I

Bringing Bureaucrats In

I.1 INTRODUCTION

Esther Kipsang joined Kenya’s administrative and security bureaucracy, the Provincial Administration, in 1995. Her first posting was to Busia, a town 450 kilometers by road from Nairobi, near Kenya’s border with Uganda.¹ Kipsang’s formal responsibilities included maintaining order by locally administering national-level policies and improving local development outcomes by coordinating the provision of local public goods, such as boreholes and health clinics. The country’s president at the time, Daniel arap Moi, relied heavily on bureaucrats in the Provincial Administration for an additional purpose, however: to help him hold onto power. It is therefore unsurprising that residents of Busia complained that their local Provincial Administration officer spent more time beating suspected dissidents than working to improve the area’s development.² Kipsang effectively corroborated the allegations, explaining “I was deployed with a mission to supervise opposition activity.”³ So did ruling elites, who concurred that local state officials sometimes played a coercive role; one senior official maintained that Moi’s co-ethnic Kalenjin officers – including Kipsang – could be “trusted” to prevent the regime’s opponents from mobilizing local residents.

¹ I have changed the names of the officers and their precise postings in this chapter to preserve anonymity. However, the surnames I use are indicative of the officer’s ethnic identity, and the postings have a similar ethnic make-up as the true locations. Though the vast majority of Provincial Administration officers are men, for simplicity I refer to them all as “she” and to the leader as “he.”
² See DB/1/38, Western Provincial Archives, Kakamega, Kenya.
³ Interview with former District Officer (DO), November 23, 2011, Nairobi, Kenya.
But Kipsang’s behavior changed markedly in her next deployment. After less than 12 months in Busia, Kipsang was rotated, or shuffled, to a town outside Tinderet and its tea estates, about 100 kilometers from her previous post. During her four years there, she constantly met with local community leaders about residents’ concerns and demands from the state. This information helped her complete many development projects in the area. For example, she repaired the community’s broken irrigation system—a project that she subsidized with her own salary—and secured additional financing from Nairobi for two additional community health workers.

While Kipsang was stationed in Busia, her colleague, Josephine Maina, was working in a small town just outside Mwingi. Maina was unwilling to comply with regime demands to coerce local dissidents. Instead, she used her short time in this post to subtly implement her own agenda, which undermined the regime locally. She granted dissidents permits to hold public rallies, dragged her feet on approving rally permits for the ruling party’s local representative, and (justly) jailed fervent pro-regime “youths” who beat residents who spoke out against Moi. Maina’s behavior helped augment local support of Moi’s political opponent, a co-ethnic of hers. Soon afterwards, she was rotated to a new station.

Another Kikuyu officer named Harriet Gitonga was in charge of governing the entirety of Nyanza Province, an area half the size of Connecticut, during this time. Gitonga was a senior officer in the Provincial Administration, having worked in the Kenyan state for decades. She was also expected to coerce residents. But unlike her co-ethnic Maina, Gitonga complied. For example, she shut down opposition meetings and refused to investigate the deaths of area residents who died at the state’s hands. She also prevented opposition parties from campaigning, or even organizing. While Gitonga explained to me that her ethnic group “was very heavy in the opposition,” she was considered one of the most loyal officers in the entire Provincial Administration. Nonetheless, just as Gitonga was becoming familiar with local dynamics in Nyanza, she was shuffled away.

The contrasting behavior and posting patterns of Esther Kipsang, Josephine Maina, and Harriet Gitonga bring to the forefront several questions about President Moi’s reliance on the state to temper popular

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4 Interview with former DO, January 8, 2012, Nairobi.
6 For instance, see HT/23/151, Nyanza Provincial Archives, Kisumu, Kenya.
7 Interview with former Provincial Commissioner (PC), July 3, 2017, Nairobi.
challenges to his rule. Why did his government demand that officials coerce residents in Busia, Mwingi, and Nyanza, but co-opt those of Tinderet? What explains why Kipsang and Gitonga complied, but Maina shirked? Indeed, Gitonga’s zealous compliance indicates that loyalty to Moi crossed ethnic lines. What explains how these officers were posted and shuffled across the country? Does the way in which an area is governed affect development outcomes? And fundamentally, how do leaders use the state to guard against threats to their rule?

The answers to these questions are important. Much existing research has examined how leaders can use the state to stay in power by focusing on the state’s formal institutional design. A state’s structure is designed in accordance with local political dynamics (Boone 2003). And in turn, the way in which a state is organized affects the livelihoods of ordinary citizens in a variety of ways, ranging from economic development to the level of coercion they can expect (Greitens 2016).

As the opening paragraphs suggest, however, states and formal institutions do not act: bureaucrats work through the state to carry out the leader’s demands. Bureaucrats are the link between citizens on the periphery and the government in the center; they “deliver [the] benefits and sanctions [that] structure and delimit people’s lives and opportunities” (Lipsky 1980, 2). In turn, leaders have a strong incentive to use their authority to manage bureaucrats – a term I use to mean how they are hired, posted, shuffled, and promoted – in a way that induces the type of bureaucratic behavior toward citizens that can further the leaders’ policies and political goals. Bringing bureaucrats into our analyses promises to provide insights on regime durability, the state and its effectiveness, and principal-agent dynamics within organizations.

This book explores how bureaucratic management can be used to exert social control. It is premised on the assumption that core tasks of governing – including the distribution of local public goods, administration of the population, and most importantly, the maintenance of law and order – can be carried out in a way that limits popular challenges to the leader in any regime type, from autocratic regimes (such as Kenya, roughly from independence until 1991) to electoral regimes (such as Kenya since 1992). Either way, the state’s ability to govern translates into a leader’s

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8 I assume that the leader’s top advisers carry out these managerial tasks, and that their interests are perfectly aligned with those of the leader.

9 As I discuss in more detail in Chapter 2, this bifurcation of regime types obscures variation in the presence and strength of regime institutions within each category.
ability to both co-opt societal groups that he needs to support him and coerce the groups most likely to challenge his rule.

A leader cannot carry out his own dirty work, however; he must rely on bureaucrats to carry out the co-optation and coercion he needs. This reliance creates a fundamental principal-agent problem: after the leader (the principal) hires a bureaucrat (agent) to act on his behalf, the bureaucrat might shirk from the leader’s demands if her incentives differ from those of the leader. The principal-agent problem is especially salient among bureaucrats whose behavior is hard to monitor.

