

The Micro-Dynamics of Empirical Statehood in Africa

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Abstract

In this essay, I argue that applying a micro-level approach to social order can provide substantial analytical leverage in understanding state capacity in Africa. I start by reviewing a number of ways that scholars of African politics have described and explained patterns of *empirical statehood*- the ability of a government to enforce compliance with the laws, regulations and, institutions that it has created. I then suggest that to fully explain patterns of empirical statehood, it is necessary to examine mechanisms motivating individual decisions to comply with laws created by a central government. I conclude by briefly discussing the implications of this theoretical perspective for research design, drawing on examples from quantitative and qualitative data that I collected during a year of fieldwork in rural Kenya.

Describing and Explaining Empirical Statehood in Africa

Students of African politics first introduced the term *empirical statehood* to the political science lexicon, drawing attention to the fact that in many African countries, it is in fact an open question as to whether the government actually governs in any given locality within its borders. Jackson and Rosberg (1982) drew on the idea to help explain why many institutionally weak states in Africa had not lost their legal status as states. In their usage, empirical statehood is the *de facto* ability of a government to utilize force to exercise authority within its territorial jurisdiction. They juxtaposed this concept with juridical statehood, by which they meant the legal recognition of a government's territorial jurisdiction by other polities.

Although the original usage of juridical statehood was in the context of international politics, there are both external and internal components of this aspect of stateness. Externally, juridical statehood revolves around the institution of sovereignty—the recognition by the international community of the integrity of a state's borders and its right to govern the territory enclosed by those borders. Internally, there are certain institutions that are components of juridical statehood—the organizational components that make a state a state, rather than some other type of political organization. At the bare minimum, these formal legal components of statehood include a constitution and differentiated institutions that are formally endowed with powers of lawmaking, law enforcement, and adjudication. Any other laws, policies, or institutions created against the backdrop of this basic legal framework are part of the larger *de jure* aspect of a state.

Whereas the juridical components of statehood are about the claims that a government makes vis-à-vis other governments and its own citizens, empirical statehood is a measure of whether governments are willing and able to exercise those claims. This conception follows from Weber's conception of the state as a "human association that successfully claims the monopoly of legitimate use of physical force within a given

territory”.¹ Based on this definition, empirical statehood can be said to exist when a government is able to enforce compliance with the laws, regulations, and institutions that it has created (Jackson and Rosberg 1982; 2).² Jackson and Rosberg’s central argument is that external juridical statehood has allowed African many states to continue to exist, even in the face of a complete absence of empirical statehood. However, they do little to actually characterize empirical statehood in Africa as anything other than “weak”.

A number of subsequent analyses of the state in Africa have pushed this insight further, attempting to describe and explain patterns of empirical statehood in Africa in greater detail.³ Herbst (1990, 1996, 2000) builds most directly on Jackson and Rosberg, arguing that empirical statehood in post-colonial Africa is generally concentrated close to capital cities and becomes more diffuse further into the periphery. Herbst explains this pattern with reference to the way in which external juridical statehood has been constructed and enforced in post-colonial Africa. In the period following independence, control of the capital city became the primary aim of many governments, due to the fact that the international community tended to recognize the government in power in a given country, regardless of whether or not that government exercised authority over its entire territory. Because the United Nations and the African Union will prevent aggressive states from conquering their weak neighbors, Herbst argues that rulers lack the same incentives to build institutions in peripheral areas as their counterparts in early modern Europe.

Rather than focusing on patterns of empirical statehood within countries, Engleburt (2000a, 2000b, 2000c) seeks to explain variation between states in Africa. The puzzle that Engleburt uses to motivate his study is that although states in Africa are typically described

¹ This particular formulation comes from Taylor 1982; most other studies of the state use similar variants.

² This capacity to enforce laws can also be extended more broadly to the ability of the government to defend its territory against military attacks by both external and internal rivals; however, this component of empirical statehood is outside of the scope of this analysis.

