in 1912, Belgian colonial administrators relied on race theory to classify Tutsis as superior, replacing family-kinship basis for elite status with more strict criteria. This racialization of ethnicity included purging of Hutu nobles and lords from the monarchy, and introducing height and color regulations for distinguishing Tutsi-ness. This was a key feature of colonial governance in many African states, constructing political identities out of ethnic difference.[311] Likewise, a key feature of post-colonial governments was to flip the settler-native narrative, making ethnicity more salient, diminishing the boundaries between ethnicity and class, and ascribing political agency to both.[312] Thus, after the Belgians left Rwanda, post-colonial governments continued to create political identities out of ethnic grievances. The idea was that institutional incentives drove ethnic elites to emphasize cultural difference and antagonistic historiography in order to gain political power.[313] By 1962, 'settler-nativist' discourse was ripe in Rwanda, casting Tutsis as an invading

---

[308] Jefremovas, "Fictions of Ethnicity"; Codere, "Power in Ruanda"; Newbury, *Cohesion of Oppression*.
[309] Jefremovas, "Fictions of Ethnicity."
[310] Jefremovas, "Fictions of Ethnicity," 96.
[311] Mamdani, "Beyond Settler and Native."
[312] Ibid.
[313] Posner, "Political Salience of Cultural Difference."

race from the Ethiopian lowlands and Hutus as natives and rightful owners of the land.[314] In the tradition of many African post-colonial governments, Rwanda's new Hutu elite, led by President Kayibanda, sought to instrumentalize colonial histories; they did so by casting the Tutsis in the same vein as the Belgian colonizers.

Interestingly, this approach has strong similarities with the nations and nationalities narrative in Ethiopia that casts the historically dominant Amhara as a colonizing identity, despite the complexities of history and the gradual integration of other ethnic communities into the Ethiopian Empire. Such settler-nativist discourses in Africa often perpetuate violence in much more intricate ways than what occurred under colonial governance.[315] In this regard, such discourses continue to perpetuate ethnic cleansing and violence against the Amhara in Ethiopia today, as discussed in Chapter 2.[316] In Rwanda, however, the violence against the Tutsi was far more pronounced, sudden, and deadly, resulting in the historical critical juncture of the 1994 Rwandan Genocide.

Critical outlooks of contemporary state-building in post-genocide Rwanda focus on three main impediments to political development. The first is the Tutsi-dominated ruling party, the Rwandan Patriotic Front's (RPF), paradoxical obsession with an ethnicized historiography and a de-ethnicized present. The second is the growing political repression by the RPF. The third is emerging power gaps between urban elites and rural peasants. Each of these critiques is considered below, to assess whether these empirical observations have resulted in skewed assessments of the overall levels of political development achieved since the Rwandan genocide.

---

[314] Jefremovas, "Fictions of Ethnicity."
[315] Mamdani, "Beyond Settler and Native."
[316] Atnafu, "Ethnic Cleansing in Ethiopia"; Moges, "Don't Blame Amhara."

First, observers of contemporary Rwanda have taken exception with the government's obsession with hyper-ethnicized historiographies of the Rwandan genocide.[317] Hutus and Tutsis often adopt contrasting historiographies of the events leading up to the genocide, with Tutsis interpreting these events as genocidal incitement and Hutus conceptualizing this as a social revolution seeking to end the Tutsi domination rooted in the pre-colonial era.[318] Indeed, a few extremist Hutu groups in the diaspora, such as the Congo-based FDLR (Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda), do engage in revisionist history, diminishing the genocide to a simple mass expression of grievance following Hutu president Habyarimana's assassination.[319] Over-compensating for these marginal perspectives, the RPF-led government has been intent on forcing the discursive adoption of a contrasting, but very simplistic historiography of the Rwandan genocide. More specifically, the RPF has used laws, public education campaigns, indoctrination camps, and media programming to construct a discourse of the genocide with only Hutus seen as potential genociders and all Tutsi seen as potential victims.[320] The intentional emphasis on ethnic identities of victims and perpetrators of genocide serves to maintain the salience of ethnicity in Rwanda's contemporary imaginary of its violent past.

Critiques of ethnicized historiography of the genocide center focus on two aspects. First is the paradox of the RPF's efforts to, simultaneously, de-ethnicize the present Rwandan polity. The RPF's contemporary nation-building has centered on creating a new Rwandan identity, coupled

---

[317] Thomson *Whispering Truth to Power*.
[318] Buckley-zistel, "Dividing and Uniting."
[319] Waldorf, "Revisiting Hotel Rwanda"; "Solving the FDLR Problem."
[320] Buckley-zistel, "Dividing and Uniting"; Waldorf, "Revisiting Hotel Rwanda."

with a virtual ban on ethnic identity.[321] As a result, Rwandans can face legal consequences for strongly professing either Tutsi or Hutu identities in public discourse, whereas reconciliation and traditional justice mechanisms seem to emphasize the ethnic identity of genocide perpetrators and victims.[322] In essence, then, what emerges is internal policy incoherence within the RPF's implementation of its nation-building project, even though it is not clear exactly how this bears causal relevance to the success or failure of its parallel state-building project.

In addition, scholars have critiqued the RPF's authoritarianism, particularly in terms of its enforcement of the ethnicized historiography of the genocide.[323] This historiography is enforced especially through a series of laws passed from 2001-2008, criminalizing 'negationism' and 'divisionism.'[324] While there are diaspora revisionist activists to whom such labels may apply, the RPF often uses anti-genocide rhetoric to silence political opponents, including labeling its Hutu critics as genociders and its Tutsi critics as monarchists.[325] Such stringent laws serve to repress societal discourse about the fluid reality of ethnic identity in Rwanda's long history and the complexities of the pre-genocide civil war, in which the RPF was, in fact, one of the belligerents.

Rwanda's contemporary state-building is also often criticized for repressive engagements with rural populations and some Hutu communities. This has resulted in the economic disempowerment of peasant populations, through top-down-driven modernization and urbanization schemes.[326] In effect, the RPF-allied urban elites have come to see rural populations as impediments to

---

[321] Buckley-zistel, "Dividing and Uniting"; Clark, "Reconciliation in Rwanda"; Thomson, *Genocide to Precarious Peace;* Waldorf, "Revisiting Hotel Rwanda."
[322] Waldorf, "Revisiting Hotel Rwanda," 104.
[323] Clark, "Reconciliation in Rwanda"; Thomson, *Genocide to Precarious Peace*; Waldorf, "Revisiting Hotel Rwanda."
[324] Waldorf, "Revisiting Hotel Rwanda."
[325] Ibid, 107.
[326] Ibid.

development, and as peasants who need to be educated on how to develop. These conflictual interactions between peasants and urban elites also show significant parallels with interactions between some Hutu communities and Rwanda's homegrown post-genocide reconciliation programs.[327] In effect, there are strong incentives for Hutus, whether guilty of genocide or not, to go along with state reconciliation programs they don't believe in, including the traditional *gacaca* courts, the community meetings, and the re-education programs.

These gaps between beneficiaries and losers of the RPF's policies pose two impending challenges for the contemporary Rwandan state. First, Rwandans may engage in acts of 'everyday resistance' or minor forms of sabotage to express their grievances in small ways that may not illicit punitive consequences.[328] The other challenge is that of unaddressed political risk, a scenario which would bear a strong resemblance to the pre-genocide Rwanda of 1990. In the pre-genocide period, in fact, Rwanda was often lauded as a model country for liberal development, attracting foreign aid accounting for 11.4 percent of its GNP.[329] However, this idealized image of Rwanda quickly collapsed, as a drop in global coffee prices, the RPF's invasion of Rwanda from neighboring Uganda, and excessive Western political intervention provided structural antecedent conditions for the genocide. In fact, the foreign aid machinery itself, particularly the IMF's imposition of structural adjustment programs in 1991, is sometimes considered the main antecedent condition for the genocide.[330] These programs undermined the legitimacy of the state and the economic pressures that followed catalyzed social grievances that had been brewing for a

---

[327] Thomson, *Whispering Truth to Power.* 2013
[328] Ibid.
[329] Uvin, *Development Enterprise in Rwanda*.
[330] Ibid.

long period of time. In short, then, there is a risk that contemporary Rwanda may have these similar types of political risk variables that persisted in pre-genocide Rwanda. These include the brewing tensions and grievances of the large swaths of peasant populations, as well as the potential for a renewed instrumentalist push for ethnopolitical rebellion by ethnic Hutus.

Overall, such assessments of state-building errors seem to push an exceedingly pessimistic picture of Rwanda's contemporary polity. However, even the most critical scholars have acknowledged many of Rwanda's successes with contemporary state-building and institutional reform. Rwanda is perennially lauded for having one of the highest scores for economic freedom in Africa, being virtually corruption-free, and being one of the easiest places in the world to open a business.[331] Furthermore, Rwanda's Vision 2050 (previously Vision 2020) has empowered local party officials with administrative discretion to minimize corruption and elevated large groups of urban youth, including women, into leadership positions in business and politics.[332] Furthermore, at face value, reconciliation efforts have proven successful, as 98.2% of Rwandan citizens see themselves as Rwandan before any other identity.[333] To the extent that grievances exist against the RPF among the peasant populations, they are articulated in terms of political exclusion of non-elite segments of the population, both Hutu and Tutsi.[334]

It must also be noted that while the RPF's historiography of the civil war and genocide may be biased, its historiography emphasizing peaceful co-existence in its pre-colonial past is relatively

---

[331] Index of Economic Freedom 2021. (Rwanda remained in this position for 4 years but has fallen in the 2022 rankings, primarily due to a political crackdown on Hutu activists impeding the political marketplace, but its economic marketplace remains vibrant and corruption-free).
[332] Thomson, *Genocide to Precarious Peace*.
[333] "Rwandan Reconciliation Barometer 2020."
[334] Chakravarty, "Navigating the Middle Ground."

accurate. Indeed, although the Tutsi monarchy dominated pre-colonial Rwanda, vassalage contracts known as *ubuhake* created a pre-modern patronage system through which Hutus were gradually integrated into the nation-building process.[335] Beyond integration, this system gradually allowed Hutu elites to emerge, as 'Tutsi' came to denote a class rather than ethnic identity under the Rwandan monarchy. The combination of ethnic fluidity with his historical elite reconstructions makes it vital to combine bounded rationality with thick description; without this broad framework, culturalist assessments are likely to misjudge Rwanda's past levels of political development. Indeed, the Rwandan monarchy came to reflect a sort of sophisticated negotiated rule between Tutsi and Hutu, with the former, by virtue of its class hierarchy, dominating decision making, but not necessarily oppressing the latter.[336] In some ways, then, the social mobility and the somewhat-advanced political order of this period may resemble the socioeconomic dynamics that appear in contemporary Rwanda. It is not surprising, in this regard, that the RPF is keen on mythologizing the pre-colonial past.

Given these dynamics, it becomes important to draw on the violence trap framework as an analytical toolkit for assessing successes and challenges in the contemporary Rwandan state. A vast swath of literature on Rwanda employs culturalist and class analysis, without really providing a comparative framework for gauging the country's performance relative to others in the region. These studies have revealed interesting findings about nation-building dynamics, as revealed above. However, it is not clear that these reveal any meaningful variable with regard to identifying indicators of political risk or political development. For instance, 'everyday resistance' measures

---

[335] Codere, "Power in Ruanda."
[336] Newbury, *Cohesion of Oppression*.

may undermine social cohesion in the short-term, but are unlikely to pose any serious threat to the Rwandan state. Ethnic dynamics may indeed forestall national unity, but they are unlikely to come with significant political consequences in the short term. Indeed, as acknowledged by regime critics, the RPF's polity is unlikely to face any serious political challenge unless contested by armed groups outside the country, which is itself a highly remote possibility.[337]

The question that Rwanda's case raises, then, is how a country with a similar history to Ethiopia, but with far more debilitating experiences with violence, has managed to create a more tenable political order. It is helpful to restate the research question here: *why do some African states incrementally achieve political development while others do not?* More specifically to this case, *what do prevailing narratives of contemporary Rwanda miss from an analytical standpoint?* Chapter 1 developed the violence trap framework to analyze political and economic institutional interactions between elites, violence, and rents. It is important to note that the independent variables in consideration here are political variables, centered on the legal and institutional mechanisms that govern the degree to which political and economic rents are institutionalized. The dependent variables, perpetuity, inclusivity, and impersonality account for both political outcomes, such as state stability, and economic outcomes, such as specialization and differentiation. The second section in this chapter applies the violence trap framework directly to the Rwanda case, developing analytic narratives of contemporary state-building in Rwanda.

[337] Thomson, *Genocide to Precarious Peace*.

3.2 Analytic Narratives: Political Development in Contemporary Rwanda

It is helpful to briefly recall the pillars of the violence trap framework here. Political development is conceptualized as a process of institutional transitions from fragile states to basic natural states, mature natural states, and finally, to an open access order. The first three levels prior to the open access order are considered different stages of a closed (or limited) access order. Each successive stage of this process of political development results in higher levels of the three dependent variables, perpetuity, inclusivity, and impersonality. To different degrees, ruling elites in all closed access orders create barriers to political and economic access, and then provide special access privileges as rents to other groups of elites that pose a threat of violence. By contrast, in open access orders, monopolization of rents gives way to pluralistic transactions in the political and economic marketplace. In fragile states, rents are highly personalized, and rents-patronage agreements are unpredictable and haphazard. In addition to making elite coalitions and violence outbreaks unpredictable, this also leads to primitive economic conditions, highly dependent on extraction and export of minerals and agricultural goods, as well as on consistent inflows of structural foreign aid.

In basic natural states, rents-patronage agreements are more institutionalized, meaning that codification and formalization of agreements creates more stable institutional equilibria. This stage provides greater clarity on elite coalitions, allowing for specialized tax collection, religious activity, and political-economic functions, including rules for secession and the prevalence of professional state-run enterprises. In mature natural states, coordination and transaction costs are minimized through credible political institutions, such as provisions for private property and contracts law. This allows for more open transactions among different groups of elites, removing the incentives for violence. This dynamic also results in more sophisticated independent

enterprises, as well as periodic re-adjustments in elite coalitions. Importantly, mature natural states are still far from functional democracies, as elite coalitions maintain some barriers to open political and economic access to sustain political order.

In the framework here, states move along successive stages of closed access orders towards an open access order through political processes involving standardization of elite privileges, consolidated state control of political-military apparatus, and strong enforcement of formal contracts. In line with the hypothetical implications of this framework, a basic natural state emerges when rents-based interactions are formalized, and benefits of economic specialization are shared among coalition members of the ruling elite. A mature natural state emerges when all groups of elites, not just the ruling elites, receive the benefits of economic specialization, and all elites share a standard set of privileges. A mature natural state emerges when all groups of elites, not just the ruling elites, receive the benefits of economic specialization, and all elites share a standard set of privileges.

I argue that Rwanda has emerged as a mature natural state in the three decades following the genocide, owing primarily to the state's commitment to protecting property rights, enacting credible administrative and contracts provisions, and diminishing ethnic politics, and by extension, the value of ethnic rents. This is not to say that Rwanda is a democracy as transition to an open access order is neither guaranteed nor expected in the short term, unless institutional equilibria favor a move away from an elite-driven order towards one with a broader basis for political and economic access.

3.2.1 Elites, Rents, and Institutions in Rwanda's Historical Transitions

Through economic and administrative policies aimed at minimizing transaction costs, Rwanda has standardized elite privileges. Standardization of elite privileges as a 'rule of law for elites' is

one of three mechanisms by which institutional transitions towards a mature natural state are achieved. These processes set the blueprint for a gradual extension of this rule of law regime to a broader segment of society, though this final transition is not guaranteed nor immediate, and certainly not in the Rwandan case. Before addressing the basis of such standardization, it is important to address the construction of elite groups in Rwanda, as well as to identify the rents that allow for privileges to be standardized.

Elite groups may take on many forms. The Ethiopian case study in Chapter 2 illustrated three historic mechanisms of elite construction. The first group of elites, the ruling elites, were drawn primarily from among members of the Solomonic Dynasty who traced their lineage to the Queen of Sheba and King Menelik I. Most members of this group hailed from the Shewa plateau, consisting of ethnic Amhara and Oromos, although significant numbers also hailed from the northern province of Tigray. For centuries, this group constituted the Ethiopian aristocracy, and it was only through hereditary titles that one could achieve nobility. Leaders of the millennia-old Ethiopian Orthodox Täwahïdo Church also exercised strong leverage over the ruling monarchy, and were considered part of the ruling elite. These two groups owned large swaths of land, and these land ownership contracts were later codified into advanced land tenure laws through the process of modernization. Along with the ruling elites, regional nobility, that is, families of regional kings that were not members of the Solomonic aristocracy, were also considered elites. This secondary group was tied in through patronage networks involving lord-vassal arrangements, intermarriages, and personalized agreements, constituting something akin to a federation of kings, with the Solomonic King of kings at the center of the Ethiopian political order. Under the modernization efforts of Emperors Menelik and Haile Selassie, two new elite groups, military

elites and educated elites, were incorporated into the Ethiopian political order through new patronage networks.

With successive revolutions in 1974 and 1991, the basis of elite construction in Ethiopia changed dramatically, altering the structural foundations of political order. First, under the Dergue, a primitive political order equated elite-hood with high-ranking members of the ruling military junta, the Dergue. After the TPLF-EPRDF's ethno-Marxist revolution of 1991, the basis of elite-hood changed again, to emphasize the construction of ethnic elites. These new ethnic elites emerged by instrumentalizing ethnic grievance and identity, and occupied competing spaces in the new Ethiopian political order. Intellectual elites continued to vie for influence amidst these transitions, but were excluded completely under the Dergue, and then only marginally influential under the TPLF-EPRDF. The Solomonic elites were also mostly eliminated or suppressed, as were leaders of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Under the most recent political transitions of the Prosperity Party led by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, the evidence suggests that the basis of elite-hood has changed very little, although newly opened political spaces gave rise for the first time to Amhara nationalist elites, and also slightly increased the influence of intellectual and religious elites. This development illustrated how the contemporary Ethiopian political order is constituted largely by patronage networks that bind together ethnic elites and ethnic-based parties, giving political parties an oversized influence in the nation's body politic.

Rwanda serves as a most-similar systems (MSS) comparison to Ethiopia, with regards to its pre-modern history of traditional African monarchy. As in the Ethiopian case, and as demonstrated in the sections above, the ruling elites of historical Rwanda were drawn from the Tutsi nobility. The claim to elite-hood for the Tutsi nobility did not emerge from Solomonic lineage as in the Ethiopian case, but was a function of civilizational processes. In the fifteenth century, cattle-

rearing pastoralists with roots not just in Rwanda but also in modern-day Burundi and southern Ethiopia, drew upon their knack for trade, governance, and warfare to carve a distinct African civilization in Rwanda. These pastoralists relied on kinship and family ties to establish a Tutsi monarchy, with clear hereditary lines and titles. Although the titles and mechanisms of nobility, in this case, were not as clearly codified as they were under Ethiopia's Solomonic monarchy, these processes nonetheless gave rise to a cohesive political order that came to govern a cohesive Rwandan state.[338]

The ancient Rwandan monarchy ruled over a territory that included a large number of sedentary agriculturalists who came to be known as the Hutu, as well as a small group known as the Twa. Although the terms Tutsi, Hutu, and Twa are now considered ethnic designations, this is not how they were understood in historical terms. Rather, especially in the case of the Tutsi and the Hutu, these classifications denoted occupation, class, and status, rather than any real primordial ethnic origin. In this vein, Hutu was the name given to the farmers and laborers who were outside the ruling pastoralist class. These sedentary populations did not travel as freely as the Tutsi, but many came to join the Tutsi ruling class through the same kinship, marriage, and familial ties that constituted the Tutsi ruling nobility. A person who was initially considered Hutu, but who, through virtue of new familial links with the nobility or through relocation and change in occupation gained access to the nobility, was no longer considered a Hutu but a Tutsi.[339] Conversely, a Tutsi who had

[338] As with the violence trap framework, political orders with clear lines of hierarchy and governance are considered pre-modern states, although these states lacked, of course, the bureaucratic pillars undermining the modern state.
[339] Williams, *War and Conflict in Africa*.

lost significant numbers of cattle or other signifiers of wealth would no longer be considered a Tutsi but a Hutu.[340]

It would be inaccurate to say that ethnicity was the basis of elite construction in ancient Rwanda. Rather, the ancient Rwandan political order constituted patronage links between the ruling Tutsi families proper, and the other Tutsi populations who gained access to the ruling family by virtue of occupational trade or familial links. As a result, ancient Rwanda, in some ways, bore the markings of a basic natural state, with contractual (though not formal) administrative links, clear hierarchical traditions, and with some specialized social and political (though not economic) functions. This accentuates the validity of employing Rwanda as an MSS comparative case study with Ethiopia, as the Ethiopian empire, particularly before the twentieth-century modernization campaigns, could also be considered a basic natural state. A point of clarification must be made here, lest these analytic narratives are equated to the romanticization of the Tutsi monarchy that underpins some of the propaganda efforts of the modern Rwandan state. Pre-colonial Rwanda was no model of an advanced, pluralist order. The Tutsi ruling elites dominated all political and economic life, monopolizing and extracting resources, and fashioning themselves as the rightful owners of the Rwandan state. Furthermore, unlike in ancient Ethiopia, which maintained more advanced forms of patronage with non-Solomonic nobility and Orthodox church elites, there was little differentiation within the Tutsi ruling elite. In simple terms, both the ruling elites and the non-ruling elites in pre-colonial Rwanda were Tutsi; Hutu agrarian populations often found themselves at the whim and mercy of their Tutsi overlords.