Conventional wisdom holds that a leader can best ensure the necessary co-optation and coercion from state officials – and thereby prevent popular threats – by hiring and promoting “good types” in the first place. In countries with salient identity cleavages such as Kenya, a bureaucrat’s type is affected by her group identity, so leaders are thought to pack the state with their own in-group members. These bureaucrats are presumed to benefit from the leader staying in power, and are thus expected to comply with his orders even when their behavior is not monitored.10

But empirically, and despite a widespread assumption that “packing” is the ubiquitous solution to ensure bureaucratic compliance, most state bureaucracies are not actually packed with the leader’s in-group members. Elite-led threats have historically been the most dangerous to leaders in both autocratic and electoral regimes.11 The high risks of elite-led challenges have pushed leaders to use the state to first and foremost stymie elite threats. Leaders use the state to prevent pressing elite-led threats by inviting both “loyal friends” (Magaloni 2008) and rival elites into the regime (Gandhi 2008; Roessler 2017). This incorporation of elites buttresses a leader’s rule both by allowing a leader to increase his current coalition of support as well as by sharing state spoils with rivals in an attempt to neutralize the threat that they pose. Importantly, leaders allow

But I theorize management of the state across these two regime types because threats from the population differ across these categories and are similar within them: under autocracy, leaders face sporadic collective action such as riots, protests, and strikes, whereas leaders of electoral regimes must worry about their performance at the polls.10 I provide an overview of why in-group state officials are thought to be the most loyal in Chapter 2. While most of this literature has been developed for the coercive apparatus within autocracies, as opposed to bureaucracies across regime types more generally, the same logic applies.

11 Svolik (2012) finds that more than 60 percent of autocrats from 1945–2008 lost power in an elite-led coup. An elected leader is more likely to lose reelection when the opposition is led by elites who are well financed and coordinated. For evidence of this in sub-Saharan Africa, see Arriola (2012).
elites’ supporters into state positions – i.e., bad types – in the process of incorporating those elites. Incorporation is expected in electoral regimes as leaders try to build a minimum-winning coalition at the polls. But surprisingly, it is nearly ubiquitous within autocratic regimes too: almost 80 percent of autocrats from 1945–2005 worldwide (Wimmer, Cederman, and Min 2009) and 90 percent from 1960–2010 in sub-Saharan Africa (Roessler 2017) incorporated out-group elites.

Figure 1.1 illustrates the lack of packing in Kenya. The country’s presidents have historically incorporated elites into the cabinet. The $x$-axis thus
plots the percentage of cabinet ministers from the country’s five largest ethnic groups from 1964–2012. These five groups collectively comprise about 70 percent of the population. The y-axis gives the percentage of bureaucrats from that ethnic group in the Provincial Administration with a one-year lag. Figure 1.1 shows that not only did each president’s co-ethnic bureaucrats never comprise a majority in the country’s largest administrative and security agency, but that the ethnic composition of the bureaucratic corps followed the ethnic breakdown of each president’s cabinet.

At first blush, then, using the state to neutralize both elite and popular challenges would seem to be at odds. Relying on the state to engage in social control seems to require a packed state to ensure compliance, especially among bureaucrats who have sustained interaction with citizens in their jurisdiction. But leaders are reluctant to staff state institutions only with in-group members, because doing so would preclude their ability to incorporate other elites and to stave off elite challenges.

I argue that leaders can jointly use the state to prevent both elite and popular threats by strategically managing bureaucrats. My argument proceeds in two steps. First, when elite threats are more pressing, the leader appeases other elites by reserving spots for bureaucrats who are loyal to elites other than himself. How a leader manages bureaucrats to ensure compliance, therefore, must take into account variation in officer type. Second, the leader uses the current pool of bureaucrats to forestall popular threats through deliberate choices on their posting and shuffling patterns. Threats from the population are not equally distributed across all state posts and sub-national jurisdictions, and thus compliance is not equally necessary for the leader’s political goals across the country. The areas of the country where compliance is most necessary are governed by the officials who are most willing – and if possible, best able – to help keep the leader in office. The ability to strategically post and shuffle bureaucrats allows the leader to recruit potentially disloyal bureaucrats, thereby tempering elite threats, and still rely on bureaucrats in order to prevent popular threats where they are most likely to emerge.

This book presents a theory about how governments strategically manage bureaucrats when monitoring is weak. I argue that the leader assigns officers across jurisdictions by evaluating the interacting preferences of

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12 I graph the country’s top-ranking Provincial and District Commissioners. These bureaucrats are similar to the type described in the case of Harriet Gitonga earlier in this chapter. I describe the data used to create the graph in Section 1.4.
three key actors who decide, execute, or are affected by the resulting governance decisions: 1) his (the leader’s) own, 2) an individual bureaucrat’s, and 3) residents of the jurisdiction to which a bureaucrat is posted. These relationships are visualized in Figure 1.2 and discussed at length in Chapter 2. The alignment between the leader and the local area affects the leader’s perceived level of popular threat in the area, which in turn shapes how he intends to have officials govern local residents. Second, the bureaucrat’s loyalty to the leader influences her expectations of the benefits she may receive from the leader staying in office, and therefore her willingness to comply with his orders. Third, the degree of the bureaucrat’s embeddedness among area residents affects her willingness and ability to carry out the leader’s orders.

The examples described at the beginning of this chapter illustrate the logic of the strategic management of bureaucrats. Beginning with the alignment between the leader and an area, Moi felt secure in Tinderet, where the vast majority of residents were from his co-ethnic Kalenjin group. Moi needed to co-opt places like Tinderet: by having bureaucrats favorably implement the policies under their control, bureaucrats could sustain the area’s genuine support for the regime. However, popular threats had a strong potential of arising in Busia and Nyanza.
Moi reserved the harshest levels of coercion for these places, for example by demanding that bureaucrats restrict civil liberties and violate the personal integrity of regime dissidents.

Turning to an individual officer’s loyalty to the leader, Kipsang, as a co-ethnic of President Moi, could expect to benefit from him staying in power and was therefore considered likely to comply with his orders. There was little expectation, however, that Maina would comply with orders as she owed her appointment (and thus much of her loyalty) to a co-ethnic of Moi’s most powerful elite rivals. Maina’s fortunes were therefore less tied to Moi’s; in fact, she could reasonably expect to benefit if her patron or another co-ethnic replaced Moi as president.