³ Of the three explanations detailed here, Boone (1998) is the only one that explicitly uses the concept of “empirical statehood” as a dependent variable. The other pieces allude to the concept, using synonymous ideas of “state capacity” (Herbst 2000, Engleburt 2000) or “center-periphery relations” (Boone 2003).

as being weak and corrupt, there is actually substantial variation across the continent with respect to whether ruling parties govern using institutions or instead rely on patron-client politics to maintain order. Furthermore, this variation appears to be correlated with differences in economic performance between countries. Englebert's explanation is that the geographical and ideological overlap between precolonial and postcolonial political institutions determines whether or not politicians use institutions to implement development policies. He argues that in countries where post-colonial political institutions are not congruent with pre-colonial polities, governments have no legitimate basis in society, meaning that policy implementation is costly and potentially divisive. Because governing through institutions was generally more trouble than it was worth, leaders who found themselves in such a situation in the early post-colonial period delved into neopatrimonial politics. In contrast, leaders in countries where post-colonial boundaries and institutions were largely congruent with pre-colonial kingdoms were accorded greater legitimacy, allowing them to govern through political institutions.

Boone (1998, 2003) advances an alternative theory of empirical statehood in Africa that focuses on the role that the organization of rural political economy plays in shaping government strategies of institutional creation. In the earliest formulation of this argument (Boone 1998), she suggests that empirical statehood in early post-colonial Africa tended to emerge more frequently in cash-crop producing countries than in countries in which the dominant economic activities were either extraction/plantation enclaves or subsistence agriculture. Governments in cash-crop countries built institutions and infrastructure in rural areas to extract surpluses from export circuits, whereas there were no similar incentives when governments could tap into enclave economies or where there was no surplus to extract.

Boone later refines this insight to explain variation in empirical statehood within cash-crop producing countries (Boone 2003). The later study was motivated by the observation that even within African countries that are widely considered to be successful state-builders, there is variation in empirical statehood between localities. Boone's theory focuses on how rural social organization and the economic autonomy of elites influences the

prospects for empirical statehood. In this perspective, empirical statehood is only likely in areas where rural communities are traditionally hierarchical and in which local elites are economically independent from the government. Traditional leaders in such areas pose a political threat to the government, leading the ruling party to create centralized institutions that deeply penetrate rural society. In cash crop areas that lack either hierarchical leadership or economically independent elites, empirical statehood is unlikely, as the government lacks incentives to create political institutions that are both spatially extensive and centrally controlled.

Although these three authors describe different patterns of empirical statehood and advance competing explanations for these patterns, their arguments share one important characteristic. In all three theories, the authors explain patterns of empirical statehood by explaining why governments do or do not create institutions that enable their agents to enforce laws more effectively. In this perspective, deepening the *de jure* aspects of the state by creating centralized, bureaucratic institutions that penetrate the periphery is sufficient to increase the *de facto* law enforcement capacity of states. However, some micro-level evidence regarding empirical statehood in rural Africa reveals counterexamples that are puzzling in light of the emphasis on government-led institutional change in the literature.

For example, Ensminger's case study of institutional changes among the Orma pastoralist community in northeastern Kenya indicates that changes in empirical statehood are not necessarily state-led (Ensminger 1990). The puzzle motivating the paper is that upon returning to the Orma community after a 6 year absence from the field, Ensminger noticed substantial changes in the law enforcement capacity of the Kenyan state in this community, noting that, "more than any other change, I was surprised by the increase in authority of the government-appointed chief at the expense of the council of elders. I was also struck by the frequency with which the chief used force in the administration of his duties; this represented a considerable departure from previous practice" (Ensminger 1990; 663).

What is particularly puzzling about this finding is that there was no noticeable change in the number or quality of state officials during Ensminger's absence from the field.

Instead, what had changed was the demand for government intervention among the Orma (Ensminger 1990; 663). Environmental changes in northeastern Kenya had led to increased population pressure in the territory occupied by the Orma. These population changes decreased the effectiveness of indigenous governance through the council of elders, which largely relied on consensus building. In order to enforce property rights over grazing lands, elders started to turn to the chief, police, and courts, providing them with information about violators. Although the elders drove this change in governance, Ensminger notes that a majority of community members complied with the new rules and exhibited increased cooperation with agents of the state in other domains of social life.

Explaining Empirical Statehood-A Micro-level Approach

Political capacity can emerge at different scales of social organization and from horizontal as well as vertical solidarities. More thinking on this point could lead to more complete theory of political capacity within communities and nations, and a better understanding of collective action and state building in Africa (Boone 2003; 137).