---

[340] Ibid.

Nevertheless, pre-colonial Rwanda sustained a basic but stable political system, with a semblance of peace and order under a pre-modern state. Certainly, the Tutsi monarchy sustained a far more advanced pre-modern order than the small-scale monarchies in other parts of Africa, or even parts of pre-modern Europe. The categorizations here must rely on the extent to which rents and patronage-driven institutional[341] interactions result in the doorstep conditions of perpetuity, impersonality, and inclusivity. The Tutsi monarchy achieved significant advances in the levels of perpetuity, marked by their ability to sustain a centuries-old political order with clear mechanisms of governance, succession, and rule. To the extent that class identities exhibited some potential for mobility, as in the fluidity of Hutu and Tutsi identity, ancient Rwanda also exhibited levels of inclusivity, though nowhere near the levels that would be expected in a mature natural state or an open access order.

The levels of impersonality achieved during this period are more difficult to pinpoint, given the lack of primary sources relating to how the Tutsi king conducted his affairs with other members of the Tutsi elite. However, available sources do indicate that there were at least variations in the levels of impersonality adopted by different kings under the Tutsi monarchy. By the seventeenth century, 'Tutsi' had come to denote an entire aristocracy of cattle-owning pastoralists, indicating an economic basis of elite-hood beyond the familial and kinship ties of patronage that denoted the former class of elites.[342] In the mid-nineteenth century, however, King Rwabugiri abolished some of the kinship ties and monarchical lineages that built the Tutsi empire, instead installing more

---

[341] These mechanisms are considered institutional or contractual in the informal, or extralegal sense. Such informal codes were later used as the basis for standardization of elite privileges and patronage networks. Such attention to informal and pre-modern contractual arrangements is a key distinction from alternative compelling models of contractualist transactions, such as those of Mousseau which require formal mechanisms of third-party enforcement.

[342] Jefremovas, "Fictions of Ethnicity."

centralized mechanisms of governance based on his person.[343] Rwabugiri's campaigns, aided by military conquest and centralization of administrative authority may be compared, in some ways, to the modernization campaigns under Emperor Menelik in Ethiopia, though Menelik chose to maintain patronage with the *de facto* federation of kings. In Rwanda, these campaigns indicated a shift in the contours of social order and class identity, as kinship ties and lord-vassal relationships were replaced with more personal patron-client (one-to-one) ties. However, such ties were still maintained between a now-narrow ruling elite, constituting King Rwabugiri and his family and a larger group of now second-order Tutsi elites who helped sustain his rule.

Although Rwabugiri's centralization campaigns diminished the levels of impersonality in the Rwandan political order, they did not necessarily renegotiate the new economic basis for Tutsi elite-hood. In short, then, from the fifteenth century to the nineteenth century, political transitions in the Rwandan monarchy drew upon sophisticated mechanisms for patronage, administration, and governance to sustain measured levels of perpetuity, and to a lesser extent, inclusivity and impersonality. These transformations resulted in more specialized social functions, despite a clear period of reversal in the levels of impersonality in the modern era of the nineteenth century. These transformations did not necessarily result in specialized economic functions, as would be expected in a mature natural state; the economy was still at a primitive agrarian stage. However, to the extent that a pre-modern state could achieve the doorstep conditions of a basic natural state, the transitions here do indicate that the Rwandan monarchy functioned in this manner.

Clearly, German and Belgian colonial incursions into Rwanda in the late-nineteenth and twentieth centuries would have interrupted the trajectory of ancient Rwanda's political

---

[343] Ibid.

development. Unlike Menelik's Ethiopia, which drew upon the wide network of non-ruling elites in the federation of kings to muster a unified national resistance against European colonial invasion, the high levels of personality in Rwanda's ruling elite allowed the Germans to make quick inroads into colonial administrative rule. Specifically, the Germans were able to co-opt Rwabugiri's son, King Yuhi Musinga, allowing him to sustain even more personal patronage ties, aided by European weapons, in exchange for his vassalage to German overlords. German rule, however, was short-sustained, given Germany's loss in World War I. Following this loss, parts of Rwanda were awarded to Belgium under a League of Nations mandate in 1919. Belgium subsequently expanded its rule over Rwanda and modern-day Burundi in the 1920s and 1930s, sustaining colonial governance over Rwanda until its independence in 1962. Unlike German colonial rule, Belgian colonialism dramatically altered the structural foundations of Rwandan political order.

The Belgians did not follow the German tradition of maintaining highly personalized ties with the Rwandan king to sustain a form of indirect rule. Rather, Rwandan political order drew upon what is known as the Hamitic hypothesis to emphasize the ethnic dimensions of Tutsi-Hutu class distinctions in Rwandan society.[344] Based on ahistorical ideas of racial superiority, the Hamitic hypothesis attributes the springing of advanced civilizations in Northeast Africa to Caucasian nomadic pastoralists. Along these lines, the Belgians constructed the Tutsis as a racially superior Hamitic group of pastoralists with origins in southern Ethiopia; conversely, the Hutus were constructed as a racially inferior group of Bantus.[345]

---

[344] Buckley-zistel, "Dividing and Uniting."
[345] Ibid.

These class reconstructions moved the political economy basis for class identity with a culturalist dimension based on primordial ethnic identity. In this way, the Belgians constructed themselves as the undisputed ruling elites, owing to their superior civilization. To sustain their rule, the Belgians maintained patronage ties with a newly constituted group of ethnic Tutsi elites. Gone were the fluid constructions of elite-hood that maintained political economy variables such as occupation, familial links, and cattle ownership. Instead, the Belgians emphasized physical distinctions such as browner skin and straighter nasal features associated with many of the populations found in Eastern Africa. Deemed primordially superior, the Tutsis were guaranteed priority access to political and social functions such as administrative governance and education. The Tutsis seemed to satisfy both the job function and simplistic racial criteria of the Hamitic hypothesis—they were nomadic pastoralists with physical features that more closely resembled Caucasians. For this reason, the Hutus were deemed negroes, unable to participate in the networks of elite governance, and were thus restricted to agrarian social functions. This reconstruction of elites was highly effective, as it allowed the Belgians to co-opt an entire ethnic group into governing a territory that was made up of an overwhelming majority of Hutus.

So how did these elite reconstructions impact the basic natural state created by the Rwandan monarchy? First, levels of perpetuity were highly impacted as patronage links and administrative codes were no longer transactional but rather primordial. The basis for elite-hood was fixed, and specialized social functions gave way to a rigid and permanent hierarchy. Tutsis, for their part, had no incentive to try to upset this new institutional equilibrium. Given that this period also introduced much of modern mechanisms of governance and economic opportunity to the Rwandan state, the new ethnic elites were only too willing to participate in the new political order.

It is unclear whether Rwanda would have regressed to a fragile state at this point, given the sheer military superiority of the Belgians. However, transitions toward a mature natural state were certainly unthinkable, as there were no possible means by which other elites could be co-opted or elite coalitions re-adjusted. To the extent that institutional patronage links were codified and formalized, they reinforced the rigidity of the political order rather than serving as the means by which higher levels of perpetuity and inclusivity could be achieved. To that end, the Belgian administrators issued ethnic ID cards to aid with granting greater employment and education opportunities to the superior-deemed Tutsis.[346] Belgian administrative rules relied on Tutsi chiefs to expropriate and provide agricultural laborers, and formalization of some traditional legal institutions as native tribunals actually gave more power to the Tutsi.[347] This made it harder for Hutu laborers to escape oppressive landlords, while ethnic class distinctions were further institutionalized through cultural productions meant to valorize Tutsi history.[348] In short, this period shows significant levels of political regression rather than development, as well as a racialization of ethnic identity that many scholars identify as one of the antecedent conditions of the Rwandan genocide.[349]

Eventually, the rigidity of the institutional equilibrium under Belgian rule made it impossible for Rwanda to achieve the third operative condition necessary for political development, that is, consolidated state control of the political-military apparatus. The restriction of rents, in this case, opportunities for employment, education, and administrative appointments to an elite, along a

---

[346] Storey, "Structural adjustment, state power & genocide"; Williams, *War and Conflict in Africa*.
[347] Jefremovas, "Fictions of Ethnicity."
[348] Ibid.
[349] Fujii, *Webs of Violence in Rwanda*; Buckley-zistel, "Dividing and Uniting"; Storey, "Structural adjustment, state power & genocide."

narrow ethnic criterion, made it impossible to stave off actors with violent potential, particularly given that the Hutu constituted an overwhelming majority of the population. Toward the end of the Belgian colonial era, in the late 1950s, this gave rise to a wave of popular anti-Tutsi rhetoric among organized Hutus, as well as a period of turbulence, land invasions, and bloodshed.[350] In a desperate attempt to restructure institutional equilibria, the Belgians responded to violent organizational capabilities by switching their allegiance to the Hutus.[351]

As a result, starting in 1959, the Belgians co-opted transformational objectives of Hutu social movements, reconstructing the Hutus as elites by virtue of their indigenous or native status, and the Tutsis as feudal settlers and invaders.[352] Cultural institutions also responded to these new institutional incentives, attempting to highlight positive attributes of Hutus such as 'humbleness' in place of qualities such as 'cleverness' and 'wiliness' that were previously attributed to Tutsis.[353] The faux-progressive pretentions of these new allegiances notwithstanding, it is important to note that this transition marked Belgium's willingness to adopt the colonial practices of powers like Britain, in pitting 'natives' against 'settlers' to sustain colonial rule.[354] Beyond these idiosyncratic insights from postcolonial theory, it is important not to understate the theoretical implications of these empirical facts, especially in regard to their reinforcement of the violence trap framework. While postcolonial approaches may fall short here, the violence trap's political economy approach helps to explain why Belgian pragmatism would trump Belgian ideals of racial superiority when the country's colonial enterprise was threatened.

---

[350] Jefremovas, "Fictions of Ethnicity"; Williams, *War and Conflict in Africa*.
[351] Jefremovas, "Fictions of Ethnicity"; Williams, *War and Conflict in Africa*.
[352] Eramian, "Ethnic Boundaries in Contemporary Rwanda."
[353] Ibid.
[354] Mamdani, "Beyond Settler and Native."

To sum up, one of the fundamental pillars of this theory is that ruling elites are incentivized to provide rents to elite actors that pose a potential for violence. The sophistication and adaptive capability of these rents-patronage networks is what allows political development to occur when institutional transitions produce new incentives. Here, the Belgians responded too late, and once it was no longer possible to achieve a new institutional order.

It would be interesting to draw up a counterfactual narrative here, to examine whether institutional transitions would have resulted in a more stable order if the Belgians had enacted some of these institutional provisions earlier, and with more sophistication. For instance, once the League of Nations trusteeship ended in 1945, and Belgium was able to consolidate its territorial rule over parts of central and eastern Africa, it could have chosen to co-opt some Hutu elites to stave off the potential for organized mass revolt over ethnic lines. This likely would not have staved off independence, as European colonial rule could never sustain an organic political order in Africa, and anti-colonial movements in Rwanda would have been affected by diffusion effects of anti-colonial movements in other parts of Africa. Certainly, though, this may have predicated a more credible order; in some ways, it may have allowed ethnic grievances to blow off steam, so to speak, negating the ethnicized institutional equilibrium that emerged in post-colonial Rwanda, and helped contribute to the genocide. In some ways, then, the pure, unabetted racism of Belgian colonial enterprise, especially compared to the more nuanced colonial administrative regimes of powers like France and Britain, precluded a bounded rational response to the dictates of institutional governance. In purest terms, Belgian colonial governance not only failed, but also resulted in rigid structures that would negatively impact institutional equilibria in post-colonial Rwanda.

In any case, independence from Belgium would have marked the first critical juncture for renegotiating institutional equilibria in the Rwandan political order. However, what distinguishes the bounded rationality of the violence trap framework from historical institutionalism is that institutional change relies not strictly on path dependence or on exogenous shocks, but on institutional incentives. Accordingly, bounded rationalism would incentivize a new group of Hutu elites to emerge, who took advantage of the ethnic basis of elite-hood to sustain an ethnicized political order at the expense of the Tutsis. Some qualifications must be made here, as initial responses to institutional incentives signaled a potential for transition toward more credibility and perpetuity. In the 1950s, as Rwanda struggled to respond to social transformations and new institutional incentives, elite-patronage networks came to favor Tutsis and Hutus in southern and central parts of Rwanda, over those in the other parts of the territory.[355] The Belgians could not completely sideline the Tutsis, because, by this point, Tutsis had come to constitute a new educated elite, owing to the benefits of colonial modernization schemes. Many of the new administrative appointments were granted to Hutus from the south rather than the north. Following independence, the ruling elite constituted a group of moderate southern Hutus who sought to enact a new patronage regime by co-opting educated and wealthy Tutsis.

In this vein, post-colonial Rwanda's first elected president, Gregoire Kayibanda, a Hutu from the south, signaled intentions to construct a new cultural order based on progressive social transformations.[356] By this point, however, democratic ideals and socialist mantras proved empty when facing up to institutional incentives. In line with the violence trap framework and much of

---

[355] Clark, "Reconciliation in Rwanda."
[356] Ibid.

the new institutionalism literature, ethnic elites respond to institutional incentives to reify ethnicity as their own claim to elite-hood.[357] Kayibanda did not depict himself as an ethnic elite, but as a transformative one. It was a fool's errand in the hyper-ethnicized incentives and constraints of what had become the post-colonial Rwandan political order. As it turned out, Rwanda's second president, Juvenal Habyarimana, elected in 1973, was an ethnic Hutu from the north.[358] President Habyarimana himself did not fashion himself as an ethnic elite; many of his policies indicated a liberal orientation and a commitment to rural development.[359] Habyarimana's apparent approach to technocratic development and governance was, in fact, lauded by Western donors and economic experts.[360]

However, policies by themselves do not constitute institutions. More specifically, political bargains, rather than economic policies, are what underlie the rents-patronage mechanisms that respond to the violence trap. It is significant, then, that Habyarimana, while not himself an extremist, surrounded himself with northern Hutu elites in the higher levels of administration.[361] Northern Hutus were more ethnicized, in the sense that they considered themselves Hutus first; indeed, many moderate Hutus, such as Prime Minister Agathe Uwilingiyimana, were later targeted during the Rwandan genocide.[362] Furthermore, President Habyarimana further reified the ethnic basis of elite-hood and class identity by imposing ethnic quotas for administrative posts and

---

[357] See, for instance, Posner, "Political Salience of Cultural Difference."
[358] Clark, "Reconciliation in Rwanda."
[359] Uvin, *Development Enterprise in Rwanda*.
[360] Ibid.
[361] Clark, "Reconciliation in Rwanda."
[362] Ibid.

employment, even retaining the ethnic ID cards that were a fundamental feature of institutional codification in colonial Rwanda's political order.[363]

Incentives and constraints primarily stemmed from how ethnicity was codified in Rwanda's political institutions; these institutional incentives were neither reworked during independence in 1962 nor in 1973. The boundedly rational response to the incentives stemming from these institutions was violent ethnic mobilization, leading to political and economic suppression of Tutsis by northern Hutu members of Habyarimana's administration. This allowed elite Hutus to draw rudimentary patronage links with the Hutu masses, further igniting anti-Tutsi sentiment in all parts of the Rwandan polity. Reinforcing the violence trap, Hutu-Hutu patronage ties were further incentivized as Hutus outside the administration mustered the capability for violence. Unsurprisingly, Habyarimana's assassination in 1974 led to the mass, unorganized, and sporadic violence of the Rwandan genocide. By this point, engrieved Tutsis had also responded in boundedly rational terms to the incentives of the prevailing order, organizing themselves mostly under the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) in neighboring Uganda. Before the shooting down of Habyarimana's plane that sparked the genocide then, Rwanda was engaged in a three-year civil war with the RPF.

Notwithstanding the underlying genocidal propaganda, media and militia affiliated with Hutu elites immediately accused the Tutsi-dominated RPF of shooting down Habyrarimana's plane, a claim given more credence considering that several international lawyers formally accused RPF military generals of the crime; most foreign observers maintain that the plane was shot down by

---

[363] Uvin, *Development Enterprise in Rwanda*.

Hutu extremists.[364] While President Kagame and the RPF fervently deny these charges, from a bounded rationality standpoint, it would make more sense that the RPF was indeed responsible. Pre-genocide Rwanda belied a fragile state. The state's collapse was no doubt precipitated by economic factors as well;[365] however, given the transformations highlighted here, the Rwandan political order had no chance of achieving a consolidated state control of the political-military apparatus, much less a level of inclusivity that would sustain a basic political order. With the collapse of the state, the RPF, as the most organized violent actor, aided by international sympathy toward Tutsis, was able to swoop in to administer the new state. In this campaign, the RPF itself predictably conducted a slew of violent campaigns and atrocities on its way to consolidating state power.[366]

Whether the RPF would have directly conducted the operation that assassinated Habyarimana is debatable. But it is also worth considering whether Hutu elites had the incentive and capability to do so. There were very few constraints against anti-Tutsi violence under Habyarimana, as many of the Hutus in official positions were themselves engaged in genocidal rhetoric. There would have been relatively less incentive, then, for Hutu elites to engineer this assassination, especially since events were already moving in their favor, and the regime maintained strong patronage ties with them. It may certainly have been that extremist Hutus were dissatisfied with the trajectory of negotiations between Habyarimana and the RPF, which had gone as far as offering 40 percent of positions in the armed forces and 50 percent of positions in the officer corps to RPF militants.[367]

---

[364] Magnarellav, "Explaining Rwanda's 1994 genocide"; Robinson and Ghahraman, "Can Rwandan President Kagame be held responsible?"
[365] Ibid.
[366] Waldorf, "Revisiting Hotel Rwanda."
[367] Magnarellav, "Explaining Rwanda's 1994 genocide."

Still, it is not clear how Hutu militias would have mustered the capability to assassinate the president. Furthermore, it is not clear that the RPF, which had mustered significant military strength, as well as the support of some foreign powers, would have been satisfied with simply sharing power. Therefore, it is fair to suspect that the RPF may have been involved, perhaps indirectly, in this operation, given the speed with which it was able to enter Rwanda from Uganda and sustain the political order that has lasted until the present day.

