STRUCTURALISM

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1. Introduction

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The point of this chapter is to make a case for structural origins of developmental politics. Thus the goal here is to argue against the claim that the problem with politics in developing countries is "bad politicians," or that success stories of development are due to great leaders. Such claims run throughout much of our thinking about the politics of the developing world. To take African politics, for example, many have claimed that individual African presidents have been responsible for Africa's success and failures (Rotberg, 2004; Schwab, 2001). Thus, according to this argument, Africa's political problems will be solved if bad politicians are replaced by better ones. Not only is this view common among academics, journalists and policy makers but also among Africans themselves. To take one example, when asked in a series of mass solicitations in the early 1990s what type of person should become President, many Ugandan citizens responded by arguing that he/she should be married, not drink and come from a relatively rich background so that he/she doesn't get tempted by corruption (Government of Uganda, 1992). Conversely, claims also abound that various countries like Botswana have been peaceful and prosperous because of good and wise leadership (Acemoglu, Johnson, & Robinson, 2003).

Yet I argue here that this view is wrong-headed inasmuch as it fails to consider structural reasons why leaders pursue policies that appear detrimental to their citizens. I use the word structuralism in this context not to describe certain "unobservable" phenomena as the term is used in the field of international relations (Gaddis, 1992, p. 13), but rather to describe the underlying structures of society that affect developmental politics. In this context there are two ways of examining structural issues in developmental politics. The first is to claim that institutions are the cause behind political decisions taken in government. For example, (Posner, 2005) argues that

ethnic politics in Africa are driven by the nature of the party regime. More specifically, he claims that the decision by citizens to focus on tribal vs. linguistic identities in post-colonial Zambia has depended on whether the state is under a one-party or a multi-party system. Thus according to (Posner, 2005) ethnic politics is not determined by the whim of individual politicians but rather by the Zambian political structure.

Yet we can go a level lower than the difference between one party and multi-party political systems. In many countries the decision to change a country's political system from multi-party competition to one-party rule and back again to a multi-party system came down to the decisions of one man, such as Zambian President Kenneth Kaunda in this case. But what if this decision was a consequence of even deeper structural issues that led the president to abolish opposition parties or to legalize them? In countries such as Zambia or neighbouring Tanzania the decision to turn regimes into one-party states was generally part of a broader agenda of nation-building which also involved such policies as land nationalization, the abolishment of federal systems and monarchies, the declaration of a national language, and military conscription or national service, not to mention more symbolic acts such as changing the name of countries, capital cities and currencies (Bandyopadhyay & Green, 2013). Nation-building, or "political integration" as it was then often called, was such an important focus for most post-colonial governments that at least one observer claimed that it took precedence "over all other tasks, including economic development" (Zolberg, 1967, p. 461).

Nation-building varied considerably across African countries: some like Guinea-Bissau, Rwanda and Togo implemented only one policy each since independence, while both Nigeria and Uganda implemented nine distinct nation-building policies. As seen in Figure 1, this variation is correlated with state size, as measured by either geographical size or population, with larger states implementing more nation-building policies. (The same result holds if nation-building is limited just to the creation of one-party states.) This should not come as a surprise to readers of (Herbst, 2000), who argues that African states have historically had problems extending their power from the capital to the periphery. Thus nation-building policies were not necessarily the result of individual whim but were responses to deeper structures of African states.

[Insert Figure 1 here]

It is this second deeper level of structure which I wish to analyse in the rest of this chapter. This level is characterized not by elements that can be relatively easily altered such as the number of legal political parties but rather by elements that change slowly, if at all. My focus here will be on this deeper level of analysis, where structures are both difficult to change and persist for long periods of time. I focus in particular on two different related structural causes here, namely geography and demography, which I examine in order below. I then assess the use of structuralism to predict the short- to medium-term future, before concluding with broader thoughts about the role of structuralism in the politics of development.

2. Geography

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Between the two types of structuralism geography is perhaps the most invariant. Equatorial countries were, are and will continue to remain in the tropics, while the same goes for elevation, distance to the sea, and other such factors. This constancy is not, of course, universally true: climate change, for instance, presents the possibility that rainfall patterns will alter over time and affect political developments in these countries, as has already been argued by economists such as (Miguel, Satyanath, & Sergenti, 2004). However, there also exists a significant amount of research which suggests the supposed links between climate changes such as decreasing rainfall and civil conflicts in Darfur and elsewhere are not as robust as they appear (Kevane & Gray, 2008).[1] In any case, for the most part we can assume that countries' geographies are invariant or change very slowly.

Yet the invariant nature of geography presents a major problem for any theory which uses it as an explanation for subsequent development: if geography does not change over time, then its impact on development should not change either, and the world today should be a reflection of the pre-historical world. And indeed, this is what economists and historians such as (Bloom & Sachs,

[1] Also see (Sen, 1981) for a notable critique of the role of geography and climate in the creation of famines.

1998; Clark, 2007; Diamond, 1999; Galor, 2011) argue, namely that differences between countries and regions today are merely exaggerated forms of earlier differences dating back centuries or millennia. But while such arguments make sense on the broad aggregate level, they do not explain the substantial variations across time that can be observed in the developing world.

More sophisticated analyses show that geography interacts with historical phenomena. For instance, (Nunn & Puga, 2012) show that rugged terrain impacts modern economic development via the historical legacy of the slave trade, whereby it allowed Africans to escape the slave trade and prosper but hindered economic development elsewhere. However, perhaps the most notable example of an economic theory which integrates geography and colonialism comes from (Acemoglu, Johnson, & Robinson, 2001), who argue that the institutions which led some former colonies towards prolonged economic growth while others stagnated economically were themselves the result of geography. More specifically, they claim that in areas with a lower incidence of malaria Europeans settled and developed more democratic institutions, while in regions with a higher incidence of malaria Europeans did not settle and instead imposed more extractive institutions. Thus malaria incidence, which is itself a product of climate and geography, explains the origins of institutional variance among former European colonies. Moreover, in a second paper (Acemoglu, Johnson, & Robinson, 2002) argue that the institutional differences imposed by colonialism led to a "reversal of fortunes" whereby formerly rich countries became poor and poor countries became rich, thereby disavowing the geographic determinism mentioned above.[2] Finally, (Easterly & Levine, 2003; Rodrik, Subramanian, & Trebbi, 2004) add additional evidence that geography impacts development only indirectly via institutions.