Although Gitonga was a co-ethnic of the main opposition candidate like Maina, she was loyal to Moi through patronage. Gitonga was one of the best paid and most revered civil servants in the entire country; Moi personally selected her to serve at the highest possible rank within the Provincial Administration. Perhaps more importantly, her high-ranking position allowed her ample opportunity to predate, or as it is referred to in Kenya, to “eat.”13 Moi’s elite rivals were sure to fill Gitonga’s coveted spot with their own personal pick if they came into office, and perhaps even investigate her for graft or the misuse of power. Gitonga’s continued career in the state and even her personal livelihood were closely tied to Moi’s fate, despite her ethnicity.

Regarding a bureaucrat’s embeddedness in a jurisdiction, Moi hoped to co-opt residents around Tinderet by posting a co-ethnic bureaucrat and lengthening her tenure there – increasing Kipsang’s local embeddedness made her better able and personally willing to co-opt residents by delivering on the area’s development needs, regardless of Kipsang’s presumed loyalty to Moi. However, Moi sought to prevent this local embeddedness elsewhere. Though locally embedded officers know an area best and can theoretically better repress it, they are often unwilling to carry out coercive orders because of their strong social bonds with area residents. Kipsang’s local embeddedness was beneficial to Moi in Tinderet, but the regime carefully managed officers in jurisdictions it wanted coerced – Kipsang in Busia, Gitonga in Nyanza – by posting non-co-ethnic bureaucrats and shortening their tenures.

13 There were even reports of Gitonga “grabbing,” or signing over the title deed to herself for, the valuable state land where her office was located in the Kenya National Assembly Official Record (Hansard).
Taken together, these relationships between Moi, individual bureaucrats, and the jurisdictions in which they served explain the posting patterns of Kipsang, Maina, and Gitonga, and ultimately how subnational areas are governed. The regime sent Kipsang to Busia and Tinderet, and Gitonga to Nyanza, because they could be trusted to comply where it mattered most. The center also manipulated their degree of embeddedness. Kipsang’s local embeddedness in Tinderet helped ensure the co-optation of locals, thereby increasing Moi’s support in the area. But her lack of embeddedness in Busia, and Gitonga’s lack of embeddedness in Nyanza – due to their non-co-ethnicity and short tenures – precluded them from having or gradually developing an attachment to the area’s residents that might weaken their resolve to coerce. Meanwhile, Moi sent Maina to Mwingi because her presumed unwillingness to coerce on his behalf would have less of an impact in an area where popular challenges were less threatening to his ability to remain in office.

This book expands on the posting and shuffling patterns of Kipsang, Maina, and Gitonga to explore how social control is exerted through bureaucratic management. Chapter 2 presents a theory of bureaucratic management that is tested in later empirical chapters through an in-depth account of the politicized management of the Kenyan state for the first five decades after independence. I use micro-level quantitative bureaucratic data on the staffing of the country’s primary security and administrative apparatus that cover the careers of some 2,000 bureaucrats and 15,000 individual bureaucratic postings. I flesh out the quantitative data by drawing on archival material from all of Kenya’s major archives and dozens of interviews with bureaucrats and regime elites collected during sixteen months of fieldwork. Together, the empirical chapters trace how each of Kenya’s first three presidents – spanning both autocratic and electoral regimes, sometimes even within a single presidency – governed different subnational jurisdictions differently based on the perceived challenges to their rule in the area. Moreover, by examining how Kenya has been governed both before and after its formal democratic opening in 1992, I show that vestiges of authoritarianism continue to linger within state institutions and have affected the trajectory of the country’s democratization.

The evidence provides strong and consistent support for the strategic management of bureaucrats. The book’s empirics begin with the country’s first thirty years, under a one-party authoritarian regime. Though many look to this period for evidence of the ruling party’s capacity to sustain authoritarianism (e.g., Widner 1992), I find that the durability of Kenya’s
autocratic regime was actually rooted in the state, which in effect bolstered a weak ruling party. The empirics track the management of high-ranking officers like Gitonga, whose loyalty to their respective president was sustained through patronage. The country’s first autocrat, Jomo Kenyatta, sought to forestall popular challenges to his rule by consolidating the support of his base and coercing parts of the country where popular challenges had arisen early in his presidency. In response, I find that his strongholds were managed by locally embedded officers – some of whom were co-ethnics, and some of whom had served long tenures at their stations – in an attempt to co-opt, and sustain support in, these aligned areas. Elsewhere, and especially in areas where popular threats had previously emerged, officers showed lower levels of embeddedness. During the one-party reign (1978–1991) of Kenyatta’s successor, Daniel arap Moi, bureaucrats were posted and shuffled following a similar pattern when we consider the alignments of different parts of the country to Moi. Moi increased embeddedness to co-opt his co-ethnic base and lowered it elsewhere, especially in areas inhabited by the ethnic groups considered most likely to launch a popular challenge against him. In other words, when ethnic coalitions switched, so did the management of bureaucrats in response. Further, I find that management patterns mattered for important livelihood outcomes – jurisdictions governed by embedded bureaucrats saw higher levels of resource distribution.

Evidence from the country’s next twenty years, after Kenya’s transition to an electoral regime in 1991, also supports the theory. As in the first part of the book, I follow high-ranking officials like Gitonga as well as lower-level officers like Kipsang and Maina. These bureaucrats earned, and “ate,” much less than their senior colleagues. Their loyalty toward their respective president was based on their perceived ability to advance through the ranks to a lucrative high-ranking position, which in turn was affected by co-ethnicity with the president. As this chapter’s opening suggests, Moi continued to increase officers’ local embeddedness in co-ethnic areas while lowering it elsewhere. Moreover, Moi sent loyal officers such as Kipsang and Gitonga to electorally valuable unaligned, or swing, areas, while keeping potentially disloyal officers like Maina away from these strategically valuable places. Moi’s successor, Mwai Kibaki, continued many of the same management practices. Kibaki increased bureaucrats’ local embeddedness among his co-ethnic base and lowered it elsewhere. And in patterns that mirror Moi’s, he kept disloyal officers away from his strategically valuable swing areas during his 2007 reelection campaign.
In the rest of this chapter I discuss the broader implications of the book, motivate the Kenyan case, introduce the data, and outline the subsequent chapters.