The fundamentals of the Rwandan genocide, including the civil war that preceded it, have been the subject of much scholarly inquiry and will not be addressed further here. In line with the violence trap's emphasis on institution and state-building the next section of this chapter will focus on the institutional transitions in Rwanda under the RPF. As indicated earlier, I argue that notwithstanding the RPF's violent and bloody rise to power, it has since rapidly transformed Rwanda's institutions, achieving a mature natural state that exhibits significant levels of perpetuity, impersonality, and inclusivity. Unlike Ethiopia, the Rwandan body politic has managed to completely remove the value of ethnic rents, and extend political and economic access to a broad swatch of elites beyond the RPF core. The RPF achieved these development transitions despite the negative critical juncture of the Rwandan genocide. Accordingly, the following section illustrates how contemporary Rwanda has been able to achieve significantly different institutional outcomes from Ethiopia, despite sharing a similar pre-colonial history. The focus will be on the construction of new elites, including the patronage networks that bind ruling and non-ruling elites, the institutional mechanisms for enforcing contracts, and the state's consolidation of political-military control.

3.2.2 Elites, Rents, and Transitions in Contemporary Rwanda

As illustrated in the previous sub-section, pre-colonial Rwanda's complex system of elite patronage reverted toward a political order that created a rigid basis for elite-hood. Elite construction continued to favor primordial ethnic criteria in post-colonial Rwanda, eventually disintegrating rents-based mechanisms of social order, and precluding the state's consolidated control over the political-military apparatus. This, coupled with the tentative nature of contracts and agreements in Rwanda's increasingly violent polity eventually led to the collapse of the state, at the heels of the Rwandan genocide. One of the main actors of the Rwandan civil war, the Uganda-based Tutsi rebel group, the Rwandan Patriotic Front, led by Paul Kagame, was well-positioned to seize control of the state soon after the genocide. Leveraging the mechanisms of peace-keeping and transitional justice that pervaded in the aftermath of the genocide, the RPF subsequently initiated a new state-building and nation-building agenda to carve out a new Rwandan state under a Tutsi-led government.[368]

The analytic narratives that follow attempt to identify how prevailing incentives (and constraints) in the aftermath of the genocide continued to drive elite preferences in new ways, resulting in new institutional equilibria. These new equilibria would also institute new networks of elite patronage, resulting in transitions toward a mature natural state. Specifically, these institutional transitions gradually provided a standardized basis for elite privilege, bolstered by highly efficient bureaucratic mechanisms that increased the levels of perpetuity and inclusivity in the new Rwandan polity. These transitions also allowed the state to reconsolidate control over the political-military apparatus. I will examine below the institutional mechanisms behind these

---

[368] Thomson, *From Genocide to Precarious Peace*.

transitions, with a focus on the 'one Rwanda' pillar of the country's constitution, the top-down approach to transitional justice, and the bottom-up approach to bureaucratic administration. I argue that the RPF leveraged the one-Rwanda policy and the post-genocide reconciliation programs towards three institutional ends: to extend the arms of the state apparatus and enforce a monopoly over violence; to replace the ethnic criteria for rents and social mobility with ideological and meritocratic criteria; and to create a political environment that prioritized enforcement of social and economic contracts. These changes allowed Rwanda to evade the ethnic rents-based violence traps plaguing the Ethiopian polity, instituting perhaps the only mature natural state in eastern Africa.[369]

It is important to begin with the institutional mechanisms that allowed the Rwandan state to achieve consolidated control over the political-military apparatus. Out of the three conditions for political development in the violence trap framework, this is the most difficult to achieve, primarily because it involves processes by which the mechanisms of violence are professionalized and bureaucratized, and subjected to a civilian-political authority.[370] This condition moves beyond the Weberian conception of a state's monopoly over violence, emphasizing the specialization of authority that shields the state military from the influence of rival political elites. In a counter-intuitive nod to prevailing theories of democracy, assurances of regime security are one of the mechanisms that disincentivize the private use of violent capabilities to secure political ends.[371]

---

[369] Kenya may be a welcome exception, owing to a political climate that similarly encourages contracts enforcement, and diminishes the value of ethnic rents; however, Kenya has not been as aggressive in disincentivizing ethnic politics, and its levels of administrative corruption are significantly much higher. Nevertheless, while it makes for an interesting cross-case comparison with Rwanda, Kenya as a case study is outside the scope of this study.

[370] North, Wallis, and Weingast, *Violence and Social Order*.

[371] Bates, *The Development Dilemma*.

To that end, this condition relies on the extent to which the bureaucratic hierarchy leading from Rwanda's armed forces to the civilian corps to the Chief of Staff and then the commander-in-chief, President Paul Kagame, is sheltered from rival political elites seeking to leverage their influence over factions of the military. Indeed, if consolidated state control of the political-military apparatus were the only criterion for political development, then personalized authoritarian dictatorships would be considered the most developed. This is where the three operative conditions for political development sometimes come in tension with one another, since achieving this condition at the expense of standardized elite privileges and strong contracts enforcement may not result in political development. More specifically, a narrow focus on the state's consolidated political-military control may lead to elevated levels of personality, even while achieving levels of perpetuity that are necessary for political development. In other words, state consolidated control of the political-military apparatus ultimately has to be considered in tandem with the state of elite privileges and contracts enforcement, as all three of these operative conditions have varying effects on each of the three dependent variables of concern, that is, perpetuity, inclusivity, and impersonality.

As seen in the Ethiopian case study in Chapter 2, ethnicity is a double-edged sword when it comes to its effect on the different conditions for political development. On the one hand, institutional coethnicity sometimes results in greater institutional efficiency, not necessarily because co-ethnics are likely to trust one another implicitly, but because they operate under reduced transaction costs that make it possible to engage in boundedly rational behavior such as reciprocity and signaling.[372] This is evident in the Chapter 2 discussion of the TPLF-EPRDF's

---

[372] *See:* Posner *et al.*, *Coethnicity: Diversity and the Dilemmas of Collective Action*.

ethnic monopoly over military and political operations in Ethiopia, leading initially to an efficient military enterprise that sustained a basic political order for 27 years. However, continued reliance on ethnic rents also handicaps the transition toward a mature natural state, because ethnicity serves as a rigid elite marker, precluding the co-optation of non-ruling elites. In other words, at the lower stages of political development, specifically in the transition from a fragile state to a basic natural order, reliance on co-ethnicity may result in lower levels of personality, and higher levels of perpetuity, due to stronger attention to contractual norms of reciprocity and credible signaling. In the subsequent move from a basic natural state toward a mature natural state, however, it becomes important to reduce the political salience of ethnic rents, even at the expense of less impersonality, because broader elite networks are necessary to institute a more credible and inclusive political order.

Considering these complexities, it could be argued that the RPF initially leveraged coethnicity, instituting a Tutsi-dominated political-military apparatus to reduce incentives for private violence. By 2004, ten years after the genocide, 70 percent of the most important government offices were held by Tutsis; furthermore, accentuating the increasing importance of party membership, 80 percent of these offices were held by RPF party members. [373] In a country where over 80 percent of the population was identified as Hutu, this over-representation of Tutsi elites certainly would have amounted to a minority dictatorship. However, paradoxically, for Tutsi elites, this provided a strong sense of regime security, since the signaling of the security of their status incentivized them to initiate more technocratic governance mechanisms. Under this order, Tutsi elites had virtually no incentive to oppose the RPF; the few who did were labeled as ‘monarchists’ and

---

[373] Reyntjens, “Rwanda, Ten Years On,” 188.

targeted for public derision.[374] With increased access to educational and employment opportunities, Tutsis supported the RPF government *en masse*, dominating the military officer corps and civilian government. Through strong intra-elite cohesion, then, civilian control over the military was easily established within a decade after the genocide.

As with the Ethiopian case under the TPLF-EPRDF, increased over-representation of Tutsi in political and military leadership eventually proved untenable, threatening the stability of the RPF-led order. Several personnel decisions indicate that the RPF eventually realized this as a political problem, certainly more quickly than the TPLF did in Ethiopia. Examples include the appointments of Marcel Gatsinzi and Albert Murasira, members of the Hutu-led military during the genocide, to Minister of Defense and Army Chief of Staff in 2002 and 2007, respectively; Major General Murasira now serves as Minister of Defense.[375] In 2018, a cabinet reshuffle awarded 14 of 33 government ministries to Hutus;[376] as of 2021, Hutus constituted 20 of the 29 members of the national government.[377] These personnel allocations indicate some conciliation toward shared ethnic governance; still, considering Rwanda's majority Hutu population, it indicates some level of continued Tutsi domination in government.

Indeed, if leadership structure or personnel allocation were the only basis for assessing Rwanda's political order, then this order would again bear a strong resemblance to the TPLF-EPRDF's basic natural state in Ethiopia. Like the Ethiopian case, coethnicity in security and political institutions sufficiently lowered transaction costs to establish credible reciprocal links

---

[374] Waldorf, "Revisiting Hotel Rwanda," 107.
[375] Reyntjens, "Rwanda."
[376] Ibid.
[377] Reyntjens, "From Ethnic Amnesia to Ethnocracy."

among the Tutsi ruling elite, disincentivizing rebellion and violent contention.[378] This made it very unlikely that the RPF would face rebellion against its rule in the form of organized violence.[379] What distinguished the Rwandan case from the TPLF-EPRDF's Ethiopia, however, was that the Rwandan state-building and nation-building project did not emphasize the political salience of ethnic rents; rather, it went further in introducing levels of inclusivity and perpetuity to its instruments of governance. Coethnicity allowed Rwanda to achieve significant levels of perpetuity and impersonality, through strong and unrivaled state consolidation of the political-military apparatus. However, by virtue of its bottom-up mechanisms for strong technocratic bureaucratic governance, its top-down nation-building project predicated on one Rwanda reconciliation, and its sophisticated mechanisms for inter-elite engagement, Rwanda avoided the violence trap that befell the TPLF-EPRDF's basic natural state. In other words, these mechanisms allowed Rwanda to achieve a standardized set of elite privileges and credible contracts enforcement regimes, even allowing Rwanda to transition into a mature natural state.

In many ways, Rwanda's polity is one of the most unique in the African continent, due to its coupling of strong, capable technocratic governance of socio-economic affairs with poor provisions for pluralism and democracy.[380] It is perhaps no surprise that Rwanda, in its contemporary public discourse, often compares itself with Singapore, an East Asian state that was able to leverage a similar mix of authoritarian politics and technocratic administrative governance on its way toward achieving an open access order. A deeper dive into relevant governance indices

---

[378] Unlike the ethnic based coalition that constituted TPLF-EPRDF regime, the RPF additionally benefited from coethnicity within its party ranks, forestalling the type of inter-elite contention that would later befall the former.
[379] Thomson, *Genocide to Precarious Peace*.
[380] Reyntjens, "Rwanda."

clearly reveals this orientation toward bureaucratic efficiency. Under the Mo Ibrahim Index, Rwanda ranks 11th in overall governance, the highest ranking in East Africa, and higher than the more democratically oriented Kenya.[381] This ranking accounts for Rwanda's very low score on participation and inclusion, but also its high scores on rule of law and economic opportunity; indeed, Rwanda is ranked 2nd in public administration and 1st in anti-corruption, indicating the near-absence of corruption in the country's public and private sectors.[382] These same positive indicators on low corruption and strong administrative governance allowed Rwanda to rank amongst the countries with the highest levels of economic freedom for four consecutive years, from 2018 to 2021.[383] Rwanda even ranks among the top-third of countries in the Corruption Perceptions Index[384], although this index over-emphasizes civil liberties and freedoms provisions that disproportionately impact Rwanda's model of governance. In other words, Rwanda would likely rank even higher if this index strictly measured rent-seeking behavior, bribery, and public-sector corruption rather than comparative levels of political freedom.

These indices indicate that Rwanda's government has enacted strong, efficient, accountable bureaucracies that contribute toward achieving perpetuity and inclusivity in its political order. This is important because corruption and the lack of technocratic administrative governance are often the most crucial gaps that completely impede political development in African states, as evidenced in Ethiopia's hyper-ethnicized federal bureaucracy (Chapter 2) and South Sudan's highly

---

[381] Mo Ibrahim Index of African Governance 2021.
[382] Ibid.
[383] Index of Economic Freedom 2021. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, governance challenges related to inflation as well as political crackdowns resulted in Rwanda's decline in this ranking. This is an area that should be of continued interest as Rwanda's polity reconstitutes itself after the pandemic.
[384] Transparency International 2021.

personalized, tentative administrative bureaucracy (Chapter 4). It is easy to chalk these successes up to the RPF's authoritarian efficiency; indeed, and this is also somewhat unique among other African states,[385] Rwanda sustains a pervasive state apparatus that reaches far down into the lower rungs of local community functioning.[386] The success of Rwanda's bureaucracy, however, is not in spite of its top-down authoritarianism but rather because of its consciously designed bottom-up approach to bureaucratic institution-building. At the turn of the Millennium, the Rwandan government announced a comprehensive economic and bureaucratic transformation plan known as Vision 2020, with the ultimate aim of achieving a middle-income polity by 2035. Rwanda later reframed this plan as Vision 2050, with a more comprehensive bureaucratic toolkit that would completely empower local party officials with discretion over social administration, elevating broad groups of urban elites, including women and minorities, to positions of political and business leadership.[387]

In a polity where bureaucratic governance is meritocratic and technocratic, private investment is incentivized by domestic and foreign actors. Politics ceases to become a zero-sum game, as political appointments are not the only means to access elite privileges. Education and entrepreneurship replace politics as viable paths to elite access. So, then, those who aspire to greater wealth or prestige can embark on value-creation activities, rather than inefficient rent-seeking activities such as political appointments or party membership; while ruling elites may still co-opt these emerging elites, the nation's political economy, as a whole, likely still develops in a positive trajectory. As with many states that prioritize pro-business political environments, these

---

[385] Excluding, among a few others, the TPLF-EPRDF's Ethiopia.
[386] Thomson, *Genocide to Precarious Peace*.
[387] Ibid.

transformations in Rwanda have certainly created structural imbalances in terms of access to wealth along with increasing levels of inequality.[388] However, given the lack of abject corruption, and the increasing levers of access to social mobility, the emergence of new groups of educated and wealthy elites forestalls the potential for social unrest or violence.

Again, this attention to the accessibility of rents, or political and economic privileges to broader groups of elites is what distinguishes the violence trap framework from other theories of political development, and certainly from modern theories of democratization. Here, the elite-driven economic transformations have created bottom-up access to elite privileges and opportunities to segments of the Rwandan population previously left out of the elite. This, in turn, creates specialized economic and social functions, creating sophisticated, legal patronage networks between the ruling elites, the RPF, and other groups of educated, wealthy, and/or administrative elites. In other words, then, bureaucratic reforms under Vision 2035 and 2050 have helped to standardize elite privileges as a 'rule of law for elites,' one of the operative conditions for transitions to a mature natural state. This condition is necessary, in fact, for states to achieve levels of perpetuity, impersonality, and inclusivity, in ways that consolidated state control of the political-military apparatus cannot.

Still, this raises two challenges with regard to achieving inclusivity under Rwanda's model of political development; first, the initial state-building project relied on coethnicity predicated on Tutsi-dominated political-military institutions, and second, much of the access to elite privileges comes from association or proximity to the ruling RPF. The second challenge is ongoing, as it requires the RPF to heed greater attention to delinking the party and the state, particularly at the

[388] Ibid; *See also:* Dawson, "Leaving no-one behind?"

highest levels of administrative bureaucracy. I will discuss this ongoing challenge discussed a bit further down in this section. First, though, it is important to pay greater attention to how Rwanda forestalled the violence trap that impeded further political development under the TPLF-EPRDF's basic natural state. More specifically, Rwanda was able to transition toward a mature natural state through the diminishing of ethnic rents, both through its one Rwanda nation-building project and through its repurposing of transitional justice and reconciliation programs as instruments of political patronage.

Nation-building narratives in post-genocide Rwanda have centered on the de-ethnicization of the polity in favor of a new 'Rwandanness,' not as a fictive identity, but as a strategic tool for reconciliation.[389] This decidedly instrumentalist adoption of national identity is bolstered by the 2003 Rwanda Constitution's prohibition against political organization along ethnic, tribal, or religious lines.[390] The Constitution also bans genocidal ideology that leads to negationism or divisionism; indeed, a series of laws enacted from 2001-2008 create mechanisms for enforcing specific criminal codes against negationism and divisionism.[391] Taken at face value, these provisions are enacted by a self-proclaimed visionary government intent on avoiding the country's past mistakes. From a bounded rationality perspective, the political motivations are clear; the RPF sometimes uses these criminal provisions to stifle political challenges against its rule.[392]

However, from a new institutionalist perspective, the incentives stemming from Rwandaness nation-building also diminish the political salience of ethnic identity, and by extension, the value

---

[389] Buckley-zistel, "Dividing and Uniting"; Thomson; *Genocide to Precarious Peace*.
[390] "Rwanda's Constitution of 2003," Art. 57.
[391] Waldorf, "Revisiting Hotel Rwanda."
[392] Thomson; *Genocide to Precarious Peace*; Waldorf, "Revisiting Hotel Rwanda."

of ethnic rents. The RPF's Rwandaness policy effectively bans ethnic identity; specific references to ethnic identity are removed from media, political communications, and educational curricula. With Rwandan national identity deemed the sovereign authority of rights in the country, Rwandan elites are incentivized to find more creative ways for mobilizing political and economic power. Again, this does not automatically result in a pluralistic order; the point here is that diminishing ethnic rents forestalls ethnic rebellion, drastically altering the political calculus and addressing one of the major pitfalls of the violence trap in multiethnic African states. It is important to acknowledge Rwanda's relative advantage in its ability to implement this policy practically; unlike the Ethiopian case, Tutsi and Hutus in Rwanda speak the same language and in many cases are physically indistinguishable from one another. Other African states that seek to adopt such policies may need to think more creatively in terms of adopting a multiethnic national consciousness. However, there is no doubt that the political incentives stemming from Rwandan institutions diminish the potential for violence. Furthermore, doing away with colonial and post-colonial native-settler discourses in multi-ethnic nations results in a progressive nation-building program that serves to reimagine political identities.[393] In extending the reach of elite construction to account for non-Tutsi elites, as well as elites outside the ruling class, Rwanda's nation-building policies result in relatively higher levels of inclusivity and impersonality.

Interestingly, Rwanda's negationism and divisionism policies are also conditioned into new instruments of patronage for enacting stronger levels of perpetuity in the country's political order. More specifically, since the adoption of the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission (NURC), Rwanda has repurposed traditional mechanisms of transitional justice and reconciliation

---

[393] Mamdani, "Beyond Settler and Native."

into programs for securing elite co-optation of broader swaths of society.[394] Ironically, it is these political mechanisms that often open up Rwanda's post-genocide reconciliation programs for criticism, on the grounds that it actually undermines justice in pursuit of political goals.[395] These criticisms are not invalid; whatever the implications for the pursuit of justice, it is important to consider here the extent to which these programs result in greater levels of perpetuity. The two main engines of Rwanda's reconciliation efforts are its traditional courts, or *gacaca*, and its reduction campaigns. Both efforts were lauded as efforts to introduce traditional mechanisms for transitional justice in post-genocide Rwanda; they have also been reconditioned as instruments for providing rents.[396] For instance, Rwanda offers reconciliation aid packages, in return for completing the re-education camps where Rwandaness identity is reinforced. Accordingly, many Hutu ex-genociders took advantage of these post-program aid packages, whereas as many as 200-300 pre-university students do so today on an annual basis.[397] Similar dynamics are observed in the traditional courts, which really function more as platforms for social performance rather than genuine justice:

> *In denouncing others, submitting self-incriminating confessions, and judging their friends and co-ethnics, thousands upon thousands of individual Hutu acted upon and enforced RPF rules, reinforcing the regime with their cooperation in exchange for reduced sentences, security guarantees, the possibility of private gains in the form of personal vengeance or economic windfalls, and opportunities to access public power and social prestige. The RPF unleashed a stream of individualized benefits and sanctions that made "opportunistic investors" of ordinary Hutu who backed RPF rule in their own interests*.[398]

---

[394] Clark, "Reconciliation in Rwanda."
[395] Thomson, *Genocide to Precarious Peace;* Thomson, *Whispering Truth to Power*; Chakravarty, *Investing in Authoritarian Rule.*
[396] Clark, "Reconciliation in Rwanda."
[397] Ibid.
[398] Chakravarty, *Investing in Authoritarian Rule*, 3.