It is clear that geographic differences have also had profound impacts on politics in the developing world. In one famous example (Engerman & Sokoloff, 1997) suggest that differences in factor endowments, specifically as regards soil types, led to the development of crop production with different economies of scale. Thus plantation agriculture developed in areas suitable to coffee, cotton, rice, sugar and tobacco production, namely the southern United States, the Caribbean and Brazil, while small-scale farmers were more efficient in areas suited for grain and

[2] See (Albouy, 2012) for a critique of (Acemoglu, et al., 2001) and (Bandyopadhyay & Green, 2012; Przeworski, 2004) for a critique of (Acemoglu, et al., 2002). But also see (Bhattacharyya, 2009) for further evidence behind the role of malaria in long-run African development.

livestock production such as the northern United States. They suggest that these initial climatic differences not only led to different economic systems but generated great differences in levels of inequality, with greater economic inequalities associated as well with greater political inequalities and subsequent lower levels of autocracy.[3]

3. Demography

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The second source of structural change I examine here is demography. Like geography, demography changes over time: unlike geography, however, its changes are much more predictable. The focus here will be on what is one of the most important features of the transition to modernity, namely the demographic transition. This transition involves the movement from a society characterized as having high fertility and mortality levels to one with low fertility and mortality levels, via a transitory phase with high fertility and low mortality. Evidence suggests that all countries and societies have gone or are going through this transition, and that the end point for all societies will eventually be roughly the same. As such the demographic transition is not reversible in the medium- to long-term and is thus closely related to an earlier focus within the social sciences on modernization and its consequences, a point which I return to below.

The relationship between population growth and development is often misunderstood, primarily because there is no serious modern theory of political demography that posits a crude Malthusian direct relationship between population growth and development. Instead, I claim here that the relationship between the demographic transition and the politics of development can be described in three ways. First, prior to the transition societies were marked by similar fertility/mortality ratios but very different levels of population density. Second, the demographic transition did not start at similar times, which had an especially profound impact on European imperialism in the 19th century. Third and finally, the transition has not taken the same time to

[3] See as well (Przeworski, 2006) for a model linking inequality to autocracy, and (Nunn, 2008) for a critique of the Engerman and Sokoloff hypothesis.

reach completion, which has had important consequences on decolonization and contemporary migration patterns. I explore the political consequences of all three periods in turn.

3.1. Pre-Demographic Transition

The first important point about demographic structuralism is as regards the nature of societies prior to the transition. In particular we can observe a strong contrast between Africa and the Americas, which were largely very underpopulated, and South and East Asia, where population densities were much higher. The structural differences between these regions led to profound differences in the nature of colonialism. In Africa and the pre-Colombian Americas low population densities corresponded to a lack of strong centralized states (with some notable exceptions like the Aztec and Inca empires), while high density areas in Asia were more likely to have a strong state structure. The relationship between state history and population density can be seen in Figure 2, whereby the vertical axis is log of population density in 1950 and the horizontal axis is the (normalized) length of time for each country in which an extant state can be verified (Bockstette, Chanda, & Putterman, 2002), going from 0.07 in Kenya, Mauritania and Zambia to 1.0 in China. Historians have long discussed the chicken and egg question about whether ancient states contributed to higher population densities or vice-versa – with (Carneiro, 1970), for instance, positing that higher densities led to state formation via competition over scarce land resources – but the point here is simply that it was the higher density pre-colonial states like China, Ethiopia, Japan, Nepal and Thailand which were able to resist colonialism, often simply because their armies were so large.

[Insert Figure 2 here]

Moreover, we can also observe an effect of population density on state formation among European colonies. In particular, (Green, 2012a) shows that, inasmuch as colonial governments relied upon head taxes for their revenues in Africa, small colonies with low population densities could not be self-sustaining. The result is that colonial powers created larger states in less densely

populated areas of Africa, such that the relationship between population density in 1850 and state size today is negative and robust to a variety of controls and sub-samples. The same argument applies to the drawing of boundaries between colonies, whereby borders were drawn closer to local socio-economic conditions in areas of high density than in areas of low density (Green, 2012a). The result has been that Africa inherited a legacy of large states with artificial borders, both of which have been linked to political unrest and low economic growth by a variety of scholars (Alesina, Easterly, & Matuszeski, 2011; Englebert, Tarango, & Carter, 2002).

Finally, we can typify pre-demographic transition economies as largely agrarian in nature due to the fact that pre-transition mortality rates were higher in urban areas than rural areas, so much so that they were actually higher than urban fertility levels.[4] This difference meant that urban areas had negative natural population growth rates, which they made up through rural-urban migration but which also meant that societies remained overwhelmingly rural and agrarian in nature.[5] The political consequence of a rural equilibrium was to hinder efforts at democratization, as spelled out by (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2005). More specifically, in societies where wealth is largely tied up in land and society is largely divided by who has access to land, landlords in agrarian societies resist any moves towards democratization for fear that democratic governments would redistribute their land holdings due to the fact that land is not a mobile asset and thus easily expropriated. Moreover, repression and violence directed towards pro-democracy citizens has little effect on land assets and therefore does not destroy or threaten wealth for the elite.

3.2. Early Demographic Transition

The second way in which demography has played a major role in the politics of development is through the staggered way in which countries have entered the demographic transition. Differences in the first stage of the demographic transition became most prominent in the 19th and early 20th centuries, when mortality decline led population growth to shoot up in

[4] Detailed urban and rural data on fertility and mortality for pre-transition societies is very rare, but (Dyson, 2011) nonetheless shows higher urban mortality rates than fertility rates for Sweden until the 1840s and for Sri Lanka until the 1920s.