In order to develop an alternative explanation of empirical statehood, it is necessary to revisit the working definition of the concept- the ability of a government to enforce compliance with the laws, regulations, and institutions that it has created. My argument turns on dividing this concept into two components: 1) the ability of agents of the government to perform the duties required of them in their public roles as civil servants, lawmakers, or judges, and 2) the willingness of individual citizens to comply with the behavioral requirements of laws and institutions created by the central government. This seems to be a trivial point. However, existing theories of empirical statehood only explain variations in the first of these components, while ethnographic studies such as Ensminger's case study of the Orma suggest that patterns of *de jure* institutions alone cannot adequately explain empirical statehood.

At the same time, it is impossible to completely abandon government institution-building decisions when explaining empirical statehood. Changes in the penetration of law enforcement institutions do seem to influence individual decisions to comply with laws to some extent. In order to more precisely understand the relationship between the *de jure* and

de facto aspects of statehood, it is necessary to look more closely at *compliance mechanisms*- the specific ways in which individuals are motivated to follow laws.⁴ My argument is that empirical statehood relies on the concurrent operation of two different mechanisms: coercion and authority.⁵ Although both of these mechanisms seek to explain individual decisions, they describe how the actions of an individual are shaped by rules external to that individual. In other words, these mechanisms explain the microfoundations of institutional performance.⁶

The coercion mechanism motivates compliance through credible threats of punishment; it works “by proposing a sanction which the recipient expects to be imposed in the event of non-compliance and which makes the non-compliant action (with the imposition of the sanction) substantially less attractive than the compliant action (without the sanction)” (Taylor 1982; 14). Coercion is the basic motivational mechanism underlying rational choice theories of social compliance and law enforcement- it operates by deterring noncompliance through threatened sanctions. The sanctions that motivate coerced compliance can vary in type, and include (but are not limited to) physical violence, material fines and fees, and exclusion from future benefits of cooperative social action.

The necessary conditions for functioning coercion are 1) the expected costs of punishment for noncompliance with a rule are high enough to lead an individual to prefer following the rule rather than breaking the rule and 2) the threat of enacting the punishment is credible. The expected costs of punishment are a function of the magnitude and nature of the penalty and the likelihood of caught breaking the rule. As a result, there are three major ways that the effectiveness of coercion in motivating compliance with a given rule can be altered: 1) decreasing or increasing the magnitude of punishment; 2) decreasing or increasing the likelihood of catching noncompliance through changes in the monitoring of

⁴ These same mechanisms are also used to describe compliance with other kinds of behavioral instruction, such as commands, orders, and unwritten social rules.

⁵ Other compliance mechanisms that have been highlighted include conditional cooperation, the activation of commitments, expert authority (Taylor 1982), and persuasion (Blau 1965; Taylor 1982).

⁶ A more comprehensive discussion of the motivational mechanisms driving institutional performance can be found in Greif (2006)

social behavior; and 3) decreasing or increasing the credibility of the threat of sanctions through changes in the preferences of the individuals or organizations responsible for enacting punishments.

Authority operates through the social influence exerted on an individual by the other members of a community or organization. Social influence enforces compliance with a given rule by perpetuating the belief amongst group members that such behavior is normatively desirable and expected of group members; it hinges on the idea that “everyone else is doing it, so it must be good”. Repeated interactions with other members of a group shape an individual’s concept of what constitutes common sense behavior and what kind of decisions can be made with very little deliberation or calculation about costs or benefits (Barnard 1938). Put differently, authority motivates compliance through “structural constraints rooted in the collectivity of subordinates rather than instruments of power or influence wielded by the superior himself” (Blau 1965; 312).

Two specific structural characteristics of social groups have been hypothesized to influence the functioning of authority: (1) the existence of some shared preferences and beliefs among group members, including normative beliefs, (2) a more-or-less stable set of members who are connected by overlapping, multidimensional social relationships (Mearns 1996; see also Taylor 1982). As a result, there are three ways in which the effectiveness of authority in motivating compliance with respect to a given law can vary: 1) decreasing or increasing the congruence between the law and group norm by changing the content of the behavioral rule, the content of group norms, or both; 2) sudden decreases or increases in the number of members of a social group or decreases or increases in the amount of time the average group member belongs to the group; or 3) decreasing or increasing the number of types of social interactions and connections between members of a social group.

The necessity of shared norms for the functioning of authority is intrinsic to the definition of the concept. If compliance with a law is motivated without reference to the norms of a given social group, then it must be the case that a mechanism other than authority is operating. This way of understanding authority can be traced to Weber, who explained

different forms of authority with reference to three different ideal types of legitimating belief systems: traditional, charismatic, and legal (Blau 1965). Although later analysts moved away from this specific typology, they maintained that the internalization and activation of social norms is central to the operation of authority. The implication for empirical statehood is that in order for a law to exercise authority over the behavior over the members of a particular group, the content of that law must be consistent with the shared beliefs and norms and goals of that group.

