Introduction

Over the past three decades, sub-Saharan Africa has undergone promising changes. Most countries have instituted regular multiparty elections. Military rule has been on a steady decline. With this increased stability, Africa has seen unparalleled economic growth. So much so that sub-Saharan growth rates exceeded those of the world economy for the first two decades of the new millennium.[1]

Yet there are troubling trends as well. The vast majority of low-income countries is found south of the Sahara.[2] African states grapple with food insecurity, high unemployment, poverty, poor infrastructure, environmental degradation, and low integration in the global economy. Nor has political liberalization been wholly progressive. One-third of the states identified as "not free" in 2017 by Freedom House were in sub-Saharan Africa.[3] In many instances, African presidents have been able to work around multiparty elections and remain in power for two, three, and in some cases, even four decades. Countries like Burundi, South Sudan, Somalia, and the Central African Republic have continued to be on the precipice of civil conflict. And although there are fewer coups, since 2000, 14 presidents have been successfully overthrown.[4]

This confusing mixture of economic growth, democracy, instability, and authoritarianism brings to the fore a fundamental question in comparative politics: how do states build predictable institutions that allow for stability, economic prosperity, and the peaceful transference of power? Broadly speaking, political scientists have held that political and economic

[1] See UN Economic Commission on Africa and African Union, "Dynamic Industrial Policy in Africa," Economic Report on Africa 2014. However, much of this growth rate was steered by a global spike in commodity prices.
[2] Of the 39 heavily indebted poor countries (HIPCs), all but six (Afghanistan, Bolivia, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua) are in sub-Saharan Africa. See http://web.worldbank.org.
[3] https://freedomhouse.org/report/fiw-2017-table-country-scores (accessed April 7, 2017).
[4] Burkina Faso (2014), Guinea-Bissau (2003, 2009, 2012), Central African Republic (2003, 2012), Mali (2012), Niger (2010) Madagascar (2009), Guinea (2008, 2009), Mauritania (2008), Comoros (2001), Democratic Republic of Congo (2001).

development is contingent upon the advancement of institutions that increase state responsiveness: a free press, multiparty elections, strengthened civil society, and free markets. However, this interpretation is based largely on an ahistorical reading of state development (Booth & Cammack 2013). Our most compelling accounts of European states underscore that responsive institutions came only after the slow but steady centralization of state power.[5]

To understand political development in the African context, we, therefore, need a better understanding of how states transition from having *authority over people* to having *authority over the national territory*.[6] Achieving control over the national territory requires two central accomplishments: the state needs to domesticate rural political bosses, and it has to build infrastructure that connects disparate parts of the territory. Once these two objectives have been achieved, it is possible to create a national economy that is interlinked, to more efficiently tax the population, and to more successfully institute political reforms.

Accordingly, the first step toward state development is establishing command over the territory. The proposition advanced here is that controlling the territory requires cultivating the political cooperation of local and regional elites across the countryside. I term this process 'political consolidation.' Political scientists tend to overlook political consolidation as a crucial step toward state development, focusing on economic development, state consolidation, or democratic consolidation. They thereby miss the central role local and regional elites play in enabling or deterring state transformation. If the task before us is to understand what strategies "are likely to combine state building, democracy, and economic growth," it is essential that we undertake "studies of the actual exercise of power and the building of institutions" (Joseph 2015: 227). My argument is that understanding the exercise of power in relation to institution-building requires an account of how neopatrimonial rulers strategically manage the authority and influence of rural and regional competitors.

As such, this book makes the case that leadership is decisive to political outcomes. Without a doubt, institutions and inherited circumstances structure the scope of possible actions political players can undertake. Several factors may influence a head of state's policies, such as the country's resource endowments, the regime's relationship with external powers, or whether the regime is opposed by a large centralized kingdom, to name a few (Boone 2003). Nonetheless, within these constraints, a wider range of

[5] See Fukiyama 2011, Ertmann 1999, Tilly 1992, Bendix 1980, Polanyi 1944.
[6] For more discussion of the central relationship between state-building and control over the periphery in Africa, see Boone 2003, Herbst 2000, Migdal 1988, Hyden 1983.

tactical possibilities is open to leaders than is often recognized in the scholarship. As Widner observes, "character matters in the way leaders incorporate the features of the political landscape social scientists so often take as given into their decision making" (1994: 152).

Leadership is particularly central in the African context, where power is fused in the presidency. Formal institutions remain largely governed by patrimonial logic. Hierarchical relationships of dependency and loyalty pervade governing systems. This systemic clientelism reinforces the centralization of authority and resources: power becomes concentrated, judiciaries have little to no autonomy, and legislatures act as rubber stamps. In addition, because of the zero-sum nature of politics in sub-Saharan Africa, in terms of both access to resources and of higher levels of risk in losing power, policy choices are often derivative of immediate political imperatives. As a result, the strategic choices leaders in sub-Saharan Africa make are more critical to political outcomes and have farther-ranging consequences than they might otherwise have in more institutionalized states.

Although I am making a strong case for agency, I am not suggesting that African leaders function in a vacuum. Just as it has been argued that the alliance of classes of actors was critical to political outcomes in early modern Europe, in contemporary Africa, the continuing transformation of predominately agrarian societies has empowered particular classes of interests to shape the political landscape. At the same time, the relative geographic concentration of ethnic groups, as well as the persistence of traditional networks tying urban communities to rural ones, has kept ethnic mobilization a central form of politicization. Above all, the insecurities of the African state make the capacity to forge strategic alliances with strong opposition leaders critical to political success or failure. The upshot is that rural populations and chiefs are vital to political outcomes in sub-Saharan Africa. Therefore, by systematically differentiating approaches leaders use to incorporate rural constituents, we can unpack what it means to develop more or less effective neopatrimonial rule. That is what this book sets out to do.