[5] No recorded society prior to the demographic transition ever had more than a third of its population living in urban areas except for the early modern Netherlands, which had 35% of its population living in towns with 5000 or more inhabitants in 1600, 39% in 1700 and 34% in 1800 (Lynch, 2003, p. 30).

western countries in comparison to those regions where mortality decline had yet to start. In particular mortality began to decline around 1800 in north-western Europe due to improvements in preventative medicine, public health and nutrition, leading to a large gap in population growth between what are now developed countries and the less developed countries by the late 19th-century (Lee, 2003, p. 178.). Thus the ratio of inhabitants in Europe to Africa increased from a ratio of 1.5 in 1750 to 3.0 in 1900, with an even more impressive increase in the ratio of inhabitants in the US and Canada to the rest of the Americas from 0.1 to 1.1 (although much of this increase came from increased immigration). Figures 3 and 4 plot the estimated and projected relationships between these regions from 1750 to 2050.[6]

[Insert Figures 3 and 4 here]

The consequences of European population growth on the developing world was perhaps most profound in the realm of colonialism. The idea that the acquisition of colonies could solve European problems of high population density was already prominent in 17th century England and lasted until the 1950s, when the Dutch government was still advocating emigration to solve the problem of high population densities (Hoerder, 2002, p. 480). Thus one estimate concludes that more than 50 million Europeans emigrated abroad between 1815 and 1930, some 60% of whom went to the United States (Baines, 1995, pp. 1-2).

Indeed, concerns about "overpopulation" peaked with the rise in European population growth rates in the 19th century, which led many in Europe to suggest colonialism as a solution particularly in the newly unified states of Germany and Italy (Smith, 1974, pp. 642, 643; Tate, 1941, p. 150). Similarly, in late 19th and early 20th century various British governments – including those of Disraeli and Gladstone – suggested emigration, especially to the white Dominions, as a means to "relieve the apparent surplus of population in this country" (Shanahan, 1923, p. 215). Such was the European concern over high population densities that a World Population Conference in 1927 in Geneva both focussed on the redistribution of population from Europe – with special attention to Italy and other parts of Southern and Eastern Europe – towards the colonies and criticized new

[6] The ratio of population in Europe to population in Asia also peaks around 1900.

immigration restrictions in Australia, the United States and elsewhere. Nor was this focus limited to Europe: Japan was also seen as overcrowded at the time, with one conference participant noting that "we must now ask where Japan can find the new colonies which will furnish an outlet for its surplus population," with the Japanese acquisition of the Philippines as one proposed mechanism (Bashford, 2007, p. 190).

The onset of the demographic transition also corresponded to a period of industrialization as lower mortality rates in cities meant that factories could attract workers in numbers previously impossible to sustain. The political consequences of this shift were of course famously discussed by Marx, whose analysis of class conflict under capitalism was based on his knowledge of industrialization in 19th century Europe. More recently the effects of industrialization on civil conflict have been analysed by (Gellner, 2006 [1983]; Mann, 2005), both of whom have emphasized the way that industrialization replaced the vertical class stratification of agrarian societies with horizontal ethnic stratification due to the geographically uneven nature of industrialization. While (Gellner, 2006 [1983])'s famous "just-so" story about the relationship between population growth,[7] industrialization, nationalism and secession among the Ruritanians of the mythical state of Megalomania was obviously written about Eastern Europe, the effects of industrialization on conflict have played themselves out very clearly in developing countries rich in natural resources. More specifically, the process of industrialization has driven up demand for such commodities as oil and gas while the creation of wealth that is produced by industrialization leads to higher demand for rare luxury items like diamonds and other gemstones. If oil and gemstones were equitably distributed across and within countries then their production would not result in strife: indeed, as noted by (Kahl, 2006), a local abundance of natural resources only has negative effects on countries when the resources in question are globally scarce. However, in reality such resources are unequally distributed, which has led to numerous civil wars and attempts at secession as those who live on land endowed with natural resources do not want to share their wealth with other citizens or the national government. Just as landlords resist democratization because they fear

[7] (Gellner, 2006 [1983], p. 58) explicitly links a "population explosion" and uneven industrialization in his model, a fact missed by many of his readers.

land redistribution according to (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2005)'s framework, so too do leaders in states rich in natural resources which are similarly immobile.[8]

Industrialization also requires the mobilization of a labour force whose rural attachments often have to be broken violently, as has happened from the time of the enclosures in early modern Britain through the expropriation of indigenous land in the settler colonies of 20th-century Africa. Even when natural resources and labour supplies are available they are often not in the same location, requiring large-scale labour migration from peripheral to core industrial areas. In Gellner's story the Ruritanians comprised one such group of migrants to the core industrial areas of Megalomania, whereupon they discovered commonalities amongst themselves and developed a new ideology of Ruritanian nationalism. Recent history is strewn with real-life Ruritanians: the cases of the Ovimbundu of Angola and Igbo of Nigeria are two of many examples whereby large-scale civil wars broke out in part due to labour migration, the subsequent formation of ethno-national identities among migrants and strife between these new groups and other more dominant groups.

In contrast, however, those states which either lack natural resources or whose population or resources are equally distributed tend not to suffer from interregional inequalities. An obvious example here is Tanzania, where a general lack of natural resources has led to a stable post-colonial political environment in great contrast to most of Tanzania's neighbours. Indeed, just as most of its neighbours have fallen into civil war over the unequal distribution of natural resources and labour, Tanzania has remained remarkably stable throughout its post-colonial history. Counterfactual discussions of what Tanzania would have looked like had Rwanda and Burundi not been cut out from German East Africa after World War I as a new colony as well as strong similarities in post-colonial Tanzanian policies to other African states suggest that Tanzania's stability has less to do with good leadership from Julius Nyerere and others and more to do with structural factors (Green, 2011).