In this vein, the RPF's reconciliation campaigns may be seen, not simply as a means of control and discursive dominance, but also as an intricate means of rents-based state-building and patronage with new groups of urban elites.

It would be inaccurate to claim that Rwandaness nation-building has successfully erased ethnicity. In the lower levels of administrative functioning, community members apparently understand ethnic affiliation and conduct themselves accordingly, without explicitly stating ethnic affinity. For instance, community development programs signify instances of 'performative ethnicity,' whereby wealthy Hutu elites 'perform' the roles of hard work, service, and egalitarianism; similarly, in interactions with those less well-off, wealthy Hutu elites perform normative donor-recipient, patron-client roles through 'equality' gestures such as friendly conversation or offering alcoholic beverages for refreshment.[399] This is the sort of attention to thick description that helps reframe the Rwandan polity's institutional tenets in more nuanced terms. More than anything else, what Rwanda's contemporary nation-building and state-building efforts have appeared to have instituted is a stronger cleavage among social classes and weaker cleavages of ethnic identity. Indeed terms of political preference, ordinary Hutus seem to emphasize a commonality of interests among non-elite segments of the population, both Hutu and Tutsi, showing very little patience for ethnic mobilization.[400]

Finally, at face value, the Rwandan government's efforts at Rwandaness nation-building and performative reconciliation seem effective; 98.2 percent of people identify themselves as Rwandan before any other identity.[401] By codifying mechanisms of special access and privilege to a broad

[399] Eramian, "Ethnic Boundaries in Contemporary Rwanda."
[400] Chakravarty, "Navigating the Middle Ground."
[401] Rwanda Reconciliation Barometer 2020.

group of elites outside the ruling elites, Rwanda has achieved, in part, a standardization of elite privileges that is key for transition toward mature natural orders. Indeed, these reconciliation policies, coupled with successes in technocratic governance, have resulted in elevated levels of perpetuity and impersonality, and to a lesser extent, inclusivity, in the Rwandan political order. This has resulted, in turn, in more specialized social, economic, and political functions, especially at the lower levels of administrative governance.

3.2.3 Prospects for Further Transition and Political Development

Rwanda serves as an incisive MSS comparative case study to the Ethiopian case. Like Ethiopia, pre-colonial Rwanda maintained a sophisticated rents-driven mechanism for enacting a political order, with codified mechanisms of elite interaction, access, and privilege. Like Ethiopia, but in this case, aided by European colonization, Rwanda experienced intense bouts of violence and civil war, undergoing a regression toward a fragile state and near-state collapse. However, unlike Ethiopia, Rwanda, in the three decades after the genocide, has enacted a series of institutional policies such as coethnic mechanisms for civilian military control, meritocratic mechanisms for bottom-up technocratic governance, a reconciliation program based on Rwandaness, and codified mechanisms for access to special privileges and rents for a broad segment of elites beyond the ruling elite. These institutional policies have garnered sufficient levels of perpetuity, inclusivity, and impersonality to classify contemporary Rwanda as a mature natural state. In this vein, contemporary Rwanda has achieved similar levels of political development to Haile Selassie's Ethiopia (Chapter 2), and significantly higher levels than the TPLF-EPRDF's Ethiopia (Chapter 2), Ethiopia under the Prosperity Party (Chapter 2), and South Sudan under the SPLM/A (Chapter 4).

Recent political events in Rwanda indicate that reversion toward a basic natural state is far from a remote possibility. First, as of 2021, political representation of Hutus at the less visible positions of high-level governance remains disproportionately low. For instance, 86 percent of foreign ambassadorships and 86 percent of major army and security positions are believed to be occupied by ethnic Tutsis.[402] Furthermore, Tutsis likely constitute up to 96% of top positions in major parastatals, economic agencies, and public agencies.[403] Such recent trends indicate a concerning confluence among political and economic elites at the higher levels of the country's political order; because standardization of elite privileges beyond the ruling elite is a significant condition for maintaining a mature natural state, Rwanda's political order is likely to revert to a basic natural state in the next decade unless the country maintains clear and transparent provisions for public administration and economic freedom.

The RPF's internal policy incoherence presents another challenge as "t]here has always been an inherent tension between the government's forwardlooking reconciliation narrative, which seeks to erase ethnicity, and its backwardlooking genocide narrative, which inevitably emphasizes ethnicity."[404] The reinforcement of Hutu identity in reconciliation programs, the discursive juxtaposition of Hutu genociders and Tutsi victims, thus serves a regressive purpose, despite the utility of these programs more broadly in maintaining the state's patronage links with Hutu allies. A state cannot be in transition forever, and Rwanda cannot sustain a mature natural state if it seeks to maintain its reconciliation programs indefinitely. Again, the RPF seems to have recognized this, as it has recently paid more attention to new leadership development programs based on pre-

[402] Reyntjens, "From Ethnic Amnesia to Ethnocracy."
[403] Ibid.
[404] Waldorf, "Revisiting Hotel Rwanda," 104.

colonial traditions, including strong engagement with Rwandan diaspora elites.[405] These are excellent mechanisms for maintaining a broad basis for elite privilege, and for maintaining the standardization of elite privileges that is key for sustaining a mature natural state. However, it is important that these programs remain broad and inclusive in their orientation, at least encompassing broad groups of educated elites beyond the RPF and the emerging Tutsi wealthy elite, and even a broader segment of all Rwandan society.

One final risk factor affecting Rwanda's prospects for continued development transition is the country's head of state, President Paul Kagame, as evidenced by increasing levels of political repression at the highest levels of government in Rwanda. While institutional safeguards maintain bottom-up, technocratic mechanisms of meritocratic governance at lower levels of administrative bureaucracy, there is an increasing tendency toward centralization of power at the higher levels. Indeed, in 2015, President Kagame successfully pushed for a constitutional referendum that would allow him to run for three more terms in office. Further, in the most recent cabinet reshuffle in 2018, President Kagame sidelined a number of members of the RPF ruling elite, including his presumed successor, James Musoni.[406] Such actions reinforce the importance of ideology and party loyalty over Tutsi ethnic identity in sustaining Rwanda's political order; in one respect, then, they may be used to show the regime's 'inclusivity' in dealing in equally harsh terms with both Tutsi and Hutu critics.

On the other hand, these actions have also clearly contributed toward lower levels of impersonality, another important variable for the sustenance of political development. In the

[405] Reyntjens, "Rwanda."
[406] Ibid.

advent of the Covid-19 pandemic, the RPF has also embarked on a wave of political and media repression campaigns, including the likely politically motivated prosecution of Paul Rusesabagina, the Hutu activist famously profiled in the movie *Hotel Rwanda* on genocide incitement charges. Indeed, in 2022, Rwanda fell for the first time in the Index of Economic Freedom.[407] Again, such actions alone are not likely to undo Rwanda's mature natural state; however, along with the structural challenges highlighted in this section, they may threaten to reverse Rwanda's recent gains in political development.

Given these impending challenges to sustaining a mature natural state, Rwanda will not likely achieve a final transition toward an open access order in the short term. Consistent with the violence trap framework, this transition involves the diffusion of political and economic power, beyond the current monopoly of the RPF and its network of patrons. With the focus on engaging and empowering urban and diaspora elites in the prevailing institutional equilibrium, there are currently no incentives to empower the majority segments of Rwanda's population, namely, the rural agricultural class.

Though outside the scope of this paper, foreign policy challenges are also likely to introduce constraints that prevent the RPF from opening political space, precluding any transition toward open access in the near term. For instance, Rwanda has recently engaged in a war of words with neighboring Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), which is thought to harbor several Hutu political dissidents. Given its own history of ethnic mobilization in a neighboring country, Uganda, it is likely that these foreign policy challenges provide sufficient regime security threats against the RPF, and from a bounded rationality perspective, constraints against political liberalization.

---

[407] "Index of Economic Freedom, 2022."

Still, these ongoing challenges should not diminish, in analytical terms, Rwanda's achievement of relatively higher levels of political development in East Africa, and the broader region, over the last three decades. Some scholars have hinted that Rwanda's contemporary championing of pro-business policies and technocratic governance, coupled with strong political repression, bears a resemblance to the fragile state that gave rise to the Rwandan genocide.[408] The analysis in this chapter has shown that the structural realities of the Rwandan political order, while far from perfect or democratic, are more nuanced than the most ardent critics of RPF nation-building and state-building may be willing to admit.

---

[408] Uvin, *Development Enterprise in Rwanda*; Thomson, *Whispering Truth to Power*.

Chapter Four: Political Development in South Sudan

As noted in Chapter 1, and demonstrated in subsequent chapters, elite-driven institutional interactions with violence and rents are the norm rather than the exception in states that have not yet addressed the problem of violence without resorting to rents. This category includes fragile states, basic natural states, and mature natural states, and all developing states in Africa would fall into one of these three categories. The violence trap theory conceptualizes political development as a process of institutional transitions that begin at the foundational stages of the fragile state, where the only institutional organization is the state and very little differentiation and specialization exists in the economy.[409] Progress towards open access orders is achieved by incrementally meeting three doorstep conditions: standardization of elite privileges as a 'rule of law' for elites (serving as a blueprint for a more pluralistic rule of law regime), consolidated control of political-military apparatus, and credible property and contract laws that affirm state perpetuity.[410] In fragile states, which have yet to begin achieving any of these doorstep conditions, political-economic interactions are highly personalized and unpredictable, elite privileges and bargains are uncodified and tentative, and the political-military apparatus resides outside the control of the state.

[409] North, Wallis, and Weingast, *Violence and Social Orders*; Weingast, "Resistant to the Rule-of-Law"; Cox, North, and Weingast. "The Violence Trap."

[410] Weingast, "Resistant to the Rule-of-Law."; Cox, North, and Weingast. "The Violence Trap"; North, Wallis, and Weingast. *Violence and Social Orders;* Carugati, Ober, and Weingast, "Is Development Uniquely Modern?"

As I examine in section 4.2, South Sudan exhibits all of these qualities of a fragile state, marking the low levels of development and elevated levels of violence as predictable outcomes of institutional equilibria. In other words, the country faces the same problem faced by fragile states: the inability to form efficient rents-based patronage mechanisms and consolidated state control of the political-military apparatus for transition to a basic natural state. Here, the problem that emerges is elite unwillingness to share rents, the unpredictability of patronage regimes, and the lack of differentiation in the country's political-military apparatus. What emerges is that much like in the Ethiopian case, these phenomena create a condition in which private provision of violence becomes a likely outcome, and the springing of independent economic or political enterprise is unlikely. The institutional outcomes precluding political development, then, are exceptionally low levels of impersonality, perpetuity, and inclusivity. However, idiosyncratic treatment of state-building in South Sudan exceptionalizes the experiences of this young nation, precluding analytical comparison with other cases; because of its dynamic and complex neopatrimonial politics, South Sudan is often considered a unique case, meriting very little comparison with other fragile states or states in the region. Section 4.1 below considers some of these prevailing narratives, and section 4.2 analyzes the institutional logic of South Sudan's fragile state, in line with the violence trap analytical framework.

4.1 Political Development in South Sudan: Failure to Launch?

Compared with the other two cases for this study, South Sudan's history is a great deal shorter and far more recent. South Sudan gained its independence from the Sudan in 2011 and has since struggled in a myriad of ways to consolidate its state apparatus. President Salva Kiir currently leads the country under the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (hereafter, SPLM), a quasi-political party rooted in the militant struggle for independence. In other words, the SPLM began

as a rebel organization and eventually took control of government by relying on its military training to govern. As was the case with the TPLF in Ethiopia, the SPLM also failed to distinguish itself organizationally from the Sudan People's Liberation Army (hereafter, SPLA), a dynamic that would contribute to personal patronage and preclude consolidated state control of the military apparatus.

Scholars have identified how this form of governance leads to a continued culture of violence in the country, and how decision-making at the highest levels of government appears haphazard and unpredictable. One implication of such critiques is that South Sudan has not yet successfully transitioned to statehood. A second implication is that South Sudan's state-building project could launch if only the country's leaders would listen to Western experts. In this sense, the literature on South Sudan does ascribe a greater deal of agency to country leaders than does much of the literature on either Ethiopia or Rwanda; however, agency, in this case, is problematized as the reason that South Sudan has not embarked on much development. In contrast to these perspectives, this chapter illustrates the existence of a complex institutional equilibrium, albeit a fragile one, in South Sudan. The state is undergirded by personalized commitments, tentative agreements, and loose, uncodified network of patronage. While these variables sometimes arise in the literature, they are identified as unique impediments, with no consideration of how these organizational tools undergird the country's political order. This section will review some of these prevailing assessments of impediments to development in South Sudan.

After a decades-long war against Sudan, South Sudan signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005 before declaring its independence through a referendum held in January 2011. Two years later, the country descended into its own civil war. In 2015, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), a regional organization led by Ethiopia, brokered the initial

Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (ARCSS) that failed to stop the violence, and South Sudan once again descended into war. The Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS), signed in 2018, made provisions for power sharing, proposing groundwork for establishing a constitution, based on a decentralized quasi-federal structure with ten administrative states.[411] One could argue that the top-down, elite-driven mechanisms that established these foundational institutions were themselves problematic. However, as I show in Section 4.2, elite bargains are a necessary component for transition to a basic natural state; it is only once a state has reached the conditions of a mature natural state that more pluralistic mechanisms of governance can be envisioned.

In any case, many scholars take for granted that only a complete federal structure, which was proposed in the CPA, would be in line with 'democratic aspirations' of the South Sudanese people.[412] Even then, the basis of the federation was never fully determined. Indeed, in 2015, President Kiir issued a decree increasing the number of administrative regions from 10 to 28, presumably to reduce the power of regional administrators vis-à-vis his central government.[413] President Kiir made similar attempts in 2017, before rescinding the presidential state decree in February 2020.[414] The important question here is what domestic incentives pushed President Kiir to work against the spirit of several peace agreements and frameworks spearheaded with the backing of powerful international powers.

---

[411] R-ARCSS; Mengisteab, *Horn of Africa*.
[412] Johnson, *Sudan's Civil Wars*; Roach, "Peace and Accountability."
[413] Mengisteab, *Horn of Africa*; Roach, "Peace and Accountability."
[414] "Juba Agreement for Peace."

As noted above, a federal system with ten strong regional governments, has been assumed to be a core aspiration of the South Sudanese people; thus, an obvious line of analysis would be that the ruling elites in the country do not exhibit democratic responsiveness and accountability.[415] However, while correct, such assessments do not necessarily address the constraints and incentives driving elite behavior, which is important to address before pluralistic democratic governance can be envisaged. For instance, one solution often proposed in the context of South Sudan, as with other fragile states, is to foster social cohesion and build strong institutions, in this case, to affirm a democratic federal structure.[416] However, it is unclear how strong institutions can be built without addressing the underlying incentives that inform bounded rationality, and how social cohesion can be achieved without a cohesive network of interacting elites. This includes the intra-elite bargains that undergird the constitution-building process as the foundational institution, as well as the ways in which administrative regions are constructed and governed, and the institutionalization of clear political and military structures under a consolidated state.

Federalism, by itself, certainly does not guarantee a pluralistic political order in South Sudan. Indeed, federalism in many states in the Horn of Africa has simply been appropriated as a codification of patronage, by which elites can maintain center-periphery links.[417] So, federalism may be one of the mechanisms by which intra-elite relations and bargains are codified; to the extent that federalism fails to do so, however, it does not address the institutional impediments to development. For this reason, Western attempts at intervention, such as the hard work of the United States-United Kingdom-Norway working group dubbed the 'Troika,' often ignore complex

---

[415] Roach, "Peace and Accountability"; Johnson, *Sudan's Civil Wars*; Johnson, *The Untold Story*.
[416] Johnson, *Sudan's Civil Wars*.
[417] Mengisteab, *Horn of Africa*.

domestic dynamics undergirding elite incentives for decision-making.[418] Indeed, a recent report identifies that clientelism is rampant in South Sudan, interspersed with international networks, including banks, investors, and foreign governments; however, the same report calls for a response based on US sanctions against GoSS (Government of South Sudan) officials.[419] Here, again, it is unclear how such actions would address the potential for violence and rents simultaneously; as illustrated in Chapter 1, development policy initiatives that seek to undo clientelist networks without providing a viable alternative solution for managing violence and sustaining social order are not sustainable.

In addition to the review of constitutional politics above, it is important to review two related state-building challenges in South Sudan, regarding the institutional and extra-institutional impediments to rule of law and the incentives driving the decisions of SPLM ruling elites. First, despite the lack of strong institutional provisions, it is wrong to assume that South Sudan is completely devoid of a legal code, especially given the slew of customary and religious provisions. However, external interventions seeking to implement universal standards of legal institution-building and professionalization of the judiciary have failed because they have ignored existing informal mechanisms, because they assume a state propensity to professionalize when the formal state apparatus itself is nearly non-existent, and because top-down formal legal provisions simply provide the veneer of legality to the SPLM and its elite affiliates who can access formal provisions.[420]

---

[418] Roach, "Peace and Accountability."
[419] Sentry Project, "Taking of South Sudan."
[420] Ibreck, *South Sudan's Injustice System*.

Along these lines, South Sudanese citizens have been found to share concerns that traverse ethnic and tribal divides, concerns having to do with the growing pains of uneven modernization, including commodification and monetization of productive resources.[421] Cultures of corruption are rooted in these new industrializing spaces, especially where new elites are involved, leading to widespread distrust of government and its affiliates.[422] The social response to these modernizing challenges includes the adoption of discourse that conflates land with blood in the moral sense, showing a militant claim to land that was liberated through force.[423] In this vein, discursive markers lead to social salience of territorial and administrative boundaries, pre-emptively diminishing future gains from adoption of a true federalism system, instead incentivizing more communal conflicts. However, as illustrated in section 4.2 below, these outcomes arise, not from the adoption of moralistic discursive markers but from the incentives and constraints represented in SPLM relations and interactions with elite clients and affiliates.

Second, and along these lines, the prevailing narrative of South Sudan's political order observes a system of patronage, with hierarchical relationships through which ruling elites 'buy off' loyalties of regional elites, especially expressed through Dinka co-optation of Nuer elites in the south.[424] This system is rightly identified as highly fragile and devoid of accountability, due to the dependence of the rents-driven order on sustained high revenue stream from oil.[425] It is easy to simplistically credit South Sudan's ruling elites and their lack of accountability as the cause of all the country's plights; indeed, some have done just that, noting, for instance, President Kiir's heavy

---

[421] Leonardi, "Economy, war, and state."
[422] Ibid.
[423] Ibid.
[424] De Waal, *Real Politics of the Horn.*
[425] Roach, "Peace and Accountability"; Johnson, *The Untold Story*, De Waal, *Real Politics of the Horn.*

investment in the military to the exclusion of basic social spending, and his decision to suddenly halt oil production in 2012 against the advice of the Troika as a sign of clear disregard for his country.[426] However, in this latter case, the decision came after a rift with Sudan due to the latter's high pipeline fees for carrying South Sudan's oil to the Red Sea for export, a dynamic that merits further analysis in section 4.2.

In any case, the idea that South Sudan's problems can be analyzed through a moralistic profiling of leadership personalities has been largely debunked. Instead, many of South Sudan's problems stem from "the fallout of a political crisis within the SPLM; a crisis exacerbated by the lack of cohesion and central control within the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) [and the] combination of a weak patrimonial state, a wartime mentality and lack of peaceful mechanisms for political contestation and transition.[427] In this regard, one of the main impediments to political development has been the militarization of politics arising from a lack of organizational separation between the SPLM and the SPLA. In many ways, personalistic patronage links tie the two organizations together, rather than any clearly codified organizational rules under the state apparatus. These dynamics make it all the more important to adopt an analytical focus on the political economy of institutional equilibria. Institutional equilibria, in this case, refers to the outcome of intra-elite bargains, driven by rents-driven interactions, and the degree to which the outcome of these bargains are tentative and personalistic, or, conversely, codified, predictable, and institutionalized.

[426] Johnson, *The Untold Story*.
[427] Rolandsen, "Another Civil War," 164-165.