Along these same lines, stability of group membership and multiplex relationships are considered to be necessary for authority to function because the mechanism is rooted in the density of horizontal relationships between group members. If there is a constant turnover in-group membership or individuals only interact with each other in very circumscribed ways, it is very difficult for individuals to have a clear sense of group norms or to converge on commonly held beliefs about what constitutes appropriate behavior (Barnard 1938; Putnam 1996). Together, these conditions establish the boundaries of the types of social groups in which authority can be expected to operate- local communities, neighborhoods, and small units of larger formal organizations. As Barnard (1938) argued, “The activities of individuals necessarily take place within local immediate groups. The relation of a man to a large organization, or to his nation, or to his church, is necessarily through those with whom he is in immediate contact” (Barnard 1938; 119). The implication for empirical statehood is that changes in the composition and coherence of local communities will alter the operation of the authority mechanism, leading to changes in the decisions of group members whether or not to comply with laws.

The differences between the conditions necessary for coercion and authority explain why coercion alone is insufficient to generate empirical statehood. Authority is characterized by voluntary compliance with social rules or directives, insofar as considerations of the possibility of punishment are concerned (Blau 1965). If the mechanism of authority is underlying an individual’s compliance with a social rule, changing the level or credibility of punishment should not lead to increased noncompliance. In contrast, if an individual’s compliance with a rule or law is driven primarily by coercion,

decreasing the likelihood of punishment or the severity of punishment should lead that person to stop following the rule. Even under the most draconian regimes, it is unlikely that a government can penetrate society to the extent that threatened punishments are sufficient to motivate consistent, widespread compliance with laws. As Chester Barnard observed after visiting Europe in the 1930s, “I observed recently in a totalitarian state under a dictator, where personal liberty is supposed to be at a minimum and arbitrary authority at a maximum, many violations of positive law or edict, some of them open and on a wide scale; and I was reliably informed of others” (Barnard 1938; 162). Conversely, explanations that rely solely on coercion cannot explain why individuals might follow the laws created by the state even if administrative presence on the ground is minimal (Ensminger 1990; Boone 2003, 135-137).

At the same time, authority alone cannot sustain empirical statehood. This can be demonstrated by examining the shortcomings of coercion in stateless societies. In Ensminger’s example, rapid demographic changes in the Orma community (including the settling of many outsiders in the area) eroded the authority of the council of elders. Although there were also coercive sanctions available to such leaders, the use of these sanctions was decentralized throughout Orma society, meaning that their mobilization required consent and consensus (Ensminger 1990; Taylor 1982). Thus, the same social changes that decreased the ability of the elders to motivate compliance through authority also decreased the potency of the coercion mechanism. In contrast, in the juridical structure of states, specialists wield the levers of coercion; changes in community composition do not affect their ability to utilize sanctions to enforce laws. As a result, coercion can allow empirical statehood to be maintained even if there are sudden shocks to a local community that undermine the authority mechanism. Consistent use of sanctions by government agents in such cases can prevent the disintegration of social order while newcomers are being assimilated to local norms or while new community norms are emerging.

Observable Implications

The specific implications regarding authority and empirical statehood that I test in my dissertation are derived from the definition of empirical statehood and the two central theoretical arguments advanced above:

- 1) Empirical statehood can be said to exist when a government is able to enforce compliance with the laws, regulations, and institutions that it has created (Page 3);
- 2) Empirical statehood relies on the concurrent operation of two different compliance mechanisms: coercion and authority (Page 8);
- 3) There are three ways in which the effectiveness of authority in motivating compliance with respect to a given law can vary: a) decreasing or increasing the congruence between the law and group norm by changing the content of the behavioral rule, the content of group norms, or both; b) sudden decreases or increases in the number of members of a social group or decreases or increases in the amount of time the average group member belongs to the group; or c) decreasing or increasing the number of types of social interactions and connections between members of a social group (Page 10).