Finally, both the early part of the demographic transition and early industrialization have tended to correspond with a period of rising inequality. As regards the former, evidence suggests

[8] The exception here is, of course, those countries where natural resources are not located on land but are instead offshore, which could help to explain the relatively limp and non-violent nature of Scottish nationalism as well as the (up to now) benign effects of the discovery of oil off the coast of Ghana.

that mortality decline initially causes fertility levels to rise in part due to declining levels of disease-induced infertility. This initial increase in fertility may lead to rising levels of inequality as fertility increases faster in lower-income families than in upper-income families, while subsequent decreasing fertility rates will lead to declining inequalities (Dahan & Tsiddon, 1998). This model is very similar to the noted inverted-U shaped "Kuznets" curve, whereby the initial stages of industrialization cause income inequality to grow due to growing rural-urban inequalities and intra-urban inequalities but later industrialization leads to decreases in inequality as the urban working class gains more income (Kuznets, 1955). However, the growth of inequality alongside industrialization can also lead to pressures for democratization as the new middle classes demand political power, which itself then leads to redistribution and decreasing inequality (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2005).

3.3. Late Demographic Transition

The late or second stage of the demographic transition corresponds to the onset of fertility decline and continues until societies have reached a low-mortality/low-fertility equilibrium. This process is also largely accompanied by a shift from rural-majority to urban-majority societies which was kick-started by decreasing urban mortality levels (Dyson, 2011; Fox, 2012). In particular this process has significant effects on the process of democratization, in two ways.[9] First, as citizens urbanize they acquire greater collective action capabilities, both because their physical proximity to each other and to the centers of power allow them to organize protests threaten the government better than in rural areas, and because urban citizens have greater access to education and information about government activities (Lerner, 1958).[10] Second, the late demographic transition corresponds with a shift away from the fixed assets of land towards more movable assets like factories and ultimately to the most mobile asset of all, namely financial capital. Just as they argue that an economic predominance of land and other fixed assets lead the elite to suppress efforts at

[9] There are other mechanisms, of course, linking urbanization to democratization: (Lipset, 1959), for instance, suggested that urbanization contributes to democratization as part of the broader process of social modernization.

[10] Also see (Bates, 1981) on how urban citizens in post-colonial Africa were able to exercise control over government policies along these lines.

democratization, (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2005) instead posit that a shift toward industrialization and even post-industrial service and finance sectors may lead the elite to fear democratization less as they can transfer their assets elsewhere if and when governments attempt to expropriate their wealth. Moreover, as assets become more physical than natural, any repression directed at protesters has a much higher likelihood of destroying wealth than in agrarian societies. As expected, recent evidence testing for a relationship between urbanization and democracy across 59 developing countries has found a strong positive relationship between the two variables (Rudra, 2005).[11]

The process of the second half of the demographic transition did not, however, unfold evenly across the globe. Indeed, by the late 20th century there had been a significant shift in population growth from the developed world to the developing world. The cause was of course the onset of mortality decline in developing countries alongside the completion of fertility decline in the developed world. The result is that today there are vast differences between those countries which have dropped below replacement fertility rates – whereby countries with a total fertility rate (TFR) at or below 1.8 TFR include most countries in western Europe plus China, Cuba, Japan, Mauritius and South Korea – and those far above it – with countries with a TFR above 5.0 mostly in Africa alongside Afghanistan, East Timor and Yemen. As such there has been a shift in the population ratio between Europe and Africa from over 3 in 1900 to less than 2.5 in 1950 and under 1 in 2000, with a projected ratio less than 0.5 in 2050. Similarly, the population of Latin America and the Caribbean overtook that of North America sometime in the late 20th century and is projected to be more than double the North American total by 2050. Figures 4 and 5 make these changes clear.

This difference between countries has led to three significant changes for the politics of developing countries. First and foremost, just as the rise in the European population ratio corresponded to the period of European imperialism, so too did the rise of population growth in the developing world correspond to decolonization in the mid-20th century. Indeed, (Grossman & Iyigun, 1997) propose that this congruence of events was not coincidental, such that higher

[11] However, not all scholars of democratization find a positive correlation between urbanization and democracy: (Barro, 1999), for instance, finds a negative relationship instead. Many have noted that the high levels of correlation between urbanization and GDP/capita makes any assessment of the relationship between democracy and urbanization very difficult to assess (Midlarsky, 1992).

population growth increased the returns to subversive anti-colonial activities among native populations and thereby made colonial rule increasingly burdensome for the colonial power.

A second change relates to the fact that developed countries with low fertility have negative natural population growth rates, which, if they want to avoid having their economy shrink, leads them to encourage immigration from countries with higher fertility rates. As Figure 5 indicates, Europe has been a net receiver of immigrants since the early 1970s, with Asia a net exporter of immigrants over the same time span.[12] The political consequences have similarly been obvious, with developed countries concerned about controlling immigration from the developing world and developing countries concerned about the effects of "brain-drain," or the loss of much of their most productive citizens to other countries.

[Insert Figure 5 here]

International migration patterns have serious economic impacts for destination countries which I sadly do not have space to address here. But these economic impacts are in many ways equalled by the political impacts of immigration on the developing world. For instance, in a noted paper (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004) show that the size of immigrant diasporas in the United States is positively correlated with the outbreak of civil war after controlling for GDP/capita, population size and primary commodity exports. They argue that this relationship is in part driven by the ability of diasporas to finance conflict while also avoiding participating in violence itself.

On the other hand, more recent evidence suggests that emigration can have a positive effect on subsequent democratization as measured by both Freedom House and Polity measures, in particular via unskilled emigration (Docquier, Lodigiani, Rapoport, & Schiff, 2011). Using more micro-level data, (Batista & Vicente, 2011) show that emigration is positively correlated with demand for political accountability in a voting experiment in Cape Verde, a country which has one of the highest proportions in the world of its population living abroad. In particular they find that the positive effects of emigration are stronger when citizens migrate to countries with better

[12] The differences are even starker if we exclude the Soviet areas of Eastern Europe and Central Asia, where immigration was highly restricted until the 1990s.

governance. This result is echoed by (Spilimbergo, 2009), who finds a robust positive and significant correlation between foreign students studying in democratic countries and democratization at home. All of these results are not surprising if we recall that the same financial and human capital resources that could allow for diasporas to support rebel movements would also allow them to support opposition political parties and civil society organizations, although this remains a topic for further research. They also fit into a (Hirschman, 1970)-style Exit/Voice/Loyalty framework suggested by (Moses, 2005), whereby allowing citizens to migrate abroad forces developing countries' governments to respond to citizens' demands to avoid losing too many of their citizens to other countries.