From a political economy standpoint, South Sudan's political order rests on personalistic clientelist commitments constructed by SPLM/A ruling elites, who use political rents through tentative political appointments and economic rents from oil and other sources. The stakes of monopolizing state power are also accentuated by a network of international financiers whose aid money is converted into rents.[428] The implication, then, is that grievances will go only so far in explaining the outbreaks of conflict. Furthermore, how South Sudan's ruling elites emerged should be an initial object of examination. The SPLM/A constructed itself as a new military elite, by absorbing other violent militias during the struggle for independence, accumulating resources through wartime predation on civilians, through a slew of post-independence provisions augmenting this dominant social and economic status, and through discursive markers marking former fighters as among the best society has to offer.[429] Reliance on kinship ties and personalistic commitments then allowed the new elites to institutionalize their new social status.

This chapter examines incentives that drive elite decision-making under bounded rationality, showing how SPLM/A ruling elites maintain a semblance of social order through the mechanisms of violence and rents. In the violence trap framework, this focus on elite preferences is not necessarily a problem at the initial stages of state-building; rather, the institutional gaps arise from lack of appropriate incentives, such as provisions for giving elites a sense of protection under a new order. These sorts of counterintuitive 'nudges' help address the development dilemma that often forces ruling elites to privilege their own security over developmental priorities.[430] The assumption is that high-reaching ideals such as democracy and human rights are extremely

---

[428] De Waal, *Real Politics of the Horn;* Mengisteab, *Horn of Africa*.
[429] Pinaud, "Making of a Military Aristocracy"; De Waal, *Real Politics of the Horn*.
[430] Bates, *The Development Dilemma*.

premature considerations in a political context where a formal institutional order is yet to be established. Thus, the political economy approach here focuses on the productive properties of rents-based interactions, in terms of how they sustain order.

More astute accounts of South Sudan's political marketplace have observed important distinctions between the types of public goods that are normatively desired versus those that actually sustain the country's political order. One way these dynamics have been framed is as a "growing tension (indeed, gap) between core and peripheral objectives of accountability that helps explain the volatility" in the country's order.[431] The distinction somewhat artificially drawn here is between core objectives, related to 'public goods' concerns such as democratic responsiveness and transitions to genuine federalism, and peripheral objectives of accountability based on power and patronage concerns. The new institutionalist perspective takes this analysis a bit further; here, there are no core or peripheral objectives in state-building, but rather a set of incentives and constraints guiding elite behavior, the summation of which results in new institutional equilibria. In other words, 'peripheral objectives' may indeed be the only real phenomena guiding the political economy of incentives and constraints, although they are more so outcomes than objectives. What are deemed core objectives, ideals such as democracy and federalism, are objectives in so far as they are set forth by well-intentioned policymakers; otherwise, these ideals can only be effected as outcomes if the political economy of incentives and constraints in South Sudan are nudged in favor of these new outcomes. Ruling elites may simply politicize core objectives for instrumental purposes, unless their own incentives, the peripheral objectives, are also aligned with these core objectives.

---

[431] Roach, "Peace and Accountability," 1350.

This new institutionalist perspective presented through the violence trap analytical framework below may not be entirely satisfying for the myriad of well-intentioned actors seeking positive change in South Sudan; however, it is only by accounting for these dynamics, and especially the productive roles of rents-based interactions, that policy responses can identify opportunities for gentle nudges to help shift incentives, and, by extension, institutional equilibria. Rents do not impede political order; they are the mechanism for sustaining political order. Any perspective that seeks to do away with rents in favor of a pluralistic political marketplace is likely to simply exacerbate the violence trap, resulting in more conflict and political regression. Gentle institutional nudges are likely to be more successful in shifting equilibria away from rents-based mechanisms; indeed, this is true of every case in this study.

4.2 Analytic Narratives of South Sudan: Institutional Logic of the Fragile State

It is useful to restate the research question of this dissertation here: *why do some African states incrementally achieve political development while others do not?* South Sudan presents an incisive case study for addressing this question through the violence trap framework. To briefly recall the pillars of this framework, political development is conceptualized as a process of institutional transitions from fragile states to basic natural states to mature natural states, and finally, to an open access order. The first three levels prior to the open access order are considered different stages of a closed (or limited) access order. Each successive stage of this process of political development results in higher levels of the three dependent variables, perpetuity, inclusivity, and impersonality.

To varying degrees, ruling elites in all closed access orders create barriers to political and economic access, and then provide special access privileges as rents to other groups of elites that pose a threat of violence. By contrast, in open access orders, monopolization of rents gives way to pluralistic transactions in the political and economic marketplace. In fragile states, rents are highly

personalized, and rents-patronage agreements are unpredictable and haphazard. In addition to making elite coalitions and violence outbreaks unpredictable, this also leads to primitive economic conditions, highly dependent on extraction and export of minerals and agricultural goods, as well as on consistent inflows of structural foreign aid. In basic natural states, rents-patronage agreements are more institutionalized, meaning that codification and formalization of agreements creates more stable institutional equilibria. This stage provides greater clarity on elite coalitions, allowing for specialized tax collection, religious activity, and political-economic functions, including rules for secession and the dominance of professional state-run enterprises. This allows for greater specifications of this dissertation's research question for this South Sudanese case. First, *what is the institutional logic of a fragile state?* Second, *what are the impediments to transition toward a basic natural state?*

States move along successive stages of closed access orders through political processes involving standardization of elite privileges, consolidated state control of political-military apparatus, and strong enforcement of formal contracts. In line with the hypothetical implications of this framework, a basic natural state emerges when rents-based interactions are formalized, and benefits of economic specialization are shared among coalition members of the ruling elite. Here, I argue that the institutional logic of South Sudan's fragile state is rooted in the deeply personalized nature of rents-based patronage networks, including the tentative nature of elite agreements and coalitions, as well the lack of a consolidated state with specialized political and military functions. These same conditions impede the country's transition toward a basic natural state. Such a transition would require the codification of patronage agreements and contracts that are otherwise informal, familial, and, thereby, tentative.

Interestingly, South Sudan presents an MDS (most different systems) comparison with the Ethiopian case study. As indicated in the introduction, the two countries have vastly different political histories. Ethiopia has the longest history of statehood among African countries, owing to a cohesive monarchy. South Sudan is the newest state in Africa. Ethiopia has successfully evaded European colonial incursions and other forms of Western influence, while South Sudan's short history has been intertwined with the interests of external stakeholders, including Sudan and the West. Despite these stark differences, the fragile state conditions in South Sudan exhibit notable similarities to the fragile state that undergirded the Dergue's Ethiopia from 1974-1991, and, to some extent, the fragile conditions that have emerged in the aftermath of the reformist regime that took power in 2018. The violence trap framework thus allows for an examination of institutional change beyond path-dependent outcomes, showing how institutional paths can shift and reverse paths through different critical junctures. In the South Sudanese case, such shifts are not evident, as the institutional logic, informed by the nature of intra-elite interactions and militarization of politics, has remained consistent. This is despite the efforts of several well-intentioned international actors, including the Troika, highlighting that these efforts have likely not addressed the actual institutional impediments to the country's transition toward a basic natural state.

4.2.1 Elites, Preferences, and Rents in South Sudan

In contrast to the approaches highlighted in the previous section, in the violence trap framework, a focus on elite preferences is not a problem at the early stages of state-building; rather, institutional gaps arise from lack of appropriate incentives, such as provisions for addressing

coordination gaps, or giving elites a sense of protection under a new order.[432] Since the SPLM/A is the current ruling elite in South Sudan, it is important to analyze how this entity conducts its relations among its members, as well as with contending elites, and how it uses rents in its attempts to control contending elites, particularly those with violent potential. It is important to draw here, again, on the concept of 'bounded rationality' introduced in Chapter 1. Bounded rationality refers to the norms, heuristic 'rules of thumb,' capabilities, and interpretations that guide decision-making under incomplete information and where transactions are highly costly.[433] In the context of South Sudan, the information gaps are inherent in the long struggle for independence from Sudan waged by different groups of militants, including the SPLM/A, the South Sudan Defence Force (SSDF), the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), and the South Sudan Liberation Movement (SSLM) in the Upper Nile region that harbored intense territorial contestations. Some of these groups were formed through intra-party elite contentions, a dynamic that can also be explored in terms of the efficiency or credibility of rents agreements. Before examining the bounded rationality underpinning elite choices among these different actors, including the splintering of the ruling elite, it is important to consider what rents refer to in the South Sudanese context.

In the violence trap framework, 'rents' refers to special access privileges that ruling elites distribute to specific elites after placing barriers to political and economic access. In South Sudan, political rents included bureaucratic positions and violent capabilities, whereas economic rents

---

[432] Bates, *The Development Dilemma*.
[433] Ostrom, *Understanding Institutional Diversity*; Ostrom, Cox, and Schlager, "Institutional Analysis and Development Framework"; Levi, "Reconsiderations of Rational Choice."

included land and mineral resources, foreign aid and investment packages, and oil.[434] In the next two sections, I discuss the mechanisms by which political rents impede perpetuity, impersonality, and perpetuity by examining ethnic and personal politics in South Sudan. Political rents can be even more detrimental than economic rents to political development because they are, by their nature, more tentative, and less perpetual. So, it is easier for SPLM/A elites to reshuffle leadership or governorship appointments, or integrate opposing militants into its military structure, than it is to upset the interests involved in its economic rents networks. Here, the focus will be on the types of economic rents that are most relevant in this case.

Economic rents are perhaps the hardest to distinguish from corruption, so they are often discussed in terms of kleptocratic clientelist networks or clientelism. In this regard, clientelism has been rampant in South Sudan's economic sector, rooted in international networks, including international banks, multinational companies, and foreign governments. For instance, Chinese, Eritrea, and American investors have exploited the extra-legal economic environment in South Sudan, working with local elites to evade accountability for delivery of promised services or aid packages.[435] This often takes the form of granting special economic licenses to affiliates of the SPLM/A. For instance, "Chinese investors formed a company with President Salva Kiir's daughter and acquired several mining licenses in South Sudan just weeks before the military reportedly drove thousands of people from the land where they held a permit."[436] These arrangements created loose, personalized patronage links between foreign patrons and local ruling elites. The local ruling elites then used their monopoly over these external inflows to reward loyal commercial elites. This

---

[434] De Waal, *Real Politics of the Horn*.
[435] Sentry Project, "Taking of South Sudan."
[436] Ibid, 3.

results in the rise of a minuscule but highly visible urban elite, against which large groups of dissatisfied former fighters and peasants are juxtaposed.[437] As a result of these economic dynamics, South Sudan's Corruption Perception Index score between 2016 and 2019 ranged from 11 to 13, marking South Sudan as the second most corrupt country in the world, only behind Somalia at 12, and was ranked as the 179th least corrupt country.[438] It is perhaps no surprise, then, that Juba, South Sudan's capital, adorns the sights of luxury developments and vehicles that would seem unthinkable in a country whose most resource-rich regions are decimated by war.

Apart from foreign investment, land would be a potential resource for development in South Sudan. Nearly all of South Sudan's 644,329 sq. km of land is classified as 'agricultural land,' with much of the land outside of the Sudd swamp better suited for pastoral activity rather than crop production.[439] Despite this rich endowment of land and other mineral resources, however, South Sudan's economy is heavily dependent on oil revenues, which represent 98% of the country's operating budget and 80% of its GDP.[440] There is a simple reason for this, from a new institutionalist perspective. Unlike oil, land and mineral resources require significant investment and more specialized economic roles. Such roles can only emerge in a context where there is sufficiently low political risk to incentivize investment; investors are wary if there is a strong possibility that investments can easily be destroyed or expropriated in future.

Furthermore, land investments may create avenues for power outside of the control of the ruling elite, and may end up benefitting violent actors who pose a threat to the SPLM/A. For this

---

[437] Leonardi, "Economy, War, and State."
[438] Corruption Perceptions Index 2019.
[439] World Factbook: South Sudan 2020.
[440] Ibid.

reason, from a bounded rationality perspective, there is no reason for the regime to pay any serious attention to investing in land resources. This dynamic is also accentuated by the lack of shared incentives between elites and mass populations of pastoralists, leading to land tenure systems that are extractive rather than productive. Ironically, investing in land resources may actually expand the basis of SPLM/A support, increasing the number of actors who have a stake in the regime's order. South Sudan's oil dependence is thus best explained by the 'development dilemma,' the idea that ruling elites will sacrifice prosperity to ensure regime security in developing countries.[441] In other words, ruling elites will only invest in land resources or allow for more liberal land tenure arrangements, if their rule is clearly not threatened by such reforms. Since the SPLM rule is fragile, directing resources toward oil revenue extraction becomes a more boundedly rational choice than productive investment in land.

In this regard, alongside foreign investment and foreign aid, oil emerges as the primary tool for providing economic rents in South Sudan. Much of the fragility of South Sudan's patronage networks comes from its dependence on oil, since patronage agreements, and by extension, political order, can be destabilized when oil revenues are low.[442] Intermediaries in the patronage networks may allow for the continuation of a tentative political order, but these types of destabilizing events cause new incentives for elite fracturing and new mobilization. Thus, oil price fluctuations or temporary interruptions of oil export may have incremental effects on South Sudan's political development. Indeed, South Sudan's decision to shut off oil production for over a year in 2012 cost the country billions of dollars of revenue, and exacerbated political strife.[443]

---

[441] Bates, *The Development Dilemma*.
[442] De Waal, *Real Politics of the Horn*.
[443] Roach, "Peace and Accountability."

The rift was due to Sudan's high pipeline fees for carrying South Sudan's oil to the Red Sea for export.[444] Sudan, for its part, was angered by South Sudan's support for Southern People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N), a splinter rebel group in the Blue Nile and Kordofan areas of the Sudan, seeking additional territorial concessions from the mother country. The oil shutdown persisted for over a year, costing South Sudan billions of dollars of revenue, and exacerbating political strife. Sudan, for its part, was angered by South Sudan's support for Southern People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N), a splinter rebel group in the Blue Nile and Kordofan areas of the Sudan, seeking additional territorial concessions from the mother country.[445] Clearly, then, South Sudan's rapid descent into civil war after 2012 was precipitated by the lack of credibility and perpetuity in mechanisms for securing elite patronage-client relations driven, in no small part, by the oil shutdown.

Along with the use of oil revenue as rents for sustaining political order, the prevalence of greed-based corruption in South Sudan is also an impediment to development. In this regard, lack of accountability measures over oil production and allocation of oil contracts and revenues has been cited as a key gap in institutional mechanisms for resource governance in South Sudan.[446] For instance, although South Sudan attempted to respond to critics in April 2012 by virtue of a new resource governance law known as the Petroleum Act, the law provided no provisions for public access to oil contracts.[447] Beyond the technocratic and legal mechanisms for resource governance, however, the main impediment to a more sustainable use of oil resources in South Sudan is likely

[444] Johnson, *The Untold Story.*
[445] Roach, "Peace and Accountability."
[446] Ibid.
[447] Ibid.

the political environment and the inter-elite contestations that underpin it. Indeed, South Sudan's 76 out of 89 countries ranking in quality of resource governance stems primarily from its poor scores for 'enabling environment' rather than for 'value realization' or 'revenue management.'[448] This indicates that South Sudan's poor performance with resource governance is primarily due to political structures and incentives, rather than lack of economic and administrative competencies. Indeed, there was no underlying incentive for leaders to enforce provisions even with administrative competencies existed. It is fitting, then, to turn next to a discussion of the construction of different groups of elites, in order to account for the interactions between violence and rents leading up to the outbreak of the civil war.

In the context of long, violent struggles, with multiple belligerents, and diverging interests, it is clear that information gaps and high transaction costs persist because elite alignments and preferences are in constant flux. First, as indicated in previous sections, the various militant groups fighting for independence were not only in contention with the Sudanese government, but also amongst themselves. If one of the pro-independence militant groups, for instance, reached an agreement with the Sudan government on terms of autonomous governance, there was no guarantee that the other militant groups would agree to or abide by such agreements. The boundedly rational response in this context is one that forces stakeholders to be suspicious toward the prospect of bargains, dialogue, or cooperation; instead, politics becomes a winner-take-all game, inseparable from military forms of engagement. Militant groups are likely to frame political bargains in terms of absolute victory or absolute loss, and absolute victory is the only rational elite preference from this perspective. Indeed, ideals about justice, sovereignty, and fairness that may

[448] NRGI 2017, 6-7.

have initially animated the struggle for independence are completely sidelined, once they have exceeded the limits of their usefulness in terms of mobilizing militants. Indeed, in the classic greed versus grievance debate of conflicts, South Sudan's political contestations point almost exclusively toward the operative mechanisms of greed and political instrumentality.[449] As is expected in the violence trap framework, contending elites use threats of violence (or actual violence) to exact more rents from the center, driven by boundedly rational interests and preferences. In other words, the long struggle for South Sudanese independence had long seized to represent the aspirations of the South Sudanese people to fight the oppression of the Arab nationalist Sudanese elites; instead, it had come to resemble the fog of war that emerges in international conflicts.

The influence of external stakeholders with diverging interests in mediating these relations also exacerbates rather than minimizes the transactional costs and information gaps that impede political bargains. For instance, the National Democratic Alliance, based in Eritrea, has long harbored an ambition to gain a greater influence in East Africa. Indeed, due to Ethiopia's involvement, Eritrea has excluded itself from the regional organization IGAD, which came to take on a strong role in South Sudanese political bargains in the advent of independence. Furthermore, many of the Western stakeholders mediating the conflict, including the Troika, chose to exclude many of the belligerents from negotiations with the Sudan. Indeed, the SPLM/A came to derive much of its legitimacy by virtue of the West, and mainly the Troika's, decision to exclude other elite contenders during the GoSS – GoS (Government of Sudan) negotiations from 2002-2004.[450] Later, during the transition to statehood, key military and political associates such as the South

---

[449] Mengisteab, *Horn of Africa*.
[450] Roach, "Peace and Accountability."

Sudan Defence Force (SSDF), and even former SPLM/A allies such as the Asmara-based National Democratic Alliance (NDA) were gradually excluded from the political process, leading to increasing apprehension towards an SPLM/A-led transition.[451] Thus, the emergence of the SPLM/A as the ruling elites of South Sudan was not necessarily the institutional equilibrium of domestic bargains, except in so far as the incentives set by foreign interventionists set these conditions. This initial external constraint in elite construction becomes even more evident when considering the lack of shared incentives between different factions within the SPLM, and the eventual emergence of contending splinter groups such as the SPLM-IO (In Opposition), examined further in the next section.

In any case, it is understandable why external stakeholders would have thought that prioritizing the SPLM/A in peace negotiations would have mitigated coordination problems and transaction gaps; indeed, in terms of facilitating negotiations with the Sudanese government, this arrangement was likely helpful in reducing information gaps leading up to the Cooperative Peace Agreement (CPA). Since Troika involvement provided credibility to bargains, this arrangement made it likely that the GoS and the GoSS would abide by agreements with one another. However, this arrangement ignored the boundedly rational response from other belligerents. It is no surprise, then, many belligerents residing in the bordering regions, including the South Sudan Liberation Movement (SSLM) and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) rejected the CPA.

The SSLM, an SPLM/A ally that fought in South Sudan’s Upper Nile region, rejected the agreement out of a concern that too many concessions were granted to the Sudanese government.

---

[451] Young, “A Flawed Peace,” 101-102.

The SPLM-N in Sudan's Blue Nile region rejected the agreement for a different reason. The preference of SPLM-N elites was and continues to be to guarantee the rights of southern Sudanese people within the framework of a greater Sudan; thus, this group preferred a share of the power in the center, rather than complete independence. Indeed, following independence, the GoSS has at times supported SPLM-N militants in the Blue Nile region as a means of undermining the GoS in political contestations.[452] This support, in turn, makes it hard for the SPLM-N to garner credibility in negotiations with the GoS over affirming its interests and preferences within the framework of the Sudanese state. In short, then, the top-down, supply-guided, interventionist approaches that led to the CPA ignored domestic political constraints in both Sudan and South Sudan, forestalling a stable order in either country.[453]

Second, the information gaps and high transaction costs informing the boundedly rational response of different South Sudanese stakeholders were exacerbated not only by the lack of inclusive bargains, but also by the implications of the death of SPLM/A founder Dr. John Garang. Through the SPLA's violent history, Dr. John had emerged as a credible and unifying figure, able to mediate information gaps, both within the militants struggling for independence, and in negotiations between the GoS and the GoSS.[454] Dr. John hailed from the Dinka group, representing 36% of the South Sudanese population and much of the upper echelon of the SPLA.