1.2 IMPLICATIONS OF THE ARGUMENT

This book contributes to ongoing debates on authoritarian regimes and regime change, the state, and principal-agent dynamics in organizations.

1.2.1 Regimes and Regime Change

This book adds to the intertwined literatures on authoritarian regimes and regime change. I seek to update the literature on authoritarian regimes from an elite-centric view to a more comprehensive one. Elite threats have empirically proved the most dangerous to autocrats (Svolik 2012). As such, much recent work on autocracy has examined why some autocrats create ruling parties, why others allow meaningful debate in legislatures or use courts, and still others hold elections. Such studies largely conclude that these nominally democratic institutions are useful because they co-opt elites and stave off elite threats.\(^{14}\) This book follows in this tradition, examining how autocrats rely on the state to incorporate rival elites. Unlike much work on autocracy, however, I consider the downstream effects of incorporation on popular threats. The literature has paid less attention to the potential for popular threats to unseat an autocrat, or how elite and popular threats interact, because popular challenges are assumed to be less threatening.\(^{15}\) Instead, I recognize that leaders face multiple threats simultaneously and sequence their strategies based on their perception of which threat is most dangerous (Wilson 2015;


\(^{15}\) Some notable recent exceptions are Slater (2010), King, Pan, and Roberts (2013), Wallace (2014), and Thomson (2018).
And strategies used to prevent one type of threat may aggravate the other (Frantz and Kendall-Taylor 2014; Woo and Conrad 2019), making it problematic to study any threat on its own.

In addition, this book contributes to debates on regime change. After the end of the Cold War, many countries transitioned away from autocracy. Yet, despite the formal introduction of multiparty elections, many of these electoral regimes have not seen the consolidation of their democracy – though these countries hold regular, competitive multiparty elections, incumbents are systematically tilting the playing field to their advantage (Levitsky and Way 2010). Recent research has suggested that these “stalled” transitions may be a function of the formal institutional remnants of the authoritarian era. For instance, outgoing autocrats can design constitutions that protect their interests and hinder impartial competition (Albertus and Menaldo 2018). This book, however, suggests that the subpar quality of these democracies may be a result of informal practices that have been held over from the autocratic era. Through their control over the bureaucracy, leaders can politicize the public sector and tilt the playing filed by relying on bureaucrats to co-opt their supporters and coerce opponents.

Relatedly, and through an empirical focus on Kenya’s largest security apparatus, this book suggests that full democratization cannot occur without changes to domestic security organs (Weitzer 1990). Security organs maintain significant clout during authoritarian periods because of their symbiotic relationship with the leader: they are the main executers of the coercion that keeps the autocrat in office and, in return, are given a central place within the regime. A transition to multiparty elections, therefore, threatens to disrupt this relationship and disrupt the identity of security organs that are wedded to the regime (Bellin 2004). Thus, whereas distributive state bureaucracies – e.g., education or health ministries – are managed in such a way as to sustain nepatrimonial relationships and ensure compliance during autocracy, a transition to democracy does not challenge their core mission in the same way that it does for the security apparatus. Transitions to democracy risk a decrease in the status, budgets, and personnel of the security apparatus that is opposed by elites in the organization. As such, many elites within these agencies see the benefit of continuing their nepatrimonial relationship with the president after the formal introduction of multiparty elections: by perpetuating many of the same tactics used before the transition, the coercive apparatus maintains its clout and undermines full democratic consolidation.
1.2.2 The State and Its Capacity

This book helps us reconceptualize state capacity or “infrastructural power” (Mann 1984), which refers to the state’s ability to efficiently redirect resources to achieve its goals (Skocpol 1985). Though clearly important, this definition has proven difficult to operationalize in practice. Some scholars treat state capacity as a fixed (or at least slow-moving), uniform characteristic of a state, such as work that measures capacity using national-level GDP (e.g., Fearon and Laitin 2003). Many scholars have moved beyond this simplification and recognize that a state’s capacity to carry out its functions depends on the capabilities, resources, and training of its bureaucrats (e.g., Evans and Rauch 1999). Indeed, many databases today incorporate measures of a country’s bureaucracy. Yet these measures still assume that capacity is constant across bureaucrats and across subnational areas. Such measures of capacity may be a “convenient shorthand” for the numerous, and often unmeasurable, factors that affect policy implementation, but they cannot capture “the mechanisms that are critical for understanding and improving bureaucratic performance and policy implementation” (Williams 2019).

This book demonstrates that state capacity is neither uniform across a country, nor fixed even in the short run. Instead, the capacity of the state to carry out the executive’s demands is highly context-specific. A bureaucrat’s abilities vary depending on the nature of the task and her local embeddedness in a post. And since the executive strategically manages the bureaucracy, we should expect purposeful, subnational and over-time variation in a state’s capacity.

This critique of state capacity helps broaden existing work on its origins. Many scholars look to medium- or long-run factors to explain capacity. These factors are important for determining the level of effectiveness that a state can theoretically achieve. But a more complete understanding of why some subnational bureaucracies are more capable than others within the same state, and why some bureaucrats

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16 For instance, Political Risk Services includes a measure of bureaucracy quality. The Business Environmental Risk Intelligence has a measure for bureaucratic delays. The Global Competitiveness Report includes a measure of civil service independence. Looking at coercive institutions in particular, the National Material Capabilities dataset by the Correlates of War Project considers military personnel and expenditure.

17 Some examples of long-run factors are geography (Diamond 1998; Herbst 2000) and conflict (Tilly 1985; Besley and Persson 2009; Slater 2010; Pierskalla, De Juan, and Montgomery 2017). An example of a medium-run political factor is party competition (Grzymala-Busse 2007).
perform better at some activities than others, requires us to examine the state’s formal and informal management practices. A more in-depth understanding of state capacity will contribute to work that uses this concept as an independent variable. Much work has examined the causal effect of state capacity on important outcomes such as regime durability (Levitsky and Way 2010; Slater 2010; Albertus and Menaldo 2012) and, more generally, the center’s ability to penetrate society and engage in social control (Migdal 1988). This research has largely been carried out at the nation-state level, with higher capacity seen as more useful for a leader. But recent work has begun to question whether the deployment of a state’s full ability is actually in politicians’ best interests. Indeed, forbearance can help politicians at the polls (Holland 2017), as well as spur bureaucratic innovation and economic growth (Ang 2016) and prevent violence from armed groups (Lessing 2017).