Third and finally, the late onset of the demographic transition has had differential effects in countries depending upon their pre-transition demographies. In Africa, for instance, communal land rights were common in the pre-colonial era and were codified along ethnic lines in the colonial period due to the institutionalization of indirect rule. While the ethnicization of land ownership was not particularly a problem in an era of low population density, the onset of high population growth rates in the late 20th century meant that land scarcities started to become more prominent by the 1980s and 1990s across many parts of the continent. As one scholar put it at the time,

> Due to high population growth and the low carrying capacity of much of the land in Africa, there are now far fewer empty areas into which people can move… The land frontier has all but closed. The specter of a land shortage is a dramatic development because as late as two generations ago Africa was characterized by small concentrations of people surrounded by large amounts of open land (Herbst, 1990, pp. 188-189).

The result has been an increase in both international and internal migration as Africans from higher-density areas move to lower-density areas where land is still available. Coupled with a lack of urbanization and a concomitant increased demand for rural land, the result has been a rise in the number of clashes between so-called "natives" and "settlers," as migrants gain access to land and other resources and thereby anger native inhabitants (Green, 2012b). These "sons of the soil" conflicts have been prominent across Africa in recent years, including the civil war in Côte d'Ivoire, election violence in Kenya, civil violence in Nigeria and civil conflict in western Uganda, among others (Boone, 2007; Green, 2007; Kahl, 2006; Kraxberger, 2005).

In contrast, parts of the developing world with higher pre-transition population densities have been more successful in managing the political consequences of population growth. The clearest example is China, whose government has focused on both drastically reducing fertility and managing internal migration via the *hukou* system. Indeed, just as high fertility and migration were characteristics of pre-colonial Africa (Caldwell & Caldwell, 1987; Kopytoff, 1987), so too can we trace the origins of the *hukou* system to the imperial *baojia* system of "population registration and mutual surveillance perfected over millennia" (Cheng & Selden, 1994, p. 645).

4. Structuralism and the Power of Prediction

One of the great benefits of structuralism as a mode of analysis is that it not only allows us to see long-term relationships between the past and contemporary outcomes, but that it also allows us to peer into the future. Structuralism is not, of course, the only paradigm which allows for predictions. In particular the ability of non-structural political science to predict the future has improved in recent years with the development of computer models; see especially the work of (Bueno de Mesquita, 1998, 2011) on such issues as politics in the European Union and the end of the cold war, among others. However, many scholars have been critical of such attempts at forecasting and political predictions due to their inability to predict unusual events than can significantly alter future trends (Doran, 2002), also known variously as "black swans" (Taleb, 2009) and "critical junctures" (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012).

As regards geography, static geographical conditions such as distance from the equator or elevation will obviously have little predictive power for future events. However, recent years have seen numerous predications about the future relationship between climate change, global warming and politics in the developing world. For example, there is evidence that higher temperatures and subsequent declines in crop yields are correlated with the outbreak of civil war, at least in Africa (Burke, Miguel, Satyanath, Dykema, & Lobell, 2009). (The link between crop yields and conflict could be driven by two potential mechanisms, namely a decrease in the opportunity costs of joining rebel armies, or a decline in tax revenues which decreases state capacity to suppress rebellions;

cf. (Miguel, et al., 2004).) Thus, if climate change brings higher temperatures over the next few years or decades, then Africa should see an increasing risk of civil war over this time frame. However, the relationship between variables like temperature and rainfall and outcomes like civil war remains controversial: (Buhaug, 2010), for instance, suggests that (Burke, et al., 2009)'s results are not robust to different definitions of civil war, while (Gleditsch, Buhaug, & Theisen, 2011) in general suggest that the relationship between conflict and climate change events like drought, rising temperature, rainfall and sea levels is inconclusive.

As regards demography, previously Thomas Malthus and others thought that unpredictable events such as famines similarly altered demographic trends inasmuch as famines were "the last, the most dreadful resource of nature" used to combat overpopulation. Yet the past two centuries have shown that modern demographic trends are not subject to nonlinear "black swan" events.[13] To continue with the example of famines, in the Great Leap Forward in China poor harvests and government policies led to the estimated deaths of some 20 to 30 million people between 1958 and 1961 in perhaps the most deadly famine in world history. Yet, in contrast to Malthus's prediction that famines would check population growth, by the end of the 1960s population growth figures recovered to their pre-famine trend (Chang & Wen, 1997). Indeed, evidence from other famines suggests that returning to previous demographic trends is the norm inasmuch as people regularly delay marriages and childbirths until the famine is over (Dyson & O'Grada, 2002).[14]

Moreover, not only do demographic trends maintain their progression in the face of unpredictable events, but these trends are very simple and thus easy to identify. In particular there are three demographic trends which are of major consequence to the politics of development, namely population growth, population aging, and urbanization. Population growth and urbanization

[13] In contrast, however, pre-modern demographic "black swan" events could set countries onto new equilibriums; for instance, the Bubonic Plague in 14th-century Europe arguably led to the development of capitalism in western Europe and the entrenchment of serfdom in eastern Europe (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012; Brenner, 1976).

[14] The one notable exception in this regard is the Irish Potato Famine of 1848-51, which led to a long-term decline in the Irish population due to out-migration. It is notable, however, that the Irish famine is generally regarded as the most deadly famine in human history in terms of deaths as a percentage of the total population (Sen, 1999, p. 170). The famine also coincided with the advent of fertility decline in Ireland as part of the demographic transition, which would have meant declining population growth even in absence of the famine.

are essentially monotonic as well – that is, they only go in one direction.[15] (Median age generally goes upwards but declined in many countries in the twentieth century due to higher declines in child mortality than old-age mortality.) I covered the political consequences of high population growth in detail above; here I focus on the other two trends and their implications for future political developments.