These conceptual and theoretical arguments lead to the following seven testable implications:

- 1) Individuals who live in localities where state laws and institutions are congruent with local norms will tend to comply with government laws and institutions more frequently than individuals who live in localities where there is a divergence between local norms and those legislated by the government;
- 2) Individuals who are part of broad, multi-ethnic social networks in that span multiple localities and encompass multiple dimensions of social life will tend to comply with government laws and institutions more frequently than individuals whose primary social networks are located within one village;
- 3) Individuals who have completed secondary school will be more likely to be part of broad, multi-ethnic social networks in that span multiple localities and encompass multiple dimensions of social life than individuals who have not completed secondary school;

- 4) Localities in which there is a match in the content and procedures of local governance norms and government laws will be characterized by higher levels of compliance with government laws, vis-à-vis communities where there is a divergence between local norms and those legislated by the government;
- 5) Localities in which pre-colonial political units were territorially bounded will tend to be characterized by higher levels of compliance with government laws, vis-à-vis communities in which pre-colonial political units were differentiated differently (either by kinship or by permeable, shifting boundaries);
- 6) Localities in which there have been increases in population density since independence will tend to be characterized by higher levels of compliance with government laws, vis-à-vis communities in which there have been no increases in population density;
- 7) Localities in which there is a high level of individuals who have completed secondary school will tend to be characterized by higher levels of compliance with government laws, vis-à-vis communities in which there have been low levels of secondary school completion.

Designing Research on Empirical Statehood

Although examining the determinants of individual compliance with laws is useful for explaining empirical statehood in Africa, this perspective poses a number of challenges for research design. First, it is not possible to directly derive hypotheses about empirical statehood from the factors that are necessary for coercion and authority. This is the case because the observable implications of compliance mechanisms and empirical statehood manifest themselves at different levels of analysis. Hypotheses regarding the operation of compliance mechanisms are relevant at the level of the individual; hypotheses about the effect of these mechanisms on empirical statehood are relevant at the level of the locality. Moreover, the two levels of analysis are connected; empirical statehood in a given area is a function of individual compliance with laws, and the functioning of both compliance mechanisms depends on locality-level variables such as the density of government law

enforcement institutions, the relationship between government laws and community norms, and the nature of social networks in a given community.

In addition, it is not sufficient to simply document individual compliance or noncompliance and then infer empirical statehood from those results. Instead, the law enforcement capacity of the government must be measured at some kind of aggregated level. But what level of spatial aggregation is appropriate? Boone's observation that empirical statehood varies between localities in the cash-crop countries of West Africa indicates that it is necessary to compare law enforcement outcomes across geographical units within the same state. Yet, there is nothing intrinsic in either her theory or the alternative approach that I have developed here that determines the precise type of territorial division that should be used as a unit of analysis to study empirical statehood.

A third major challenge to testing the approach to empirical statehood developed here is that explaining variations in the operation the authority mechanism is not sufficient to explain empirical statehood. As noted above, variation in the effectiveness of both coercion and authority can result in variation in empirical statehood. As a result, when explaining sub-national patterns of empirical statehood, it is necessary include variables measuring the effectiveness of coercion, the effectiveness of authority, and the interaction of the two. In practice, this means that is necessary to measure hypothesized determinants of state penetration in rural areas, as increased *de jure* statehood increases the effectiveness of coercive punishments. The theories of empirical statehood advanced by Herbst, Englebert, and Boone all have implications for how changes in the spatial location of government institutions alter the costs of breaking laws, the likelihood of getting caught, and the credibility of punitive sanctions. Because these three explanations have not been explicitly tested against each other, I do not add my own alternative explanation for changes in *de jure* statehood. Including the implications of these theories in my empirical analysis will thus serve the dual purposes of providing a complete model of empirical statehood in my analysis and the first comparative test of these three competing theories of government institutional penetration in Africa.

Together, these three challenges mean that testing the observable implications of the theoretical approach advanced here will require a substantial departure from the type of research designs that have typically been utilized to study empirical statehood in Africa. Most studies in this field have typically consisted of country-level case studies (Villalon and Huxtable 1998, Bates 1987, Reno 1998, Berman and Lonsdale 1992), cross-national statistical analyses (Englebert 2000a, 2000b, 2000c; Thies 2004), or a combination of unstructured cross national and sub-national analyses (Herbst 2000, Boone 2003). In contrast, the research strategy that I use in my dissertation project is to test the implications of the authority mechanism at the individual level (**Observable Implications #1-3**) and to test the joint implications of the authority mechanism and the existing explanations for the character of *de jure* government institutions by comparing law enforcement outcomes between sub-national political units (**Observable Implications #4-7**). By utilizing data at these different levels of analysis, I am able to test the seven implications of the central theoretical arguments that I outlined above, as well as the implications of Herbst, Englebert, and Boone's theories of government penetration.