I find that the variability of capacity – over space, across agencies, and within bureaucracies – is a strategic choice. This logic helps us reconcile the fact that many states categorized as “weak” – such as Kenya – have proven very capable of helping their leaders meet critical policy and political goals. Though the Kenyan state as a whole is considered inefficient at carrying out its functions, its leaders have consistently deployed the state selectively to the problems and places that are the most important for their political survival.

This strategic variation of capacity thus provides a new mechanism to help understand leaders’ in-group favoritism. Much work has empirically established that leaders’ in-group areas see better development outcomes. These outcomes are said to be simply the result of a leader’s decision about where to channel state resources. However, the results of this book show that in-group areas may experience better development outcomes because the leader decides to manage these areas differently: though in-group areas may see higher taxes (Kasara 2007) – perhaps because embedded bureaucrats can more efficiently extract resources – central resources distributed to aligned areas will go substantially further than resources sent elsewhere.

### 1.2.3 Principal-Agent Dynamics

This study also contributes to our understanding of principal-agent dynamics within organizations. To begin, I show that a principal does
not always hire “good types.” Standard literature on organizations has long assumed that principals always avert the adverse selection problem if they can easily identify agent type in advance of hiring. According to these studies, we should only see bad types hired into an organization, and thus the possibility of a principal-agent problem arising at all, because good types find it difficult to preemptively signal their type and the principal finds it too costly to screen during the hiring process. But I theorize the conditions under which a principal can benefit from doing the opposite – deliberately hiring bad types who are likely, and even expected, to shirk. This decision to forgo solving the adverse selection problem is rational once we recognize that a principal faces different threats at the same time, and can use his organization in different ways to address each distinct threat. But preempting each type of threat suggests a different management strategy for the organization, and ultimately the principal cannot implement different strategies simultaneously. In the context studied here, leaders will forgo a packed state and introduce a moral hazard problem in an attempt to preempt dangerous elite threats at the expense of popular ones.

The theory and empirics also contribute to the literature on the role of identity in principal-agent dynamics. Agents are not blank slates who operate on command; they weigh the social bonds they have with those over whom they govern. The emotional toll that violence takes on bureaucrats is especially strong when they are expected to coerce their in-group members (Tajfel and Turner 1979). At the same time, the embeddedness that makes shirking from orders to coerce more likely is sometimes purposefully developed. The leader is willing to post a bureaucrat among the bureaucrat’s in-group when the leader wants the area to be co-opted. In these situations, the agent is complying with central directives due less to a desire to secure the leader’s continued tenure and more because of social obligations to the area’s residents; an embedded bureaucrat improves local outcomes because she is an agent of the local area, not an agent of the leader. But the leader has leveraged this social relationship to achieve his desired governance outcome in the locality.

The book’s focus on embeddedness informs debates about delegation. Existing work on delegation tends to examine the conditions under which principals change the level of de jure power delegated to an agent (Epstein and O’Halloran 1994; Huber and Shipan 2002; Gailmard and Patty 2012). My study contributes to this argument, showing that delegation via increased embeddedness is most likely in areas where popular threats are unlikely and regime stability is secure. But in addition, I further the
literature by suggesting that a bureaucrat’s ability to implement policies does not only depend on her formal authority. Instead, the bureaucrat’s level of embeddedness in the jurisdiction determines the limits of her authority – the greater the extent of her embeddedness, the greater her ability to exercise her full authority. Research must recognize that delegation is not only about the level of formal authority conferred onto an agent, but her real authority to produce change (Aghion and Tirole 1997).

Relatedly, the book also has implications for the relationship between bureaucratic embeddedness and the improvement of service delivery. Embeddedness can be detrimental because it creates centrifugal forces whereby agents unevenly apply their mandate (e.g., Kaufman 1960; Epstein and O’Halloran 1994) or engage in higher levels of corruption (e.g., Landry 2008; Xu, Bertrand, and Burgess 2018). Similarly, embeddedness can increase bureaucratic drift: when bureaucrats implement policy that differs from the principal’s original mandate, this undermines the integrity of the delegation relationship. But allowing a bureaucrat discretion to shape policy responses based on the area’s conditions can result in better outcomes (Honig 2018). I recognize this duality and show that leaders allow embeddedness in places where they benefit from its positive externalities, and prevent it where they fear the negative consequences.

More broadly, this book hopes to expand the empirical focus of bureaucratic politics past developed democracies, and especially the United States, to developing and nondemocratic contexts. My empirical focus on Kenya builds on accumulated knowledge of bureaucratic politics. But by focusing on a new case, I show how assumptions in existing research on developed democracies – such as the space between de jure laws and de facto procedures, or rational-legal norms of advancement – have limited our ability to develop a more complete understanding of bureaucracies. And the large role of the state in developing countries, from overseeing economic development programs to securing regime survival, heightens the importance of understanding bureaucratic management.

19 See Pepinsky, Pierskalla, and Sacks (2017) for a review of the literature on bureaucratic embeddedness in comparative politics.
I explore the argument using an in-depth examination of the Kenyan state for the first five decades after independence in 1963. Kenya is an ideal setting for this book because of the variation in regime type and ethnic coalitions. President Jomo Kenyatta started his reign under an electoral regime before he consolidated power under a one-party authoritarian regime. One-party authoritarianism continued under President Daniel arap Moi, until he was forced to hold multiparty elections in 1992. Kenya has remained an electoral regime since then, including a decade each under Presidents Moi and Mwai Kibaki. Ethnicity was (and remains) a salient political cleavage in Kenya (Elischer 2013; Horowitz 2016), and there is variation in ethnic identity – and thus the alignment of different ethnic groups toward each president – across regime type. Presidents Kenyatta and Kibaki hail from the country’s plurality Kikuyu ethnic group, while President Moi is a member of the Kalenjin ethnic group. Examining the theory since independence allows me to leverage multiple regime types with different ethnic coalitions, and to observe geographic variation in where each leader’s threats emerged.