In the first case the median age of the world population has been rising since 1970, which is only set to continue in the future: (Goldstone, 2010) predicts that the populations of many countries in Europe and North America will age rapidly relative to the rest of the world, rising from 20% of the population over 60 today to over 30% by 2050. This increase will be even sharper in China and South Korea, where the over-60 population is today less than 15% but by 2050 will be over 30% in China and over 40% in South Korea. Thus aging developing countries like China, Iran, Thailand and Vietnam may all have median ages over 45 by 2050 (United Nations, 2010), or older than contemporary Japan, currently the oldest country in the world. This trend will have a negative effect on its economy, both in terms of a shrinking labour force and thus – unless governments find a way to increase output per worker – a decrease in economic growth, as well as rising medical costs for the elderly.

The political consequences of population aging are several. First, as suggested by (Haas, 2007), declining economic growth per capita and increasing budgetary shares allocated to the elderly in the form of medical care and pensions could mean less money for other items such as defence, which would have domestic and geopolitical implications in the case of China. Second, given the past correlation between increasing median age and democratization (Dyson, 2012), one major political consequence could be greater pressures for democratization in aging autocracies in the coming decades. Farther into the future one could see similar effects in parts of Africa which have until recently only seen declining median ages over the past few decades, which are nonetheless predicted to start increasing at the present time.[16]

[15] This fact might at first appear odd, for instance, in light of the de-urbanization enforced by the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia in the 1970s or more recent examples in Tajikistan and Zambia. However, Cambodia overtook its urbanization level of 1970 by the year 2000 and in Tajikistan and Zambia de-urbanization was only relative rather than absolute as urban population growth merely fell behind rural population growth.

[16] Thus Uganda's median population, for instance, declined from 18.2 in 1950 to a low of 15.6 in 2005 and has been growing since, with lows for Afghanistan, Angola, Chad, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Guinea and Sierra Leone, among others, also between 2000 and 2005 (United Nations, 2010).

The second trend is urbanization, which is proceeding across all parts of the developing world due to lower mortality rates. Urbanization historically has had strong links with violence and revolution, as Goldstone showed as regards early-modern Eurasia (Goldstone, 1991). Indeed, more recently (Varshney, 2001) has shown that rural India, despite housing a majority of citizens, was host to only 3.6% of all deaths in communal violence between 1950 and 1995.

However, there is a good amount of scholarship that has either problematized these findings or found much more positive impacts of urbanization. As regards the former, recent evidence has suggested that there is no statistical correlation between urbanization and political violence (Buhaug & Urdal, 2010). As for the latter, not only has urbanization resulted in greater democratization along lines discussed above, but recent work by (Green, 2013) provides a variety of evidence that urbanization is highly correlated with ethnic homogenization, whereby rural-urban migrants identify with broader ethnic identities in cities than they do in rural areas.

Of course, the political consequences of ethnic homogenization are potentially mixed depending on which literature one believes. On the one hand, if there is a linear relationship between ethnic diversity and conflict then urbanization should bring lower levels of civil violence (Easterly, 2001); indeed, in Botswana, which has had the highest rate of urbanization of any country in the world since 1950, “the urban experience… contributed to the creation of a unifying national identity on the part of Botswana’s citizens” (Solway, 2004, p. 132). However, if the relationship is instead non-linear and ethnic polarization is instead correlated with war and civil unrest (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004; Montalvo & Reynal-Querol, 2005), then the influence of urbanization may depend upon the prior level of ethnic diversity.

5. Conclusions

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In this chapter I have shown that geographic and demographic structural factors have played a major role in the politics of developing countries and should continue to play a significant

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According to UN projections the last country in Africa – and the world – whose median age will stop declining is Zambia, which is predicted to bottom out at 15.9 years in 2025.

role for some time to come. While discussing the role of geography I largely concentrated on demographic factors, both in terms of historical evidence prior to the demographic transition and during the early and late phases of the transition. I also examined the way in which a more structural view of development allows for predications of the near to medium-term future, especially as regards population growth, population aging and urbanization.

I conclude with two further thoughts. First, a lingering question exists as to why geographical predictions are so hotly debated and controversial while demographic predictions are taken less seriously. Part of the reason lies in the nature of the debate, which in the case of climate change has taken place in popular mass media while demographic debates have been more prevalent in academic journals. Another reason is that dire predictions of the effects of climate change are actually more comparable to the Malthusian fears of overpopulation popularized by (Ehrlich, 1968) a few decades ago. More specifically, unlike the more complex political demography analyses noted above, geographic predictions have mostly tried to theorize a simple direct link between climate change and political outcomes that can easily be summarized in the popular media. Thus, for instance, no respectable social scientist claims today that population growth or urbanization has a direct impact on civil war occurrence in the way that (Burke, et al., 2009) suggest that higher temperatures will lead directly to more civil war. But an analysis of these differences remains outside the bounds of my discussion here.

Second and finally, the role of structuralism as a mode of analysis has become more popular in the political science of development lately, but only slightly. On the one hand, not only has the degree to which economic and political phenomena persist across time become an important topic within the study of economic development (Nunn, 2009), but the role of slow-moving trends in determining contemporary political and economic outcomes have become prominent as well, especially since the publication of (Acemoglu, et al., 2001). On the other hand, however, much of this work has been focussed on geographic factors, while those that focus on demographic structuralism generally focus only on narrow issues and therefore fail to discuss the broader relationship between the demographic transition and the politics of development. Certainly one problem here is the dominance of an ahistorical variety of rational choice scholarship that fails to take broader historical context into account, with insights from the “analytical Marxist” school as

well as the “analytical narrative” approach to explaining historical change largely failing to have an impact on contemporary political science. Another problem is the dismissal of modernization theory and a lack of engagement with its focus on non-reversible phenomena such as urbanization, fertility and mortality decline and population ageing, which in part is linked to a failure among many rational choice scholars to read few works that date back more a decade or two.[17] And a final more general problem is an increased focus on micro-level scholarship for reasons of research robustness, a problem which is greatly advanced in development economics but which has begun to afflict political science as well (Rodrik, 2008). Yet none of the topics discussed above are inherently antithetical to rational choice scholarship, and there are no barriers to reconstituting a theory of macro-level modernization along micro-level rational choice lines. Certainly such a research agenda could prove to be quite fruitful in the future.