Initially, the movement faced stiff resistance from the Nuer group, which comprises about 16% of South Sudan's population, though tensions cooled after a power-sharing agreement was reached in 2002. In January 2005, Dr. John was named the First Vice President of the Sudan, signaling the

---

[452] Johnson, *The Untold Story*.
[453] Young, "A Flawed Peace"; Roach, "Peace and Accountability."
[454] Johnson, *The Untold Story*.

possibility that the aspirations of South Sudanese peoples could be guaranteed within the framework of a greater Sudan. This preference, as indicated above, is also that of the SPLM-N, which continues to fight the Sudanese government. Although Dr. John could never escape perceptions of ethnic favoritism, his preference for a united Sudan likely made it possible for the signing of the CPA, retaining the SPLA's bargaining power; he died in a plane crash in August 2005, a few months after the signing of the CPA in January 2005. He was replaced by his presumed successor, Salva Kiir, who did not share the same vision of shared governance within the SPLA, or, indeed, anywhere near the same level of credibility as his predecessor. Still, to keep the SPLA united, Kiir appointed Riek Machar, an ethnic Nuer, as his deputy within the SPLA, garnering credibility for the SPLA as a movement that was representative of all South Sudanese groups.

Dr. John's death likely changed the calculus in favor of full South Sudanese independence in the long term, while exacerbating conflict over territories in the short term. The MAR quantitative tracking data shows that levels of political and economic discrimination against the Southerners sharply decreased from 2004 to 2006; however, political grievances remained and group interests mainly continued to be represented by militant rather than political organizations.[455] More importantly, his death reanimated some of the rifts within the SPLM/A on the mechanisms of power-sharing under a new South Sudanese government, though President Kiir was better able to consolidate power for the movement's political wing. Given these growing political rifts, though South Sudan secured independence through a referendum in 2011, its subsequent descent into civil war was somewhat predictable.[456] The civil war events were precipitated by a slew of contestations

---

[455] Minorities at Risk Dataset 2009.
[456] Rolandsen, "Another Civil War."

within the SPLM/A that arose well before South Sudan gained independence in 2011. For instance, in 2010, a splinter militant group, the South Sudan Democratic Movement (SSDM), was formed by a dissatisfied SPLM/A general, George Athor, after the latter failed to win governorship of Jonglei in the restive Upper Nile region. After Athor died in 2011, the Upper Nile contingency of the SSDM was dominated by ethnic Murle and Shilluk militants contesting territory against the Dinka-dominated SPLM/A. [457] Indeed, this region is where the conflict in South Sudan came to take on more clearly ethnic dimensions.

The immediate cause of the civil war was President Salva Kiir's removal of Riek Machar from the post of Vice President in 2013. By 2014, dissent against Kiir had mobilized around a new political group, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement—In Opposition (SPLM-IO).[458] The scale of violence was especially pronounced in the Jonglei and the Upper Nile, where the SSLM movement was active in the latter region. Kiir's SPLM/A then tried to co-opt the SSLM, assimilating them within the South Sudanese army, to prevent the SSLM from aligning with SPLM-IO. This likely prevented the conflict from taking on primarily ethnic forms, given that the SPLM-IO and SSLM were primarily Nuer and the SPLM/A was primarily Dinka. Still, some members of the SSLM did remain loyal to Machar. These new dynamics in South Sudan thus came to resemble the high information gap contexts of the Sudanese civil war, increasing the costs of bargaining between belligerents.

It was not surprising that the 2015 Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)-mediated Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan (ARCSS) was not honored by

---

[457] "Pendulum swings: The rise and fall of insurgent militias in South Sudan."
[458] Johnson, *The Untold Story*.

the belligerents of the conflict.[459] As one scholar notes, “South Sudanese political leaders continue to engage in a game of one-upmanship that has called into question their own commitment to the peace process.”[460] This indicates the bounded rationality that guides decision-making in high information gap contexts where credible formal institutional mechanisms are non-existent. In other words, leaders of the SSLM, SPLM-IO, and SPLM/A are all incentivized to maximize the bargaining power of their own group at the expense of the other, and violence is the logical outcome of these interactions when elites are unable to establish stable rents-based agreements for governance. It is difficult, under these circumstances, to achieve institutional equilibria, let alone a socially optimal outcome.

In many ways, the collapse of institutional order in South Sudan can be traced to the increasing ethnicization of rents in South Sudan. After independence, the state established a political order built on patronage, with hierarchical personal relationships in which ruling elites ‘buy off’ loyalties of regional elites, especially expressed through Dinka co-optation of Nuer elites in the south.[461] The ethnicization of rents as the basis for codification of elite bargains is not necessarily an impediment to political development at the fragile state stage. However, it became very clear early on that the Dinka majority within the ruling elite was intent on monopolizing power, a key factor in the political rifts that emerged within the SPLM/A. Unlike the Rwandan case, in which ethnic co-optation was institutionalized through non-ethnic markers, the South Sudan polity signified a much more rudimentary, personalized, and un-institutionalized form of the EPRDF’s ethnic federalism. Just as the TPLF monopolized power within the EPRDF ethnic coalition in the

---

[459] Rolandsen, “Another Civil War”; Roach “Accountability and Peace.”
[460] Roach, “Peace and Accountability,” 1350.
[461] De Waal, *Real Politics of the Horn*.

Ethiopian case, the political system that emerged in South Sudan was an autocratic and entitled form of leadership dominated by ethnic Dinka elites, with tentative Nuer co-optation.[462]

The fact that these elite patronage mechanisms were extra-institutional meant that South Sudan's political order functioned at an even lower level than the EPRDF's Ethiopia, and perhaps in ways that bear more resemblance to the emerging Ethiopian polity under the Prosperity Party. Indeed, rather than diminish the value of ethnic rents, the patronage system in South Sudan belied a highly tentative arrangement that was subject to unpredictable adjustments, especially once the Nuer elites no longer appeared to have a say in the SPLM/A's decision-making. As a result, South Sudan's Freedom House Political Rights score decreased to -2/40, in large part due to a negative discretionary adjustment for increased salience of ethnic politics amidst the civil war.[463]

Still, it would be a mistake to reduce the failure of South Sudan's patronage system to ethnic politics. Notions of ethnicity in South Sudan are complex, as the Nuer and the Dinka are themselves internally divided.[464] Furthermore, in stark contrast to the Ethiopian case, ethnic contestations within the SPLM/A do not necessarily reflect ethnic animosities among the general public. Most ordinary South Sudanese citizens instead emphasize a dichotomy between urban elites, both Dinka and Nuer, and the vast majority of peasants of all ethnic origins who are marginalized by these contestations.[465] Thus, more so than a simple outcome of ethnic politics, the institutional equilibrium that emerges in South Sudan is one in which 'political CEO's' oversee a marketplace in which political and economic rents are distributed on the basis of loyalty.[466]

---

[462] Johnson, *Causes of South Sudan's Wars.*
[463] South Sudan Country Report, Freedom in the World 2019.
[464] Rolandsen, "Another Civil War."
[465] Leonardi, "Economy, War, and State."
[466] De Waal, *Real Politics of the Horn*.

Rather than serving as the basis for elite bargains, codification of elite privileges, or enactment of credible contracts regimes, these tentative patronage mechanisms instead served to create more personalized links between a few political operators and their loyal networks. In other words, because this institutional outcome did not result in a credible equilibrium, South Sudan was unable to achieve any significant progress in the state's levels of impersonality, perpetuity, and credibility. The involvement of external actors, notably Uganda, in bolstering the SPLM/A during the civil war, added to the lack of credibility in elite bargains.[467] Given these dynamics, institutional design, especially the debate over federalism in South Sudan, emerges as the most significant area of contention among the belligerents of the country's civil war.

As noted above, federalism was noted as a key goal in the CPA that laid the framework for South Sudan's independence and was also affirmed in the 2015 ARCSS that failed to end the conflict. As in Ethiopia, the hope was that federalism in the South Sudanese case would help to ameliorate ethnic animosities and give contending ethnic groups some semblance of self-rule capability. However, these provisions were immediately violated in the same year, due in part to the incentives guiding SPLM/A leaders in the country's north, more specifically, the incentives underlying the bounded rationality of President Salva Kiir. In this regard, as one scholar commented, it is perhaps more fitting to envisage constitutionalism as 'the missing element' in South Sudan's state-building experiments, rather than focusing exclusively on federalism.[468] Contestations over institutional design and federalism are thus examined below through the

[467] Rolandsen, "Another Civil War."
[468] Zemelak, "Constitutionalism: The Missing Element."

violence trap framework, which emphasizes the precedence and difficulty of establishing constitutionalism.

As noted above, provisions for a new federal framework for elite power-sharing were immediately violated in the aftermath of the failed ARCSS to end the South Sudanese Civil War. Some accounts attribute this to malice and carelessness on the part of President Kiir and an overly militarized political program that saw high levels of investment in military and security in conditions where the most basic social necessities continued to be absent.[469] However, Kiir's actions can be better explained through the prism of bounded rationality when considering the instability of the ethnic basis of rents examined in the previous section. First, it is important to note that Kiir was not the sole actor in this decision. For instance, under the ARCSS, Kiir had agreed to award governorship of the oil-rich Unity and Upper Nile regions to the SPLM-IO.[470] However, in 2015, President Kiir issued a decree increasing the number of administrative regions from 10 to 28, presumably to reduce the power of regional administrators vis-à-vis his central government.[471] President Kiir made similar attempts to increase the number of regions to 32 in 2017, before rescinding the presidential state decree in February 2020. The stated goal was to better accommodate the nuances of ethnic and cultural diversity under a unitary system rather than under a federal system that would serve to reify the political salience of ethnicity.[472] However, northern politicians, as a whole, were hesitant to engage in federalism efforts that would give greater levels

---

[469] Johnson, *The Untold Story.*
[470] Zemelak, "Constitutionalism: The Missing Element."
[471] Mengisteab, *Horn of Africa*; Roach, "Peace and Accountability."
[472] Zemelak, "Constitutionalism: The Missing Element."

of autonomy to the resource-rich south, signifying that monopoly over oil rents was a key factor in resistance against federalism.

In any case, it is unclear how federalism would address the power contestations within the SPLM/A. President Kiir's attempt to create new administrative regions was rooted in a desire to create more personalistic commitments rather than larger group-based patronage relations. However, President Kiir resisted decentralization within the internal power structures of the SPLM/A, not just in the state apparatus. It is perhaps for this reason that more so than federalism, the principle of constitutionalism, that is, a degree of trust and good faith among political elites with a stake in the political order, has been cited as a fundamental prerequisite for credible institutional bargains in this conflict.[473] Furthermore, because the basis of the federation was never fully determined, President Kiir made similar attempts to increase the number of regions to 32 in 2017, before rescinding the presidential state decree in February 2020.[474]

In order to explain the incentives guiding President Kiir and his small group of SPLM/A allies when it comes to decisions over institutional design, it is useful to provide a thick-description account of a few select cases of highly personalistic elite patronage arrangements. One of the provisions under President Kiir's decree creating 32 new states in 2017 was the dissolution of the resource-rich northern regions into smaller states. This included the restive Upper Nile region, as well as Western and Eastern Equatoria.

Under the R-ARCSS, the SPLM-IO would govern the large Upper Nile state, drastically reducing the SPLM/A's monopoly over oil rents. Given the drastic increase in the power of the

---

[473] Zemelak, "Constitutionalism: The Missing Element."
[474] "Juba Agreement for Peace."

SPLM-IO under this arrangement, it is clear that the SPLM/A would only abide by this agreement if regime security were also affirmed. This is in line with new institutionalist insights detailed in Chapter 1, that ruling elites in developing countries face trade-offs between prosperity and regime security; only when regime security is credibly guaranteed would ruling elites willingly abide by outcomes of institutional bargains that may precipitate higher levels of development.[475] Given the slew of foreign actors involved in the R-ARCSS, and more notably, those, like Eritrea, which were excluded, it was unlikely that the SPLM/A would feel secure in the new institutional arrangement. Thus, under the 2015 provisions, the Upper Nile region was divided into 11 small regions, ostensibly creating Dinka-dominated enclaves within a Nuer-majority region.[476] If the ethnic basis of rents were sufficient for SPLM/A to maintain order, this would have been sufficient. However, under President Kiir's 2017 decree, the new Eastern Nile state was further divided into Central Upper Nile and Northern Upper Nile states. This showed that objective of the ruling elites was not to sustain Dinka domination, but rather to maintain a highly tentative, personalistic network of clients.

These institutional provisions thus may have appeared to decentralize power; in reality, however, they centralized and monopolized rents among a small group of elites. Unsurprisingly, the Upper Nile region, which was not only resource-rich but also the region where the South Sudan civil war was most intensified, was the biggest target of institutional reorganizations. As mentioned earlier, the Upper Nile region was home to many of the SSLM and SSDM rebels that initially opposed the SPLM/A. While the SPLM/A was able to co-opt the SSLM against the SPLM-IO, and

---

[475] Bates, *The Development Dilemma.*
[476] Zemelak, "Constitutionalism: The Missing Element."

integrate them into its military force, the SSDM and other SPLM-IO allies continued to fight heavily in the region amidst negotiations to end the war. Thus, the 2017 presidential decree ensured that President Kiir could count on a small group of allies to oversee virtually all government operations in these regions. Indeed, in cities like Jonglei and Malakal, where fighting was most intense, the only real institutional provisions came from the secretariat of the newly appointed regional governors, United Nations-sanctioned PoC (Protection of Civilian sites), and a few faith-based civil society organizations that dispensed small-scale social education and information services.

In the Central Upper Nile region, the governor in charge of the regional secretariat was Kiir ally Peter Chol Wal. Peter Chol Wal was himself appointed in Kiir's 2019 extra-constitutional reshuffling of 4 regional appointments in the country's north.[477] Once in charge, Peter Chol Wal was omnipresent in virtually every government operation in the region, including the reopening of the UNDP and Japan-funded Upper Nile University, one of only five institutions of higher education in the country. At the time, the university was administered through the Upper Nile University Council under Chairman Dr. Samson Samuel Wasara, who, like the previous governor of the region, did not even reside in Malakal. Instead, Governor Peter, a personal extra-constitutional appointee of President Kiir, was responsible for dispensing with all high-level bureaucratic decisions in the region, including those that involved lucrative rebuilding projects that were financed by external bodies. In other words, these rents-based relations allowed Kiir to maintain personalistic control over this region, albeit in ways that undermined perpetuity. Indeed,

[477] "Kiir dismisses and appoints 4 governors."

the Central Upper Nile state was short-lived; as noted above, the presidential decree creating 32 states was rescinded in 2020.

Similarly, President Kiir's prioritization of loyalty over ethnic or tribal ties was evident in his treatment of the institutional reconfigurations in the newly formed state of Western Equatoria. President Kiir had promised to provide more agency to local tribal chiefs amidst the negotiations to end the civil war; however, in 2016, the SPLM/A intervened to arrest tribal chief King Wilson Peni Rikito of the Azande Kingdom in Western Equatoria, over suspicions of his suspected allegiance to the former governor who had joined the rebellion against Kiir.[478] Indeed, the erosion of social capital in South Sudan during the civil war was such that many of the tribal chiefs themselves were themselves victimized as refugees or IDPs (internally displaced persons). Thus, the civil war undermined any hope of co-opting local chiefs to sustain a more credible ruling order in some parts of the country.

South Sudan's civil war eventually came to an end through an institutional equilibrium amounting to a return to the status quo, but without addressing the mechanisms that led to war in the first place. A revitalized peace agreement was signed in 2018, with provisions for power sharing, and proposing a groundwork for establishing a constitution, based on a decentralized quasi-federal structure with ten administrative states.[479] Subsequently, a 2020 unity government peace deal saw the restoration of Riek Machar to the vice presidency and the political integration of the SPLM-IO operatives into South Sudan's parliament, the National Assembly.[480] The SPLM/A also announced plans to integrate the Shilluk-dominated SSDM and other militant groups

---

[478] Ibreck, *South Sudan's Injustice System*.
[479] R-ARCSS; Mengisteab, *Horn of Africa*.
[480] Johnson, *The Untold Story*.

into its military structure,[481] following the blueprint that it used to co-opt the SSLM amidst political contestations in 2014-15. The 2020 agreement also established a transitionary period, leading up to proposed elections in 2022, that have since been postponed to 2024.[482]

4.2.2 Credibility, Perpetuity, and the Role of Civil Society

The pervasive nature of extra-institutional political and economic transactions and the apparent lack of institutional capability, especially compared to the other two cases for this study, have marked South Sudan as an incisive case study in rents-based interactions. Indeed, as was seen in this chapter, rents in South Sudan dominate in an extra-institutional political marketplace, through which elites maintain personalized clientelist commitments to sustain their rule in exchange for special access. Currently, South Sudan's order continues as a fragile state owing to the difficulties of transitioning to a basic natural state. To restate the principles of the violence trap framework, a fragile state features highly personalistic rents-based arrangements, with no specialization of political and economic roles, and a highly tentative contracts environment. Transition to a basic natural state requires the consolidated state control of the political-military apparatus, gradual standardization of elite privileges, and the enactment of a credible contracts regime. Arguably, the conclusion of the civil war ended in the SPLM/A's favor, because the SPLM-IO lacked a strong militant wing to bolster its political wing, and because the ruling regime was able to co-opt other militants that posed a violent threat. Thus, South Sudan may be on the path toward achieving the first condition, consolidated state control of the political-military apparatus. However, this

[481] Ibid.
[482] "South Sudan again delays its 1st election, until late 2024."

condition can only be maintained if all elite groups envision a stake in the emerging political order, leading to the fulfillment of the other two conditions for transition to a basic natural state.

This transition is far from guaranteed for the same two reasons that the 2005 CPA was not sustainable, that is, because significant actors may continue to be excluded and because it is not clear that the SPLM/A will be willing to forego its absolute monopoly of economic rents in the country. Elections were postponed to 2024 primarily due to the concerns of the Troika; having perhaps learned from its past mistakes, the Troika is now insisting that all elite groups are included in the country's new political arrangement.[483] However, while the Troika may have learned from mistakes in this one regard, it also continues to undermine the importance of institutional equilibria through a singular focus on democracy. This is similar to the present Ethiopian context, where external actors continue to push for more inclusive democratic arrangements rather than addressing the rents-based mechanisms for elite patronage.

The "missing element" here, as in the Ethiopian case, is a commitment to constitutionalism, which means the enactment of a political order that is deemed contractually credible and perpetual.[484] Elections may be one of the mechanisms for achieving this, but only if the framework for electoral law is one that emerges out of a genuine institutional equilibrium of elite preferences and interests in South Sudan. In other words, if the outcome of elections is not palatable to all major stakeholders, South Sudan is likely to remain a fragile state. So, then, as in the Ethiopian case, institutional bargains would have to precede any attempts at democratization.

---

[483] Ibid.
[484] Zemelak, "Constitutionalism: The Missing Element."

One of the promising mechanisms that have been proposed in this regard is a national dialogue commission, perhaps akin to South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission to address and ameliorate the grievances of all the stakeholders of South Sudan's long civil war.[485] This also strikes similarities to the National Dialogue Commission proposed in Ethiopia. As in the Ethiopian case, however, it is not likely that such a commission will be relevant if it is too focused on local social issues, rather than on the grand institutional bargains that serve as the framework for state-building. Perhaps the outcome of such grand bargains may be a mechanism for shared rule between Dinka and Nuer elites, but under clear and credible institutional codes. Such an outcome cannot be reached, however, if the SPLM/A perceives any short-term threat to its regime security, that is, its hold on political power. Thus, it is only by guaranteeing this security that the SPLM/A can be incentivized to perpetually share power, either with Nuer elites, or with a wider group of elites in rural and urban areas. Policy provisions for military training and assistance, and specialized economic investments in rural land development thus emerge as the most likely mechanisms for aiding South Sudan toward a basic natural state; sanctions and threats are almost certain to aggravate the SPLM/A and thrust the country back into chaos.