I focus on Kenya’s largest administrative and security apparatus, the Provincial Administration. This bureaucracy is unequivocally the most important within the Kenyan state. Its bureaucrats are responsible for overseeing the maintenance of law and order, land administration in this agrarian nation, and the distribution of resources. Its centrality in the country’s political development is partly demonstrated by the sheer volume of studies devoted to it.

The Kenyan state is also similar to others across the world. Kenya was a unitary state for much of the study period and the president exerted strong executive control over all state bureaucracies. This setup is akin to the majority of countries across the world. Moreover, even executives

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20 Kenya was a centralized, unitary state for the majority of the study period. It gained independence with a devolved, federal state structure, but its first president quickly dismantled that state structure in favor of a centralized, unitary state. The country’s new constitution, only fully adopted in 2013, devolves significant authority to sub-national counties.

21 Although the Provincial Administration has since been renamed the National Administration, I refer to this agency by its original name throughout.

of federal countries maintain control over centralized bureaucracies, as I show in the conclusion. In addition, to the extent that bureaucracies are run by governors of federal units, my theory can be adapted to consider the governor’s elite threats, the governor’s relationship with bureaucrats under his control, and his alignment with different subunit areas. And like many sub-Saharan countries, Kenya has strong ethnic cleavages, but no group comprises a majority (Ferree 2010). Most presidents have found it necessary to incorporate elites from other ethnic groups (Roessler 2017).

Further, Kenya’s Provincial Administration is similar to prefectural administrations and executive bureaucracies in other countries. An executive bureaucracy tends to be in charge of both administrative and security functions across the country. Their duties include tax collection, the protection of property, overseeing local development, and maintaining law and order – by force if necessary. Taken together, this means that executive bureaucracies have the authority to either co-opt or coerce. Moreover, these agencies have a direct line of command to the leader or indirectly through the Interior Ministry. Indeed, even though presidents often hand over control of service ministries to other elites in an attempt to incorporate them, the Interior Ministry and the executive bureaucracy tend to stay squarely in the hands of the leader or a most-trusted adviser: a leader would not outsource security to a rival. As such, state officials across executive bureaucracies serve as the leader’s “hands on the ground” within their jurisdiction. Bureaucrats in these organs have various names, such as regional executives, local prefects, (appointed) governors, or county commissioners.

Executive bureaucracies are common for two reasons. First, they were initially adopted in countries across Europe, including among some of sub-Saharan Africa’s colonizers, which later replicated this structure in their colonies (Fesler 1965; Berman 1992). Kenya’s colonial Provincial Administration – of which the post-independence Provincial Administration is an almost identical replica – was remarkably similar to those used in other British colonies. In fact, British colonial officers were sometimes rotated between colonies, not only between posts within a colony. Second, this type of bureaucracy allows for governing on the cheap. Instead

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23 Executive bureaucracies tend to oversee other service bureaucracies in the field.

24 This concentration of authority, with little means of horizontal accountability, is the main normative drawback of an executive bureaucracy in democracies. However, this drawback was less of a concern for imperial powers.
of investing resources into multiple bureaucracies, the center only needs to rely on one agency.25

Parallel institutions can be found in other colonies and countries. For example, the legal-administrative kadi officers in the Ottoman Empire were “asked to facilitate the performance of their various tasks, from tax collection to special investigations” (Kunt 1968, 12) given their role overseeing administration, the courts, security, and the coordination of other bureaucracies in their jurisdiction. The functions of the Landespolizei of colonial Namibia were also similar to Kenya’s Provincial Administration. These bureaucrats “handled anything from health and veterinary inspections, the enforcement of mining and labor legislation, to post and customs duties. One leading former officer took pride in the fact that police had acted as ‘girl Fridays’ of the colony” (De Juan, Krautwald, and Pierskalla 2017). The Landespolizei seemed to have been modeled on Prussian landrats, who were considered “the linchpin” of the Prussian state.26 According to Daniel Ziblatt (2009), landrats served as the “central government’s bureaucratic ‘field officer’ on the ground, overseeing tax assessment, schools, the military draft, police, and the management of elections.”

Many executive bureaucracies in former colonies have persisted past independence, as indicated by the research that cites their importance in, among other countries, Egypt (Blaydes 2011), Ghana (Brierley Forthcoming), India (Bhavnani and Lee 2018; Xu, Bertrand, and Burgess 2018), Iraq (Sassoon 2011; Blaydes 2018), Republic of the Congo (Carter, Building a Dictatorship), Sudan (El-Battahani and Gadkarim 2017), and Zaire (now Democratic Republic of the Congo) (Young and Turner 1985; Schatzberg 1988). Further, executive bureaucracies are exceedingly common in large, populous, and diverse federations including China (Landry 2008), Ethiopia (Woldense 2018), and Russia (Reuter and Robertson 2012; Reuter 2017) precisely because of their ability to help the center control the population. Thus, while I look at one case, management of similar state institutions is a constant concern of leaders around the world.

1.4 THE DATA

Studying governance requires micro-level data about how local bureaucrats are managed, but it is hard to obtain systematic data on the inner

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26 Jacob (1963) as seen in Ziblatt (2009).
workings of any state—especially authoritarian ones. This lack of data has led to theories about states that are empirically unvalidated at best, and inaccurate and misleading—such as an unwavering belief that all leaders pack their states—for theory building at worst. This book attempts to overcome these issues by pairing rich qualitative data that helps us grasp the motivations of individual officers with systematic, micro-level data on how the Kenyan state was run. Together, the data give us an unparalleled look “inside the state.”

1.4.1 Qualitative Data

This book draws on interviews and archival data to trace the incentives, motivations, and actions of Provincial Administration bureaucrats under different leaders. Over a period of seven years, I conducted more than 100 interviews with administrators of various ranks and ethnicities who served under all of Kenya’s presidents and in the colonial period, political elites under the Moi and Kibaki presidencies, and ordinary citizens.

Given the sensitive nature of the material, all interviews were semi-structured conversations chosen through a snowball sampling method. I was cognizant of interviewees who hesitated to answer questions directly and tailored the interview accordingly. Many subjects asked for the interview to be off the record. Information from these sources is described abstractly so as to avoid identifying information.