[17] See (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2005) for a refreshing exception in this regard.

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Figure 1: Nation-Building and Population Size in Contemporary Africa

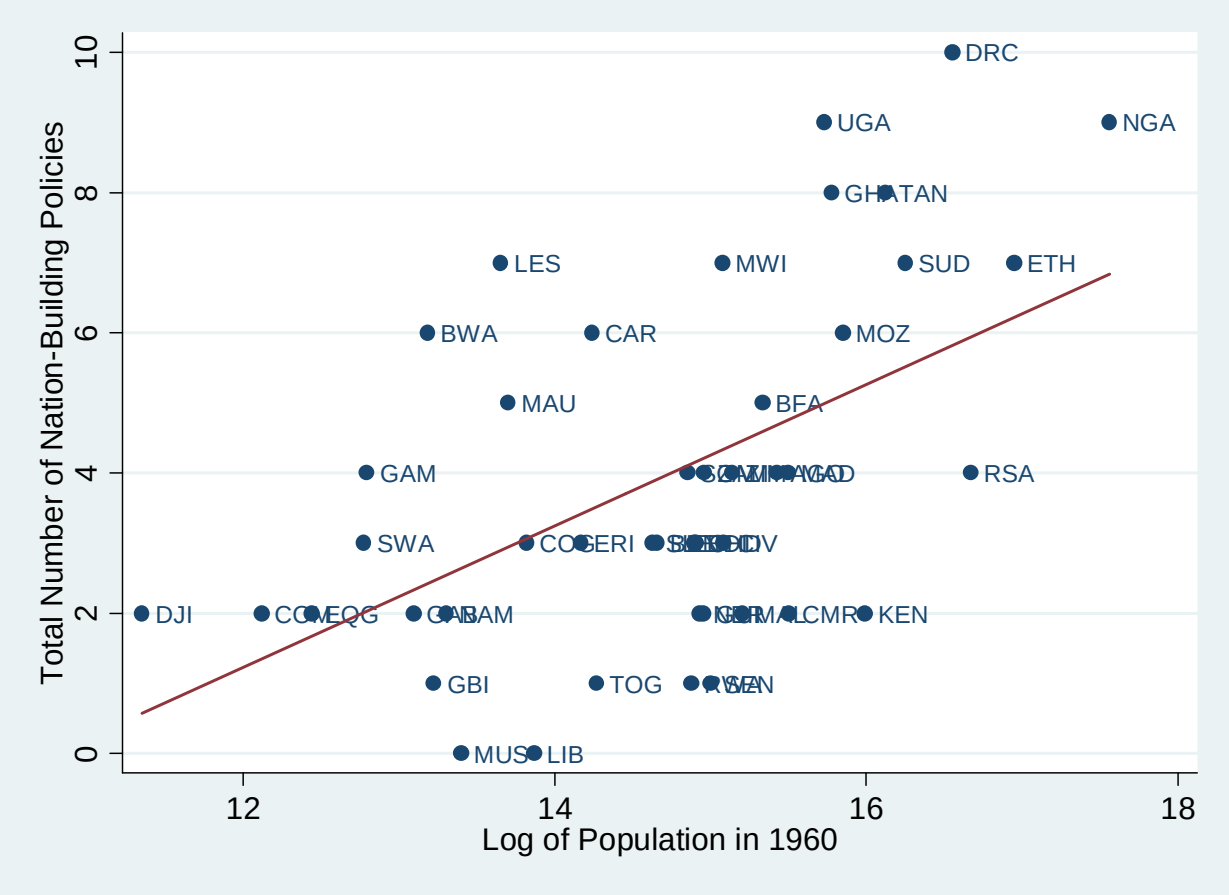

Figure 2: Population Density in 1950 and State History