Development policy provisions aimed at building 'rule of law' may be helpful once South Sudan achieves the status of a basic natural state but are likely premature in the current context for several reasons. First, such provisions ignore the local mechanisms that are already in place, focusing on the statutory and formal systems that, for the most part, serve only to provide the SPLM's militarized politics with a veneer of legality.[486] By contrast, informal legal mechanisms

[485] Roach, "Peace and Accountability."
[486] Ibreck, *South Sudan's Injustice System*.

provide a participatory space in which local chiefs are included; the focus is on the culturally informed mechanisms of reconciliation rather than punishment.[487] Indeed, in both towns and rural areas, most South Sudanese rely on customary and makeshift courts to go about their daily lives, as they are perceived as more independent and legitimate than formal courts.[488] The key to building a credible contractual regime in South Sudan, then, is not formalization but codification. That is, rather than adopting formal rule-of-law mechanisms from abroad and implementing them top-down, South Sudan's political order would benefit from small-scale provisions for codifying and institutionalizing social contracts at local levels, especially in rural areas. Again, it is unlikely that the SPLM/A will support such efforts unless it is credibly assured of its own regime security. Provisions for bridging the gap between the elite constituencies of Kiir and Machar, thereby consecrating them as a joint ruling elite of sorts, while difficult, may also be extremely helpful in this regard.

Finally, the conditions of perpetuity, inclusivity, and impersonality cannot be achieved without the involvement of civil society actors. As noted above, informal and traditional civil society groups already have a long history of providing mechanisms for contractual enforcement at the local levels. Beyond this, many of the social services in South Sudan, particularly education and information are provided by faith-based groups that have both international and local credibility. This is an important and underutilized avenue, given that South Sudan's population is predominantly Christian. For instance, the Catholic Church of South Sudan operates various services, such as Radio Emmanuel 89 FM, which was virtually the only source of information for

[487] Ibid.
[488] Ibid.

tens of thousands of IDPs in Malakal's POC sites. The Church also operates the Catholic University of South Sudan in Yambio, which offers more advanced training.

Similarly, a faith-based radio station, Radio Grace 90.5 FM, exhibited a strong presence in official state functions in the conflict-ridden city of Torit. The Episcopal Church has also played an important role in local peace-keeping efforts in the Upper Nile region. Beyond the active faith-based groups, land investment initiatives can also partner with rural development groups such as the Rural Development Action Aid (RRDA), which provides agricultural training and development in Western Equatoria. In short, then, along with institutional provisions for codifying inclusive elite bargains and augmenting regime security, efforts at specialization can be catalyzed by utilizing already-existing informal contractual arrangements and civil society groups in different parts of South Sudan.

Conclusion

This dissertation sought to explain why some states undergo political development while others have regressing or stagnant political orders, particularly in the African context. This regional specification of the research question made this a study especially worth undertaking, given the lack of comparative insights and replicable frameworks in sometimes idiosyncratic treatments of the region. Such exceptionalizing analysis of experiences in African political development may reveal interesting insights about local challenges, grievances, and cultures, while failing to provide sufficient comparative insights to draw sound policy conclusions. Furthermore, they often fail to account for the variables that are causally relevant to political development; this may be due to an excessive focus on culturalist variables or to idiosyncratic treatments of problems such as corruption, violence, social grievance, or clientelism, which may be found in any undeveloped society.

In an effort to draw better insights into comparative political development, this dissertation developed and applied the violence trap framework to analyze political development transitions in three Eastern African states, Ethiopia, Rwanda, and South Sudan. The three countries were selected strategically to augment the analytical framework. First, the specification of a single region, Eastern Africa, minimizes sharp deviations in geographical factors or diffusion effects that may impact political development. Indeed, these three countries have pre-modern and modern histories of interaction with one another and are thus sufficiently comparable. Furthermore, they provide sufficiently different trajectories to illustrate variations in the outcome variable under investigation.

In this regard, Ethiopia, which is the only African country to resist European colonialization successfully, presents itself as somewhat of a deviant case; despite its long history of statehood, it exhibits low outcomes in political development. Rwanda, for its part, presents an interesting MSS comparison with Ethiopia; the two countries share similar pre-modern political cultures in the form of sophisticated monarchies and long histories of statecraft. Despite this, the two countries are seen to experience very different outcomes in political development. South Sudan, for its part, serves as an MDS comparison with Ethiopia, wherein the two countries have sharply diverging histories but experience similar fragile state conditions at points in history.

In reaching these observations, Chapter 1 first developed the framework that I use to analyze the three cases. The chapter illustrated the utility of a political economy approach, one that illustrates the society-wide outcomes of political choices, through the prism of bounded rationality. Bounded rationality helps remove expectations about public-service orientedness among political elites, but also rejects the pure rationalism of public choice theory; instead, it interprets agent decisions in terms of their institutional constraints. The new institutional paradigm was thus identified as a fitting framework for explaining political choices in the three cases that may have led to similar or diverging outcomes.

Within the new institutional paradigm, two closely related traditions were explored: historical institutionalism and rational choice institutionalism. In Chapter 1, I showed how these two approaches were commensurable rather than conflicting, as the former can identify antecedent conditions while the latter can capture the operative conditions for institutional change. In this regard, the violence trap framework was identified as a framework that combines aspects of both new institutionalisms.

The violence trap framework conceptualizes political development as a process by which closed access orders, wherein ruling elites monopolize and allocate rents to contending elites who pose a threat of violence. Rents are privileges granted to contending elites once ruling elites place barriers to access in the political and economic marketplace. In this framework, fragile states, wherein elite roles are non-specialized and elite interactions are highly personalized develop into basic and then mature natural states through gradual standardization of elite privileges, credible contracts enforcement, and consolidated state control of the political-military apparatus.[489] These operative conditions result in the incremental achievement of three outcome variables that indicate political development, perpetuity, impersonality, and inclusivity. To examine these outcomes, I devised an analytic narratives methodology combining theory-driven conceptual analysis of primary and secondary sources with 'thick description' interpretations elucidating institutional incentives and boundedly rational choices of elites. Primary sources included elite interviews for the primary case study, as well as government communiques, party documents, and open-source archives for all the cases. At each stage, I cross-referenced findings with comparative insights to illustrate how some of the operative conditions identified above may have functioned differently in each of the three cases.

Chapter 2 examined political development in Ethiopia using this violence trap framework. Accordingly, I argued that standardization of elite privileges and a strong contracts regime had brought Haile Selassie's Ethiopia to the doorstep of a mature natural state, and that the Dergue's militarized and personalistic political style had decimated perpetuity, reconstructing Ethiopia as a fragile state. Subsequently, the TPLF-EPRDF used co-ethnicity and a new ethnic patronage regime

[489] Weingast, "Resistant to the Rule-of-Law"; North, Wallis, and Weingast, *Violence and Social Orders.*

to assume consolidated state control over the political-military apparatus, as well as some standardization of elite privileges. However, the narrow ethnic basis for elite-hood under this regime provided the very mechanisms for its downfall, incentivizing intra-elite ethnic-based contentions and the emergence of a new ethnic coalition under the Prosperity Party. These transitions, however, were marked by increased violence, and loss of differentiation within political-military roles; in effect, reduced levels of perpetuity and impersonality reverted Ethiopia's political development to near-fragile state conditions.

Chapter 3 examined how political development in pre-colonial Rwanda relied on kinship ties and economic rules for elite construction to set credible rules for inter-elite interaction; pre-colonial Rwanda functioned as a basic natural state. I argued that King Rwabugiri added state perpetuity through his centralization campaigns, while at the same time undermining impersonality by removing some of the economic ladders of elite mobility. However, subsequent rule by German and especially Belgian colonial administrators decimated all outcome variables of political development. Belgium's conflation of ethnicity with race and adoption of a rigid basis for elite access also introduced exceedingly high levels of fragility. In post-colonial Rwanda, Hutu ethnic entrepreneurs responded to institutional incentives to mobilize violently along ethnic lines, sparking a civil war led by the Tutsi-dominated RPF, and, eventually, the Rwandan genocide. However, I argued that in post-genocide Rwanda, the removal of the ethnic basis for elite-hood, along with the standardization of elite privileges and strong contracts enforcement brought Rwanda to the doorstep of a mature natural state. I argued that the virtual absence of corruption in the public sector, strong administrative autonomy at lower levels, and economic access for urban educated masses and Hutus undergoing 'reeducation' programs provide sufficiently tenable rents-patronage arrangements to provide for a perpetual, inclusive order. I identified, however, that

increasing levels of authoritarianism at the highest levels, notably via President Kagame continue to undermine impersonality and threaten to reverse some of Rwanda's massive strides in political development.

Finally, in Chapter 4, I examined how the highly tentative, personalized nature of rents-based patronage relations continued to impede political development away from the conditions of a fragile state. I argued that the history of South Sudan's struggle for independence had created institutional incentives for elite contention within the SPLM, and showed how these incentives continued to influence boundedly rational elite responses that amounted to highly accelerated levels of violence at the national level. I concluded that rather than any specific policy provisions or accountability constraints, constitutionalism was a component severely needed in the South Sudanese polity to invite elite actors to enact a more credible and institutionalized rents-based order.

There are two clear contributions to theory from my empirical investigations in this work. The first is that the debate between rationalist and culturalist paradigms, especially in the context of research on African politics can be resolved by resorting to bounded rationality. In each case, bounded rationality helps illustrate the institutional incentives rooted in the violence trap, as well as the choices of elite actors in response. In many cases, and in line with the new institutionalist paradigm, I have shown that institutional equilibria may not immediately result in socially optimal outcomes, but that they may result in more stable political orders. Along these lines, by examining temporal variation within each individual case, but also drawing cross-case comparative insights based on agent choice and change, I hope to have also illustrated a commensurable application of perspectives from both historical institutionalism and rational choice institutionalism. The second contribution to theory in this work, though not nearly as consequential as the first, is the application

of a qualitative methodology, analytic narratives, to examine bounded rationality. This is not necessarily a new contribution; the violence trap framework was initially illustrated through such a methodology. However, this dissertation explicitly links this back to the concept of bounded rationality through analytic narratives.

The upshot of this entire study serves as a critique of standardized, externally-driven or idealistic approaches to political development. Policy interventions, particularly in the African context, should be rooted in the realization that personalized rents incentivize fragility and codification and broadening of elite bargains creates incremental political development. Pluralized political systems may be desirable, but seeking to dismantle patronage networks immediately without introducing a credible replacement will simply exacerbate violence.

Simply importing legal systems to enforce top-down mechanisms for rule of law will not serve as a credible replacement, either, and elections are not always the answer. Elections may be one of the mechanisms for achieving genuine institutional equilibria, but only if the framework for electoral law emerges out of credible elite bargains reflecting the true preferences of the stakeholders. Indeed, if the outcome of elections is not palatable to all major stakeholders, the logic of the fragile state prevails. So, then, in a fragile state, institutional bargains would have to precede any attempts at democratization. Such conclusions may be disconcerting to those of us who wish to advance democracy, but the reality of the violence trap in closed access orders forces us to acknowledge that state-building is messy, and development is neither linear nor guaranteed.

I end with a somewhat contrarian policy prescription. Development policy should meet states where they are rather than try to copy-paste institutional structures. This means working within existing institutional constraints rather than seeking to undermine them. For example, rather than spending millions on democratization efforts in fragile states, policymakers and external

stakeholders can host dialogues and symposiums that bring together different elite actors into an ongoing dialogue. Similarly, policymakers can focus on constitutionalism rather than democratization, hosting legal training, scholarships, and exchanges to help local elites develop locally responsive mechanisms for creating credible contracts. These types of policies are likely to work within institutional constraints to create mechanisms for elite bargaining and progressive transition, rather than trying to import institutional capacity from abroad.

Bibliography

Abbink, J. “Ethnicity and Constitutionalism in Contemporary Ethiopia.” *Journal of African Law 41*, no. 2 (1997): 159–74.

Abbink, J. “The Ethiopian Revolution after 40 Years (1974–2014): Plan B in Progress?” *Journal of Developing Societies 31*, no. 3 (2015): 333–357. https://doi.org/10.1177/0169796X15590321.

Atnafu, B. “Ethnic Cleansing in Ethiopia.” *Peace Research 50*, no. 1 (2018): 77-104. https://www.jstor.org/stable/44873804.

Ayele, Z., and Fessha, Y. “The Constitutional Status of Local Government in Federal Systems: The Case of Ethiopia.” *Africa Today*, *58*, no. 4 (2012): 89–109. https://doi.org/10.2979/africatoday.58.4.89.

Ayele, Z. “Constitutionalism The Missing Element in South Sudan’s Elusive Quest for Peace through Federalism?.” In *Decentralization and Constitutionalism in Africa*, edited by Charles Fombad and Nico Steytler, 234-253, Oxford University Press, 2019.

Acemoglu, Daron, and James A. Robinson. *Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity, and Poverty*. New York, NY: Crown Publishing Group, 2012.

Almond, Gabriel. *A Discipline Divided: Schools and Sects in Political Science*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1990.

Anria, S. *When Movements Become Parties: The Bolivian MAS in Comparative Perspective*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2019.

Bach, Jean-Nicolas. “Abyotawi democracy: neither revolutionary nor democratic, a critical review of EPRDF's conception of revolutionary democracy in post-1991 Ethiopia.” *Journal of Eastern African Studies 5*, no. 4 (2012): 641-663. https://doi-org.ezproxy.lib.usf.edu/10.1080/17531055.2011.642522.

Baldwin, D. A. “Interdependence and power: a conceptual analysis.” *International Organization 34*, no. 4 (1980): 471-506.

Barata, D. “Minority Rights, Culture, and Ethiopia’s ‘Third Way’ to Governance.” *African Studies Review 55*, no. 3 (2012): 61–80.

Bates, R. H., A. Greif, M. Levi, M., and B. Weingast. *Analytic Narratives*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998.

Bates, R. H. *Prosperity and Violence: The Political Economy of Development*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2010.

Bates R. H., Block S. A., Fayad G., and Hoeffler A. “The New Institutionalism and Africa.” *The Journal of African Economies 22*, 4 (2013): 499-52.

Bates, R. H. *The Development Dilemma: Security, Prosperity, and a Return to History*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017.

Bell, Stephen. “Do We Really Need a New 'Constructivist Institutionalism' to Explain Institutional Change?” *British Journal of Political Science 41, no.* 4 (2011): 883-906. http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.lib.usf.edu/stable/41241846.

Berhe, A. “The Origins of the Tigray People’s Liberation Front.” *African Affairs 103*, no. 413 (2004): 569–92.

Berhe, M. G. *Laying the past to rest: The EPRDF and the challenges of Ethiopian state-building*. London: Hurst, 2020.
Boettke, P.J., Coyne, C.J. and Leeson, P.T. "The Continuing Relevance of F.A. Hayek's Political Economy." In Koppl, R. (Ed.) *Explorations in Austrian Economics* (Advances in Austrian Economics, Vol. 11), Emerald Group Publishing Limited, Bingley (2008): 79-98.
Buckley-Zistel, S. "Dividing and uniting: The use of citizenship discourses in conflict and reconciliation in Rwanda." *Global Society 20*, no. 1 (2006): 101-113.
Capoccia, G. "When Do Institutions "Bite"? Historical Institutionalism and the Politics of Institutional Change." *Comparative Political Studies 49*, no. 8 (2016): 1095–1127. https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414015626449.
Caporaso, J. "Introduction to the Special Issue of International Organization on Dependence and Dependency in the Global System." *International Organization 32*, no. 1 (1978): 1-12.
Carugati, F., Ober, J., and Weingast, B. "Is Development Uniquely Modern? Athens on the Doorstep." *Public Choice 181,* no. 1-2 (2019): 29-47. DOI: 10.1007/s11127-018-00632-w.
Chakravarty, Anuradha. "Navigating the middle ground: The political values of ordinary Hutu in post-genocide Rwanda." *African Affairs* 113, no. 451 (2014): 232-253.
Chakravarty, Anuradha. *Investing in Authoritarian Rule: Punishment and Patronage in Rwanda's Gacaca Courts for Genocide Crimes*. Cambridge University Press, 2016.
Chanie, P. "Clientelism and Ethiopia's post-1991 Decentralisation." *The Journal of Modern African Studies 45,* no. 3 (2007): 355–84.
Chanie, P., and Ishiyama, J. "Political Transition and the Rise of Amhara Nationalism in Ethiopia." *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 56, no. 5 (2021): 1036-1050. DOI:10.1177/00219096211015322
Clapham, C. "Imperial Leadership in Ethiopia." *African Affairs 68*, no. 271 (1969): 110–20.
Clapham, C. *The Horn of Africa: State Formation and Decay*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.
Clark, J. N. "National unity and reconciliation in Rwanda: A flawed approach?" *Journal of Contemporary African Studies 28*, no. 2 (2010): 137-154.
Clemens, M. A., and Demombynes, G. "When Does Rigorous Impact Evaluation Make a Difference? The Case of the Millennium Villages." Policy Research Working Paper 5477, The World Bank, (November 2010). https://doi.org/10.1596/1813-9450-5477.
Codere, Helen. "Power in Ruanda." *Anthropologica 4* (1962): 45-85.
Cohen, J. M. "Ethiopia after Haile Selassie: The Government Land Factor." *African Affairs 72*, no. 289 (1973): 365–82.
Cohen, J. M., Goldsmith, A., and Mellor, J. "Rural Development Issues Following Ethiopian Land Reform." *Africa Today 23*, no. 2 (1976): 7–28.
Colburn, F. "The Tragedy of Ethiopia's Intellectuals." *The Antioch Review* 47, no. 2 (1989): 133–45. https://doi.org/10.2307/4612023.
Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. (1995)
Conteh-Morgan, E. (2004). *Collective Political Violence: An Introduction to the Theories and Cases of Violent Conflicts*. London, UK: Routledge.
Corruption Perceptions Index 2019. Transparency International. https://www.transparency.org/cpi2019.

"Corruption Perceptions Index 2021". *Transparency International.* https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2021/index.

Cox, Gary W., Douglass Cecil North, and Barry R. Weingast. "The Violence Trap: A Political-Economic Approach to the Problems of Development." *Journal of Public Finance and Public Choice* 34, no. 1 (2019): 3-19. DOI: 10.1332/251569119X15537797528769.

Dawson, N. M. "Leaving no-one behind? Social inequalities and contrasting development impacts in rural Rwanda." *Development studies research 5*, no. 1 (2018): 1-14.

Demerew, K, "Elites, Rents, and Transitions: A New Institutionalist View of Ethiopia's Political Development." *Africa Today 68,* no. 3 (2022): 65-86. DOI: 10.2979/africatoday.68.3.04.

De Soto, H. *The Mystery of Capital: Why Capitalism Triumphs in the West and Fails Everywhere Else*. New York: Basic Books, 2000.

De Waal, Alex. *The Real Politics of the Horn of Africa: Money, War and the Business of Power*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2017.

De Waal, Alex. The theory and practice of Meles Zenawi. *African Affairs 112,* no. 446 (January 2013): 148-155. https://doi.org/10.1093/afraf/ads081.

Diamond, Larry. "Progress and retreat in Africa: The rule of law versus the big man." *Journal of Democracy* 19, no. 2 (2008): 138-149.

Diamond, Larry Jay. *In Search of Democracy*. New York: Routledge, 2016.

Eramian, L. "Ethnic Boundaries in Contemporary Rwanda: Fixity, Flexibility and Their Limits." *Anthropologica, 57*, no. 1, (2015): 93-104. http://www.jstor.org/stable/24470917.

"Ethiopian Military Consolidates Rule." *MERIP Reports*, no. 34: 27 (1975). https://doi.org/10.2307/3011474.

"Ethiopians to Get the Vote." *Africa Today 2*, no. 5 (1955): 5.

Fujii, L. A. *Killing Neighbors: Webs of Violence in Rwanda*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011.