This book also makes use of two types of archival data. First, the Kenya National Archives contains official correspondence about the Provincial Administration from the Kenyatta and Moi presidencies. These documents are located in the Kenya National Archives in Nairobi, or provincial branches in Kakamega, Kisumu, Mombasa, or Nakuru. Second, I examined unsorted archival material and community complaint letters about Provincial Administration officers. These files are stored in the headquarters of each of Kenya’s provinces and were made available after I received approval from the Permanent Secretary of the Provincial Administration as well as the head administrator of the respective province. These folios are largely from the Moi and Kibaki presidencies.

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27 Government folios are not open to researchers until thirty years after they close.
28 I was only granted access to these folios in two provinces: Coast and Rift Valley. While the files from these provinces cannot provide a representative sample of all communications with the state, they are the two provinces in which the Provincial Administration had
My qualitative data provides a rich description of the management of the Provincial Administration, but each source suffers from bias. Both types of archival folios suffer from potential selection bias: each regime clearly has an incentive to destroy or hide correspondence that incriminates its elites (Balcells and Sullivan 2018). For instance, these folios only contain vague references to the organization’s involvement in election violence during the multiparty era, even though the Provincial Administration allegedly played a leading role. Or consider the only archival folio on Kenyatta’s main opposition party in the provincial branch of the archives where the party was most active. The folio contains seventeen documents covering a span of over five years. Most folios contain upwards of 150 documents for 1–3 years. This bias of omission, however, runs against me. Documents with the most explicit references to the Provincial Administration’s involvement in suppressing popular threats are likely to suffer from “victor’s justice” and to be systematically destroyed.

The interviews also suffer from bias. My interviewees were not sampled at random. And my convenience sample is not representative of the ethnic makeup of the Provincial Administration during all presidencies. Moreover, the interviews may suffer from social desirability bias. Many individuals are unwilling to discuss their coercion of fellow citizens, or any predation they may have committed, or they may exaggerate their positive actions. For instance, even though these bureaucrats are widely considered to be “land grabbers,” officers steered clear of implicating themselves outright. Bureaucrats instead discussed, for example, how their position gave them advance knowledge of which tracts of land within their jurisdiction would be available for purchase. Others discussed how their knowledge of land titling procedures or their contacts with land officers made it easy to finalize a transaction. For these reasons, I use the qualitative data to trace the logic and mechanisms of the theory, while the quantitative data, discussed in Section 1.4.2, allows me to test empirical implications of the theory with more systematic evidence.

1.4.2 Quantitative Data

Officer Postings Datasets
This book examines the observable implications of the theory on officer management by creating datasets on Kenya’s administrative units and the the most contentious role in the distributive outcome I focus on most – land (Kanyinga 2000b; Boone 2014; Klaus 2020).
officers who ran from 1964–2012. I create three separate datasets on Provincial Administration officers: (1) high-ranking officers (like Gitonga) from 1964–2007, (2) lower-level officers (like Kipsang and Maina) from 1992–2007, and (3) all bureaucrats from 2005–2012. I use fine-grained data on who ran the state to rigorously analyze what each president was trying to achieve, and where.

The first dataset allows me to examine postings of senior administrators who were all considered loyal to their respective president. These presidential appointees are all remunerated exceedingly well, regardless of their ethnicity. And many advanced to their position after displaying loyalty to their respective president. This dataset includes the officer’s name and length of tenure in each post. This information was collected from each unit; each office for high-ranking bureaucrats has a large plaque that lists the unit’s current and previous administrators, as seen on the left-hand side of Figure 1.3. I collected the management history of more than a dozen jurisdictions myself. I received permission from the Ministry of Provincial Administration to request the information for the remaining units.29 This dataset contains 576 officer-years under Kenyatta, 1,197 under Moi’s entire reign, and 335 under Kibaki. I use this dataset in Chapters 4–8.

The second dataset contains information on lower-level bureaucrats, whose loyalty to the president varied. It was created by collecting and digitizing “administrative officer returns,” which are internal documents that the Ministry of Provincial Administration maintains about high- and lower-level bureaucrats at the time of publication. See the right-hand side of Figure 1.3 for an example. These returns are supposed to be updated every month, but this directive is not always complied with. For those periods in which it was, I sampled returns from June and December. For years when records are spotty, I attempted to gather one set of returns from the first six months of the year and a second from the next six months, making sure to collect returns in the run-up to elections to prevent post-treatment bias.30 Unfortunately, and unlike the dataset on high-ranking bureaucrats, the administrative officer returns

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29 I excluded officers who were explicitly labeled as “acting” or “temporary.” I also removed officers who were in a post for less than six months from the dataset, as they were likely temporary replacements.

30 Some data is still missing. I could not find returns from late 1993–early 1994, or for 1998 for seven of Kenya’s eight provinces, and from 1993–1995 for one province. The bureaucrats who maintain these records claim that records were lost at random.
Figure 1.3 Visualizing the raw data. The image on the left is of a plaque from a District Commissioner’s office (Kakamega district in Western Province). The image on the right is a page from the administrative officer returns data (Coast Province). I have blurred the officers’ names for privacy.
are not precise enough to track individual officers or to make inferences about each lower-level bureaucrat’s tenure in a station.\textsuperscript{31} I use this second dataset in Chapters 7–8.

Third, I obtained annual spreadsheets of all officers working in the Provincial Administration from 2005–2012. I combine these sheets to track individual officers over time. The spreadsheets also contain information on officers’ rank each year. I use this dataset in Chapter 8 to analyze promotions during the Kibaki era.

\subsection*{1.4.3 Ethnicity}

Classifying area alignment, bureaucratic loyalty, and bureaucratic embeddedness for the Kenyan case depends, in part, on the ethnicity of bureaucrats and residents. Neither officer dataset lists officers’ ethnicity, however. Instead, I identified officer ethnicity by leveraging the distinctiveness of Kenyan surnames to specific ethnic groups.\textsuperscript{32} I created a dictionary of unique surnames associated with each ethnic group using administrative officer returns of local stationary bureaucrats from 2007–2012 for seven of Kenya’s eight provinces.\textsuperscript{33} Whereas the officers that this book follows were rotated across stations, the stationary bureaucrats I used to create the surname dictionaries must be from the unit’s majority ethnic group and the local administrative unit in which they serve. I merge the surnames of stationary bureaucrats with local-level ethnicity data from the 1989 census, the most recent census with sub-national ethnicity data. I collect the surnames of stationary bureaucrats whose administrative units were at least 90 percent homogeneous to create a dictionary of common surnames for each ethnic group that I use to determine the ethnicity of other bureaucrats. I employed nine Kenyan research assistants to code each officer’s ethnicity based on their local knowledge of surnames for names not found in the dictionary. In cases of discrepancies, the modal estimate was taken.