I collected the data that I use to test the observable implications of my argument during 11 months of field research in Kenya in 2006 and 2007. I chose to work in only one country because the primary goal of my research was to exhaustively document and explain sub-national patterns of empirical statehood. Because this goal requires multiple research sites for each country, I decided that engaging in such an endeavor in more than one country would be impractical. My main criterion for selecting a country for field research was that there be a likelihood of some degree of spatial variation with respect to my dependent variable. This consideration eliminated countries such as Somalia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where localities that experience empirical statehood are likely to be few and far between. Based on these factors, I chose to work in Kenya. Based on a review of secondary literature on potential field sites, Kenya seemed to fit the criterion of spatial variation in empirical statehood well. A number of different analysts have described Kenya as one of Africa's success stories with respect to empirical statehood (Berman and Lonsdale 1992; Jackson and Rosberg 1982; Bates 1987). At the same time, anti-state rebellions, ethnic violence, vigilante gangs, and intermittent cattle raiding and banditry have filled

Kenya's pre-independence and post-independence history. My aim in undertaking the research was to more systematically document and explain the striking contrast between these two characterizations of political order in Kenya.

The individual-level data were collected in Laikipia North District, which is located about 5 hours north of Nairobi. The data that I collected in this area were part of a natural experiment and a field experiment. In the natural experiment, I utilize the random timing of secondary school construction in Laikipia North to examine the effect of education on the nature of individuals' social networks (**Observable Implication #2**) and the effect of these social networks on the extent to which individuals voluntarily comply with state laws and institutions (**Observable Implication #3**). In the field experiment, I randomly assigned villages to different versions of an anti-littering program that is backed by coercive enforcement by government chiefs. The treatment is whether local elders were incorporated in the monitoring and enforcement of the externally imposed behavioral rule of "Don't Litter". I measured the effect of this treatment on individual littering decisions (**Observable Implication #1**) and amount of litter that accumulates at the village-level (**Observable Implication #4**).⁷

The district-level data were collected with the cooperation of the Office of the President for Provincial Administration and Internal Security. I chose the district as the level of analysis for the sub-national analysis because it was the smallest administrative unit for which data were available for all relevant measures, but which was sufficiently numerous for cross-sectional analysis. At the time of the analysis, there were 71 districts (the number has since increased, but is currently in flux due to the current political instability in Kenya). I measured the dependent variable, empirical statehood, by collecting crime rates for each district, disaggregated by type of crime. I also collected measures of the density of state institutions in each district, which is used as a proxy for the effectiveness of the coercion mechanism. I was able to add these two measures to a pre-existing spatial dataset that is maintained by my host organization in Kenya, the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI). This dataset contains measures for a number of key independent

⁷ The setup and findings of this experiment are described in greater detail in Sheely (2008).

variables in my analysis, including ethnic composition (which, combined with secondary sources on traditional institutions can be used to test **Observable Implications #4 and #5**), changes in population density (**Observable Implication #6**), and the number of secondary school graduates (**Observable Implication #7**). The ILRI dataset also contains measures of a number of variables that are relevant for controlling for alternative explanations in the literature, including rainfall, road density, and mode of agricultural production. I analyze this data using spatial regressions and by making maps with ArcGIS. I also check the external validity of this spatial analysis of empirical statehood by analyzing survey data from the 16 countries included in rounds 2 and 3 of the Afrobarometer project (**Observable Implications #4 and #7**).

Finally, I connect the individual and district-level quantitative data with a qualitative ethnohistorical analysis based on a combination of participant observation, oral interviews, and archival research. By examining how the large historical trends in state penetration throughout Kenya's pre-colonial, colonial, and post-independence history have influenced and been influenced by refracted through local norms of governance in five Maa-speaking communities in Laikipia North District, I am able to trace the competing roles of coercion and authority in shaping law enforcement outcomes in the area (**Observable Implications #1-7**). In addition, by analyzing temporal and spatial patterns of empirical statehood in a set of five communities from the 1920s to present, I am able to document the reciprocal relationship of state institutions and local norms while testing hypotheses about coercion, authority and individual compliance with laws.

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