Gamst, Frederick C. "Peasantries and Elites without Urbanism: The Civilization of Ethiopia." *Comparative Studies in Society and History 12,* no. 4 (1970): 373–92. https://doi.org/10.1017/S001041750000596X.

Geertz, C. *The Interpretation of Cultures.* NY: Basic Books, 1973.

Gudina, M. "The State, Competing Ethnic Nationalisms and Democratisation in Ethiopia." *African Journal of Political Science 9*, no. 1 (2004): 27-50.

Hall, P. A., & Taylor, R. C. "Political science and the three New Institutionalisms." *Political Studies, 44*, no. 5 (1996): 936-957. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9248.1996.tb00343.x.

"Haile Selassie Presses Ethiopian Land Reform." *New York Times*. (November 4, 1971). https://www.nytimes.com/1971/11/04/archives/haile-selassie-presses-ethiopian-land-reform.html.

Haile-Selassie, Teferra. *The Ethiopian Revolution, 1974–91: From a Monarchical Autocracy to a Military Oligarchy*. New York, NY: Kegan Paul International, 1997.

Hasselskog, M., & Schierenbeck, I. "National policy in local practice: the case of Rwanda." *Third World Quarterly 36*, no. 5 (2015): 950-966.

Hoben, Allan. "Social Anthropology and Development Planning: A Case Study in Ethiopian Land Reform Policy." *The Journal of Modern African Studies 10*, no. 4 (1972): 561–82.

Ibreck, Rachel. *South Sudan's Injustice System: Law and Activism on the Frontline*. London: Zed Books, 2019.

"Index of Economic Freedom." *Heritage Foundation.* 2018-2022.

Isaac, Ephraim. *The Ethiopian Orthodox Täwahïdo Church*. Trenton: Red Sea Press, 2012.
Ishiyama, J. "Is Ethnonationalism Growing in Ethiopia and Will it Lead to the Dissolution of the Country? Evidence from the World Value Survey 2007–2020." *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 56, no. 5 (2021): 1024-1035. DOI: 10.1177/00219096211007650.
Jefremovas, V. "Contested Identities: Power and the Fictions of Ethnicity, Ethnography and History in Rwanda." *Anthropologica, 39*, no. 1/2 (1997): 91-104. doi:10.2307/25605855.
Johnson, Douglas H. *The Root Causes of Sudan's Civil Wars*. Oxford: James Curry, 2002.
Johnson, Hilde. *South Sudan: The Untold Story, From Independence to Civil War*. London: I.B. Tauris. 2018.
"Juba Agreement for Peace in Sudan Between the Transitional Government of Sudan and the Parties to Peace Process." 3 October 2020. https://constitutionnet.org/sites/default/files/2021-03/Juba%20Agreement%20for%20Peace%20in%20Sudan%20-%20Official%20ENGLISH.PDF.
Katznelson, Ira, and Barry R. Weingast. "Intersections Between Historical and Rational Choice Institutionalism." In *Preferences and Situations: Points of Intersection Between Historical and Rational Choice In*., edited by Ira Katznelson and Barry R. Weingast, 1–24. Russell Sage Foundation, 2005.
Kebede, Messay. "Gebrehiwot Baykedagn, Eurocentrism, and the Decentering of Ethiopia." *Journal of Black Studies 36*, no. 6 (2006): 815–32.
Kebede, Messay. "Japan and Ethiopia: An Appraisal of Similarities and Divergent Courses". *Philosophy Faculty Publications 114* (1997). https://ecommons.udayton.edu/phl_fac_pub/114.
"Kiir dismisses and appoints 4 governors". *Juba TV*. 20 May 2019. https://jubatvm.com/2019/05/20/kiir-dismisses-appoints-4-new-governors.
Koehn, Peter. "Ethiopian Politics: Military Intervention and Prospects for Further Change." *Africa Today 22*, no. 2 (1975): 7–21.
Koelble, T. The New Institutionalism in Political Science and Sociology. *Comparative Politics 27*, no. 2 (1995): 231-243. doi:10.2307/422167.
Kohli, A. *State Directed Development: Political Power and Industrialization in the Global Periphery.* NY: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
Lambton, Ann K. S. "Ethiopia: An Approach to Land Reform." *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London 34*, no. 2 (1971): 221–240.
Lefort, Rene. "The Theory and Practice of Meles Zenawi: A Response to Alex De Waal." *African Affairs 112*, no. 448 (2013): 460-470. http://www.jstor.org/stable/43817334.
Levine, Donald. 1961. "Haile Selassie's Ethiopia: Myth or Reality?" *Africa Today 8,* no. 5 (1961): 11–14.
Leonardi, Cherry. "Paying 'buckets of blood' for the land: moral debates over economy, war, and state in Southern Sudan." *Journal of Modern African Studies 49*, no. 2 (2011): 215-240.
Levi, M. "Reconsiderations of Rational Choice in Comparative and Historical Analysis." In Lichbach, M. and Zuckerman, A. (Eds.), *Comparative Politics: Rationality, Culture, and Structure*. Second Edition. NY: Cambridge University Press, 2009, 117-133.
Lyons, Terrence. *The Puzzle of Ethiopian Politics.* Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2019.

Magnarellav, Paul. "Explaining Rwanda's 1994 genocide." *Human rights & human welfare* 2, no. 1 (2002): 3.
Mahoney, James. "Path-Dependent Explanations of Regime Change: Central America in Comparative Perspective." *Studies in Comparative International Development 36*, no. 1 (2001): 111-141.
Mamdani, M. "Beyond Settler and Native as Political Identities: Overcoming the Political Legacy of Colonialism." *Comparative Studies in Society and History, 43*, no. 4, (2001): 651-664. http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.lib.usf.edu/stable/2696665.
Mamdani, Mahmood. *Neither Settler nor Native*. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press, 2020.
Mamdani, Mahmood. "The Trouble with Ethiopia's Ethnic Federalism." *New York Times*, (January 3, 2019). https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/03/opinion/ethiopia-abiy-ahmed-reforms-ethnic-conflict-ethnic-federalism.html.
Marcus, Harold. *A History of Ethiopia*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994.
Markakis, John. "Nationalities and the State in Ethiopia." *Third World Quarterly 11*, no. 4 (1994): 118–30.
Mengisteab, K. *The Horn of Africa*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2014.
Mekonnen, Walleligne. "On the Question of Nationalities in Ethiopia." (1969). https://www.marxists.org/history/erol/ethiopia/nationalities.pdf.
Milkias, Paulos. "Traditional institutions and Traditional Elites: The Role of education in the Ethiopian body-politic." *African Studies Review 19,* no. 3 (1976): 79.
Minorities at Risk Project. "Minorities at Risk Dataset." College Park, MD: Center for International Development and Conflict Management (2009). http://www.mar.umd.edu.
"Mo Ibrahim Index of African Governance – Index Report". *Mo Ibrahim Foundation* (2020). https://mo.ibrahim.foundation/sites/default/files/2020-11/2020-index-report.pdf.
Moges, Z. "Don't Blame Amharas for Ethiopia's War." *Foreign Policy* (4 February 2022). https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/02/04/amhara-tigray-tplf-abiy-ethiopia-war.
Mousseau, M. "The Social Market Roots of Democratic Peace." *International Security 33*, no. 4)2009): 52–86. https://doi.org/10.1162/isec.2009.33.4.52.
Munck, G. "The Past and Present of Comparative Politics," *Kellogg Institute*, Working Paper 330 (2006).
Newbury, Catharine. *The Cohesion of Oppression: Clientship and Ethnicity in Rwanda, 1860-1960.* NY: Columbia University Press, 1988.
North, Douglass C. *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
North, D. "Institutions." *The Journal of Economic Perspectives 5*, no. 1 (1991): 97-112.
North, Douglass Cecil, Wallis, John Joseph, Weingast, Barry. *Violence and Social Orders: A Conceptual Framework for Interpreting Recorded Human History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.
Ostrom, E., Cox, M., and Schlager, E. "An Assessment of the Institutional Analysis and Development Framework and Introduction of the Social-Ecological Systems Framework." In Sabatier, P. and Weible, C. (eds.). *Theories of the Policy Process*, Boulder: Westview Press, 2014, 267-3-6.
Ostrom, E. *Understanding Institutional Diversity*. Princeton University Press, 2005.
Ottaway, Marina, and Ottaway, David. *Afrocommunism*. New York: Africana Publishing, 1986.
Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative. *Global Multidimensional Poverty Index Databank*. University of Oxford, 2017.

Pankhurst, R. *The Ethiopians: A History*. Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2001.
Pearce, Jeff. *Prevail: The Inspiring Story of Ethiopia's Victory over Mussolini's Invasion, 1935–1941*. New York: Skyhorse, 2014.
"Pendulum swings: The rise and fall of insurgent militias in South Sudan." HSBA Issue Brief. Small Arms Survey (2013). https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/174763/HSBA-IB22-Pendulum-Swings.pdf.
Pierson, P. "Increasing Returns, Path Dependence, and the Study of Politics." *The American Political Science Review 94*, no. 2 (2000): 251-267.
Pinaud, Clemence. "South Sudan: Civil War, Predation, and the Making of a Military Aristocracy." *African Affairs 114* (2014): 192–220.
Posner, D., James Habyarimana, and Macartan Humphreys. *Coethnicity: Diversity and the Dilemmas of Collective Action*. NY: Russell Sage Foundation, 2009.
Posner, D. N. *Institutions and Ethnic Politics in Africa*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
Posner, Daniel N. "The Political Salience of Cultural Difference: Why Chewas and Tumbukas Are Allies in Zambia and Adversaries in Malawi." *American Political Science Review* 98, no. 4 (2004): 529–45. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055404041334.
Prochazka, P. *Abyssinia: The Powder Barrel, A Book on the Most Burning Question of the Day*. British International News Agency, 1935.
Prosperity Party By-Laws. Addis Ababa, 2019.
Resource Governance Index (2017). Natural Governance Resource Institute https://api.resourcegovernanceindex.org/system/documents/documents/000/000/046/original/2017_Resource_Governance_Index.pdf?1498599435.
Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS) (December, 2018). https://www.peaceagreements.org/wgenerateAgreementPDF/2112.
Reyntjens, Filip. "From ethnic amnesia to ethnocracy: 80% of Rwanda's top officials are Tutsi." *African Arguments* (November, 2021). https://francegenocidetutsi.org/ReyntjensAmnesieEthniqueAAnovembre2021.pdf.
Reyntjens, Filip. "Rwanda." In *Political chronicles of the African Great Lakes region,* Hague, Academic and Scientific Publishers (2019), 67-90.
Reyntjens, Filip. "Rwanda, ten years on: From genocide to dictatorship." *African affairs* 103, no. 411 (2004): 177-210.
Roach, Steven. "South Sudan: A Volatile Dynamic of Accountability and Peace," *International Affairs 92*, no. 6 (2016): 1343-1359. https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2346.12748.
Robinson, Peter, and Golriz Ghahraman. "Can Rwandan President Kagame be held responsible at the ICTR for the killing of President Habyarimana?." *Journal of International Criminal Justice* 6, no. 5 (2008): 981-994.
Rolandsen, Øystein H. "Another Civil War in South Sudan: The Failure of Guerrilla Government." *Journal of Eastern African Studies 9*, no. 1 (2015): 163-174.
Rwanda's Constitution of 2003 with Amendments through 2015. https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Rwanda_2015.pdf?lang=en.
"Rwanda Reconciliation Barometer". *National Unity and Reconciliation Commission*. Republic of Rwanda (2020). https://www.rwandainun.gov.rw/index.php?eID=dumpFile&t=f&f=24853&token=72a119c58554f99bc72a1ec83a4efb01c832757f.

Saati, Abrak. *The Participation Myth: Outcomes of Participatory Constitution Building Processes on Democracy.* Umea University, 2015.
Sentry Project. "The Taking of South Sudan: The Tycoons, Brokers, and Multinational Corporations Complicit in Hijacking the World's Newest State." September 2019.
Soifer, Hillel David. "The Causal Logic of Critical Junctures." *Comparative Political Studies 45*, no. 12 (2012): 1572–97. https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414012463902.
South Sudan's Constitution of 2011 with Amendments through 2013. https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/South_Sudan_2013.pdf?lang=en.
South Sudan Country Report – Freedom in the World 2019. Freedom House. https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2019/south-sudan.
"South Sudan again delays its 1st election, until late 2024." *ABC News*. 4 August 2022.
Spindler, M. "Neoinstitutionalist theory." In *International Relations: A Self-Study Guide to Theory*. Opladen; Berlin; Toronto: Verlag Barbara Budrich, (2013): 141-157. doi:10.2307/j.ctvdf09vd.9.
Staniland, M. *What is Political Economy?: A Study of Social Theory and Underdevelopment*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987.
Strang, G. Bruce, ed. *Collision of Empires: Italy's Invasion of Ethiopia and Its International Impact*. Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2013.
Storey, A. "Structural adjustment, state power & genocide: the World Bank & Rwanda." *Review of African Political Economy 28*, no. 89 (2001): 365-385.
Straus, S. *The Order of Genocide: Race, Power, and War in Rwanda*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008.
Tadesse, K. *The Generation: The History of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party*. Silver Spring, MD: K & S Distributors, 1993.
Tareke, G. *The Ethiopian revolution: War in the Horn of Africa*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009.
Tesfaye, Aaron. *State and Economic Development in Africa*. New York: Springer, 2017.
"The Congo: Solving the FDLR Problem Once and For All". Brussels: International Crisis Group, 2005. https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/central-africa/democratic-republic-congo/congo-solving-fdlr-problem-once-and-all.
Thelen, K. "Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Politics." *Annual Review of Political Science 2*, no. 1 (1999): 369-404.
Thelen, K. *How Institutions Evolve: The Political Economy of Skills in Germany, Britain, the United States, and Japan*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008.
Thomson, Susan. *Whispering Truth to Power: Everyday Resistance to Reconciliation in Postgenocide Rwanda.* Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2013.
Thomson, S. *Rwanda: From Genocide to Precarious Peace*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2018.
TPLF (Tigray People's Liberation Front. "People's Democratic Program of the TPLF." Second Organizational Congress of the TPLF (May 1983). https://marxists.architexturez.net/history/erol/ethiopia/tigray-program.pdf.
Tullock, Gordon C., and Charles Kershaw Rowley. *The Rent-Seeking Society*. Fairfax, VA: Liberty Fund, 2005.
Ullendorf, Edward. The Ethiopians: An Introduction to Country and People. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1961.

Uvin, P. *Aiding Violence: The Development Enterprise in Rwanda*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2011.

Van Der Beken, C. & Dessalegn, B. (eds.). *Alternative Approaches to Ethno-cultural Diversity Management at Sub-national Levels: Ethiopia in Comparative Perspectives*. Ethiopian Constitutional and Public Law Series, Addis Ababa University, 2020.

Vaughan, Sarah. “Revolutionary democratic state-building: party, state and people in the EPRDF's Ethiopia.” *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 5, no. 4 (2011): 619-640. doi: 10.1080/17531055.2011.642520.

Verjee, A. “Political transitions in Sudan and Ethiopia: an early comparative analysis.” *Global Change, Peace & Security* 33, no. 3 (2021): 279-296.

Vestal, Theodore M. *The Lion of Judah in the New World: Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia and the Shaping of Americans' Attitudes toward Africa*. Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2011.

Waldorf, L. “Revisiting Hotel Rwanda: genocide ideology, reconciliation, and rescuers.” *Journal of Genocide Research 11*, no. 1 (2009): 101-125.

Weingast, Barry. “Why Developing Countries Prove so Resistant to the Rule-of-Law.” In *Global Perspectives on the Rule of Law*, edited by James J. Heckman, Robert L. Nelson, and Lee Cabatingan, 28–52. London: Routledge, 2010.

Weis, Toni. “Vanguard Capitalism: Party, State, and Market in the EPRDF’s Ethiopia.” PhD diss., University of Oxford, 2015.

Williams, P. *War and Conflict in Africa*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2011.

Wolde Giorgis, Elizabeth. “Charting out Ethiopian Modernity and Modernism.” *Callaloo 33*¸ no. 1 (2010): 82–99. https://doi.org/10.1353/cal.0.0627.

Woolbert, R. “The Rise and Fall of Abyssinian Imperialism.” *Foreign Affairs 14*, no. 4 (1936): 692-697.

Wood, Adrian P. 1983. “Rural Development and National Integration in Ethiopia.” *African Affairs 82,* no. 329 (1983): 509–39. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordjournals.afraf.a097553.

The World Factbook: South Sudan 2020. Central Intelligence Agency. https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/od.html.

Young, John. “Sudan: A Flawed Peace Process leading to a Flawed Peace.” *Review of African Political Economy 32*, no. 103 (2007): 99-113.

Zewde, Bahru. *Pioneers of change in Ethiopia: The Reformist Intellectuals of the Early Twentieth Century*. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2002.

Zewde, Bahru. *The Quest for Socialist Utopia: The Ethiopian Student Movement, c. 1960-1974*. NY: Boydell & Brewer, 2014.

Appendix A: IRB Exemption Letter

EXEMPT DETERMINATION

February 15, 2022

Kaleb Demerew

Dear Mr. Demerew:

On 2/14/2022, the IRB reviewed and approved the following protocol:

Application Type:	Initial Study
IRB ID:	STUDY003719
Review Type:	Exempt (2)(iii)
Title:	Violence, Rents, and Elites: Institutional Determinants of Political Order in Ethiopia, Rwanda, and South Sudan
Funding:	None
Protocol:	• Protocol, Version 1, Feb 9 2022.docx;

The IRB determined that this protocol meets the criteria for exemption from IRB review.

In conducting this protocol, you are required to follow the requirements listed in the INVESTIGATOR MANUAL (HRP-103).

Please note, as per USF policy, once the exempt determination is made, the application is closed in BullsIRB. This does not limit your ability to conduct the research. Any proposed or anticipated change to the study design that was previously declared exempt from IRB oversight must be submitted to the IRB as a new study prior to initiation of the change. However, administrative changes, including changes in research personnel, do not warrant a modification or new application.

Ongoing IRB review and approval by this organization is not required. This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these activities impact the exempt determination, please submit a new request to the IRB for a determination.

Sincerely,

Various Menzel
IRB Research Compliance Administrator

Institutional Review Boards / Research Integrity & Compliance
FWA No. 00001669
University of South Florida / 3702 Spectrum Blvd., Suite 165 / Tampa, FL 33612 / 813-974-5638

Appendix B: IUP Article Republishing Rights

Consent to Publish Agreement
Africa Today

INDIANA UNIVERSITY PRESS
INDIANA UNIVERSITY
Office of Scholarly Publishing

made at Bloomington, Indiana, on 19 March 2021

BETWEEN Kaleb Demerew (hereinafter "the Author")

Home address:

Professional address: 4202 East Fowler Ave, SOC107
Tampa, Florida 33620

Home phone: ________ Professional phone: ________

Email address: demerew@usf.edu Citizenship: USA

AND Indiana University Press, Indiana University, Office of Scholarly Publishing, Herman B Wells Library 350, 1320 E. 10th St., Bloomington, IN 47405-3907, USA e-mail: <journals@indiana.edu> (hereinafter "the Press").

Indiana University Press is pleased to have the privilege of publishing your article, review, briefing, photo essay, or multimedia contribution (hereinafter the "Contribution")

entitled Elites, Rents, and Transitions: A New Institutionalist View of Ethiopia's Political Development

in *Africa Today* (hereinafter "the Journal") in both print and electronic formats.

You, as Author, and the Press hereby agree as follows:

1. Whereas the Press is undertaking to publish the Contribution in the Journal, the Author grants and assigns to the Press the full and exclusive rights during the term of copyright to publish or cause others to publish the said Contribution in all forms, in all media, and in all languages throughout the world.

2. In consideration of the rights granted above, the Press grants the Author, without charge, the right to republish the Contribution in revised or unrevised form, in any language, in any volume consisting entirely of the Author's own work or in any volume edited by the Author, provided the Press is notified of such use and that it carries the appropriate copyright notice and standard form of scholarly acknowledgement.

Indiana University Press • Consent to Publish Agreement
Africa Today [rev. 7/2016]

Page 1 of 3

Author's initials KD