\textsuperscript{31} The returns only reliably contain the officer’s last name and first initial. Since many officers share last names and first initials, I am hesitant to make inferences about the stay of any particular officer. Moreover, new administrative units were constantly being created or renamed, such that it is difficult to track the same bureaucrat within a district.

\textsuperscript{32} I also recorded the ethnicity of officers I interviewed personally, though this is only a minority of officers.

\textsuperscript{33} The population of these jurisdictions in 2009 was 6,500 on average.
I estimate an area’s alignment with the president and the innate embeddedness of the bureaucrat posted there based partly on shared ethnicity. I use official census data to determine the ethnic makeup of each jurisdiction.\textsuperscript{34} The analyses that examine management before 1992 rely on the 1962, 1969, 1979, and 1989 censuses.\textsuperscript{35} Those that assess management after 1992 rely on a 2.5-percent sample of the 1989 census at the lowest level for which I examine officer management.\textsuperscript{36}

1.4.4 Organization of the Book

This book builds a theory of how leaders manage the state to prevent elite and popular threats to their rule, and then empirically evaluates it using the case of Kenya.

Chapter 2 first examines the range of threats that leaders face and investigates why the state is a powerful tool of social control. This discussion highlights the need to understand the actions of the bureaucrats who actually carry out the orders that temper popular threats. Chapter 2 then explores the leader’s principal-agent problem that emerges from relying on bureaucrats whose actions are difficult to monitor. I outline existing strategies thought to prevent shirking, but argue that each – when applied in full – has negative costs that inhibit a leader’s stability in a manner separate from ensuring compliance. I then describe the book’s theory of the management of state officials. I argue that the hiring of bureaucrats is partly motivated by the need to temper elite threats. Though this initially aggravates the leader’s principal-agent problem and increases the likelihood of shirking, the leader strategically posts and shuffles bureaucrats to ensure that areas in which a popular threat is most likely to arise are overseen by bureaucrats who are the most willing – and, if possible, the most able – to comply. Bureaucrats’ promotions are based on a desire to neutralize elite threats, and also serve as a mechanism to reward bureaucratic compliance.

\textsuperscript{34} Census information is also used to determine a jurisdiction’s population.

\textsuperscript{35} The 1999 Kenyan census did not collect ethnicity information.

\textsuperscript{36} Kenya saw bouts of administrative unit proliferation from 1992–2010, thereby changing the jurisdictions of the bureaucrats I examine. These boundary changes have implications for the quantitative analyses. I cannot assume that the ethnic makeup of new “split” units matches that of their “parent” unit, as new units were created for local ethnic minorities within parent units (Kasara 2006; Hassan 2016). Instead, I use data from previous work that documented the creation date and boundaries of new districts to determine the ethnic composition of parent and split units (Hassan 2016).
Chapter 3 introduces the Kenyan case and the Provincial Administration. I discuss the origins and growth of the Provincial Administration under colonialism. I next lay out Kenya’s postindependence administrative and political landscape, including the *de jure* management of the Provincial Administration.

Chapter 4 chronicles the elite threats faced by Kenya’s first three presidents. I show how elite incorporation into the state was useful in preempting some elite threats. I then illustrate the downstream consequences of partial elite incorporation by quantitatively evaluating the makeup of the Provincial Administration. I find that this agency was never packed with any president’s co-ethnics. Instead, its ethnic makeup reflected patterns of elite incorporation into the cabinet alongside the country’s general ethnic heterogeneity.

Chapters 5 and 6 examine Kenya’s one-party authoritarian era under Presidents Kenyatta (1963–1978) and Moi (1978–1991). In each chapter, I determine the alignment of different parts of the country after discussing the popular threats to each president, many of which emanated from unsuccessful attempts at elite incorporation. I then systematically assess the management of the senior ranks of the Provincial Administration. These officers, similar to Gitonga in the opening example in this chapter, had a neopatrimonial relationship with their respective president through patronage. I find that these officers were managed with the intent to increase local embeddedness in each president’s aligned areas and decrease it elsewhere. I also find evidence that local embeddedness was especially low in the misaligned areas where popular threats had previously emerged under each president. This strategy increased the willingness of officers posted there to coerce.

Chapters 7 and 8 examine how Presidents Moi (1992–2002) and Kibaki (2002–2013) managed the senior ranks of the Provincial Administration after the reintroduction of multiparty elections. These officers were managed in much the same way under multiparty elections as they were under autocracy, despite the fact that popular threats took different forms between these periods. Officers’ local embeddedness increased in each president’s aligned areas and decreased elsewhere. Both chapters also study the lower ranks of the Provincial Administration, officers such as Kipsang and Maina. Presidents could not rely on money to create a neopatrimonial bond with these officers. Instead, officer loyalty varied, with the president’s (opposition’s) co-ethnic officers seen as the most (least) willing to act on behalf of the president. I find that lower-level co-ethnics of the president were sent to electorally valuable areas.
Lower-level co-ethnics of the opposition were sent to places where their shirking behavior would least affect the president’s reelection chances.

Chapter 8 also examines promotion patterns in two ways. First, I show that Kikuyu officers, co-ethnics of Kibaki, could expect more promotions than other officers. Second, I leverage the 2007–2008 postelection violence to examine the promotion of lower-level officers after a bout of highly visible violence. Though the center cannot monitor the behavior of officers in the execution of routine and everyday bureaucratic tasks, it can observe how they acted during large-scale violence (Policzer 2009; Hassan and O’Mealia 2018). Administrators whose jurisdictions experienced violence initiated by Kibaki’s supporters were promoted at higher rates, despite their ethnicity.

Chapter 9 concludes. After reviewing the argument and empirics, I apply the theory to cases outside the scope conditions, map out areas for future research, and discuss some of the book’s policy implications.