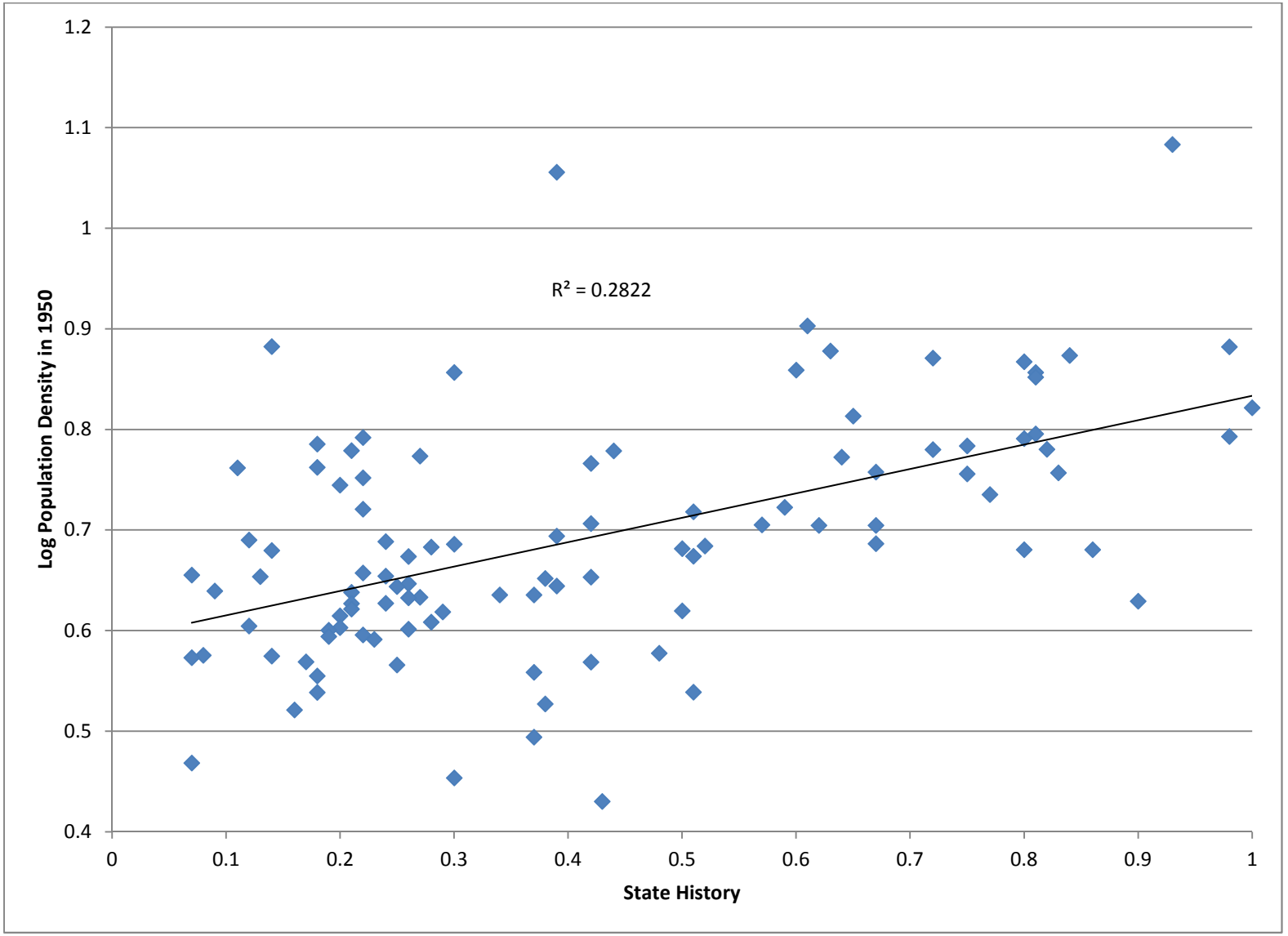

Figure 3: Ratio of Population in Europe to Africa, 1750-2050

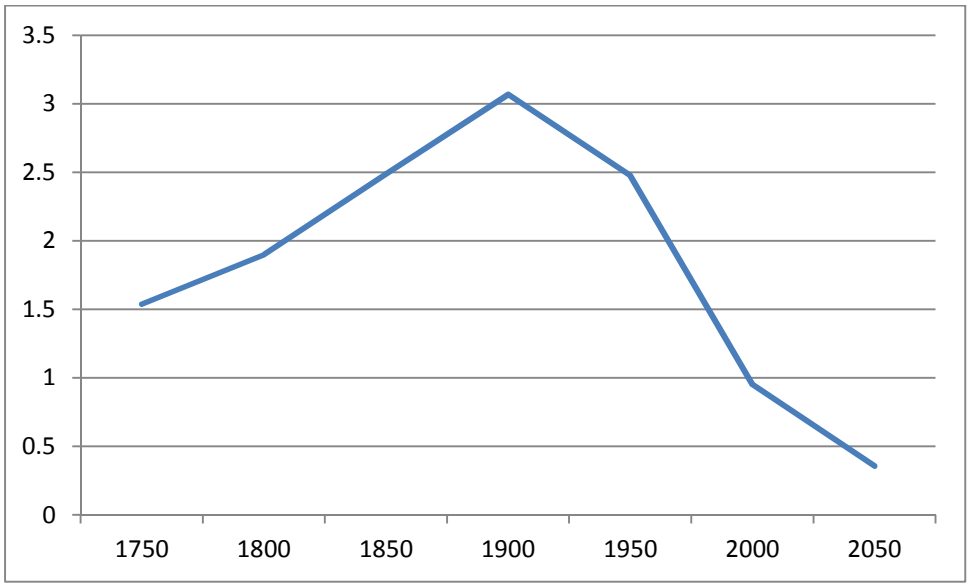

Figure 4: Ratio of Population in North America to Latin America and the Caribbean, 1750-2050

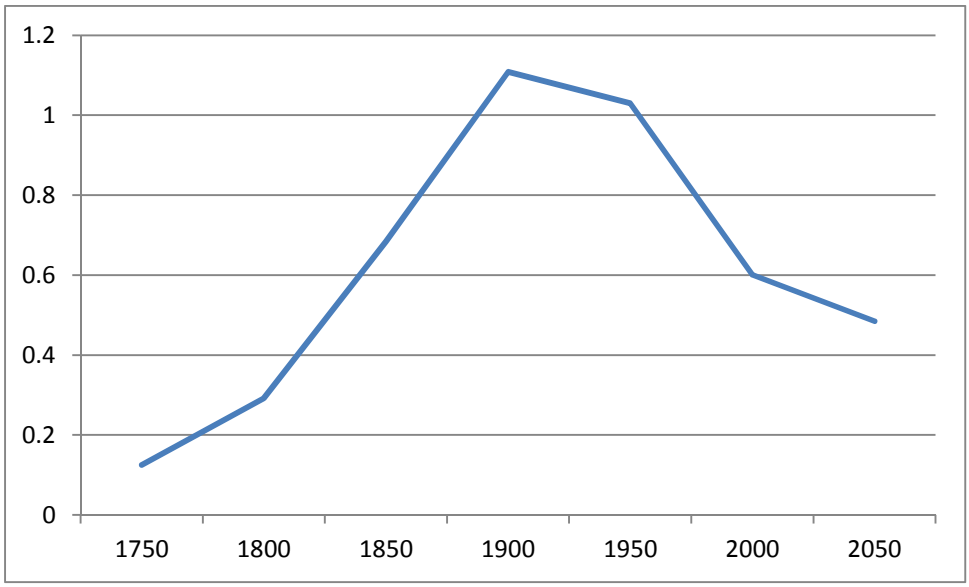

Figure 5: Net Immigration in Asia and Europe, 1950-2010