The following chapters will show that leaders who cultivate the goodwill of the countryside are better able to endure sporadic unrest in the cities, subdue the real dangers posed by political challengers, quiet ethnic and regional discord, and prevent a military uprising. Less fettered by these threats, such regimes are more likely to build roads and bring electricity to isolated rural communities, paving the way for national development.

Organization of This Book

This book is divided into four parts. The heart of the study is a comparison of Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire, neighboring countries with similar populations, geography, and economies that nonetheless followed diametrically opposing trajectories. After 40 years of stability, Côte d'Ivoire experienced its first coup and was subsequently torn apart by civil war. In contrast, Ghana emerged out of decades of repeated coups and economic turmoil to become one of the most consolidated democratic systems in Africa. Why did these comparatively similar countries reverse their fates?

Part I, "Setting the Stage," lays the theoretical groundwork for investigating this question. Chapter 1 introduces a new model of coalition politics in Africa based on two ideal-typical approaches: a *rural political strategy* and an *urban political strategy*. Leaders who implement a rural political strategy support chieftaincy, prioritize small-scale agriculture, and offer rival ethno-regional elites power-sharing opportunities. This enables the center to strengthen the economy, reduce ethnic tensions, foster a stable political environment, and focus on state development. Leaders who do not follow a rural political strategy implement what I characterize as an *urban political strategy*. Scarce resources are used to buy off potentially destabilizing urban groups, areas outside of the ruling clique's ethno-region are marginalized, traditional agricultural is neglected, and local elites are disempowered. Over time, these policies weaken the economy, undermine development, and destabilize the state. Chapters 2 and 3 apply the model to regimes across Africa from 1960 to 2000. Chapter 2 presents a multiple case study analysis that illustrates the value and utility of analyzing a wide assortment of regimes in terms of this typology. Chapter 3 substantiates the probabilistic claims about the relationship between rural strategies and regime stability with formal statistical models.

Parts II–IV apply these analytic constructs to the study of Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire. Each part introduces paired country chapters focused on a particular epoch. To highlight similarities and differences among the cases, the narratives address in sequence: (a) what ethno-regional opposition emerged; (b) what steps were taken to address it; (c) how each leader's response to opposition influenced state-building policy choices; (d) the cumulative impact these choices had on the country's economic development; and (e) how all of these factors ultimately impacted the security forces.

Part II covers the period from the end of WWII to independence, roughly 1945–1959. This section unpacks what it means to use a rural

political strategy to consolidate politically, by examining the independence leaders' rise to power and the tactics each man used to forge political coalitions. Chapter 4 examines Kwame Nkrumah's accession to the prime ministership of the Gold Coast and his strategies for creating a one-party state. It shows that Nkrumah's party structure alienated critical allies and rural elites, setting the stage for future developments. Chapter 5 provides a parallel examination of independence leader and the first president of Côte d'Ivoire, Félix Houphouët-Boigny. The chapter traces how Houphouët's commitment to working across party lines and incorporating competing ethno-regional elites allowed him to dominate the field and set the stage for his political consolidation of the state.

Part III focuses on the initial period of state consolidation in each country, roughly 1960–1970. It investigates the relationship between following a rural political strategy and state-building. Each chapter focuses on the types of policies each independence leader implemented as he worked to consolidate control over his government. Chapter 6 traces how Nkrumah implemented urban biased policies with the intention of bolstering his political base. Instead, his policies undermined the economy and took a toll on the administrative capacity of the state. These combined effects politicized the military and resulted in his ouster in a coup. In a parallel manner, Chapter 7 shows how Houphouët's rural strategy enabled him to consolidate politically and develop the state. Using the power of patronage and developing innovative institutional solutions, Houphouët kept regional elites incorporated into the state structure. He was, therefore, able to undermine ethno-regional politicization and repress urban discontent. As a result, he managed to grow his economy, develop state capacity, and minimize politicization in his military.

Part IV seeks to explain the reversal that both countries underwent by examining the SAP period, roughly 1980–2000. Chapter 8 traces the leadership choices of J. J. Rawlings, the president who finally put an end to Ghana's coup trap. The chapter shows that Rawlings' commitment to rural development and willingness to work through traditional elites enabled him to consolidate himself politically and thereby begin the arduous process of rebuilding the state. Chapter 9 shows that Houphouët-Boigny's successor Henri Konan Bédié's rejection of Houphouët's strategic model of compromise and elite cooptation led to his downfall. His implementation of jingoistic policies undermined the regime's support in the north and the west, and ultimately brought about his ouster.

Finally, Chapter 10 functions as a coda for the in-depth studies. The chapter addresses several alternative structural and institutional explanations for outcomes in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire at both periods. The examination shows that all four men faced serious obstacles when they came to power. However, valuable opportunities were presented to each as well. In demonstrating that each man had more room to maneuver than is typically acknowledged, the chapter illustrates that each president's assessment of risk and response to fortune critically helped decide his fate.

The book's conclusion discusses the broader implications the study has for thinking about a number of issues, including the importance of political consolidation to economic development and democratization and ways in which the findings of this study relate to political processes in ethnically factionalized countries in regions outside of sub-Saharan Africa.