Stability and Neo-Patrimonial Developmentalism in Gabon
A Comparative Analysis of Equatorial Africa

Darrin Patrick McDonald

PhD

University of York

Politics

September 2021

Dedicated to –

Mary Jane McDonald (1928-2016); Mario Torrisi, Jr. (1990-2017)

Alexander Longstaffe (1928-2019); Doreen Longstaffe (1930-2020)

and too many others to list.

Abstract

Gabon, Republic of Congo, Chad, and Central African Republic all gained independence in 1960. These four states were *territoires* under the shared jurisdiction of French Equatorial Africa (AEF) up to this point, but since gaining independence their experiences have been highly variable. Gabon has proceeded to record one of the most impressive development records in sub-Saharan Africa while the other three have all been far less successful. In investigating the processes behind these disparate outcomes, this thesis set out to explain: 1) In what ways have domestic circumstances and state operations in Gabon differed from those in Congo, Chad, and CAR? and 2) How have these case-specific circumstances and dynamics resulted in such significant divergence between these ostensibly similar and intimately linked countries? All four of these states have been assessed as being neo-patrimonial, but the analysis in this thesis departs from dominant perspectives on African neo-patrimonialism to emphasise the variability inherent to these informal systems and the outcomes generated. Rather than viewing neo-patrimonialism as inherently deleterious for development, this thesis aligns with literatures on neo-patrimonial developmentalism in emphasising the case-specific impact from these systems. Specifically, the thesis investigates the disparate outcomes among these four states and identifies key points of differentiation through which domestic circumstances and state operations in Gabon are distinct from those in Congo, Chad, and CAR to promote security and productivity in Gabon that is absent in these latter three contexts. Neo-patrimonialism operates through mechanisms for clientelism, presidentialism, and regime corruption. The dysfunction from these systems can be counteracted by expanding formal capacities for extraction, coercion, and administration, which can enable progress toward political, economic, and social development. Such has been the case in Gabon, promoting institutional performance and development outcomes that surpass its regional counterparts and rival the most developed states in sub-Saharan Africa.

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Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I owe a huge debt of gratitude to my supervisor Tony Heron. His advice, feedback, and support have been invaluable. I had a course with Tony during my MA studies at the University of York and, when I decided to revisit the issues and region for which I had developed a strong interest and affinity during my MA thesis, he was the obvious choice. He has dedicated so much time to pulling me out of my various rabbit holes and, although this thesis is entirely my own work, Tony has been instrumental throughout the process. To Tony, I am especially thankful. In addition to Tony, my second supervisor, Peg Murray-Evans, and TAP member, Paul Gready, have both been massively helpful throughout the process in providing detailed and helpful feedback and advice. Peg offered an alternative pair of eyes to look over my work, even taking extra time prior to her annual leave to look over my introduction, while Paul provided insights unique from those offered by Peg and Tony that were very helpful, particularly in the formative stages.

I should also express my gratitude to the Department of Politics for providing such a solid basis for my research endeavours and connecting me with such helpful and interesting individuals. Administratively, Lisa Webster and Liz O'Brien were extremely helpful throughout the PhD process. I would also like to specifically express my gratitude to Dan Keith, who provided immense support for my first few years as a GTA and was generous enough to provide me with well-paid research opportunities that were very appreciated by this self-funded researcher. While I made the acquaintance of several fellow researchers along the way, I would like to reserve special mention for Peter, who provided a welcome and relatable social outlet and a good friend.

I also want to express my gratitude to John F. Clark, François Sita, and Paul Michele Sita for their immense help during my fieldwork. John represents an important figure in studying equatorial Africa and welcomed me with open arms, recommending me for key projects and connecting me with key individuals as I seek to expand my expertise on the region and attempt to fill his very large shoes.

François and his son Paul Michele were hugely helpful and welcoming during my time in Congo, aiding significantly in my fieldwork efforts and providing life-long friends with whom I look forward to reuniting.

Finally, I will always be appreciative of and eternally indebted to my parents, Sandy and Bill, for all their support throughout this process; without them, nothing I do would be possible. Thank you to my sister, Alayne, for providing a needed outlet and source of comfort. Thanks to my brother, Ryan, for helping inspire me to pursue this dream, to Pap for hanging in there and just being you, and to Jack and the Brashes, who have become like a second family for me during the holidays. Also, a big thank you to my "framily" throughout this process, Kath and Lauren. You two have been invaluable in your support and love and our time together will never be forgotten. I also want to express a particularly special thank you to my grandparents, Mario, and all those that I have lost before and during this process. This thesis is inspired by and dedicated to all those who will never be able to read it.

Author's Declaration

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, University. All sources are acknowledged as References.

Chapter 1

Introduction

1a. Background and Research Questions

France's colonisation of equatorial Africa officially began with the occupation of Gabon in 1839 and establishment of its modern-day capital, Libreville, in 1843 (Naval Intelligence, 1942: p. 6). By the beginning of the twentieth century, France had colonised Gabon, Moyen-Congo (modern-day Republic of Congo, hereafter Congo), Tchad (Chad), and Oubangui-Chari (Central African Republic, CAR), officially cementing their status as *territoires* of French Equatorial Africa (AEF) in 1905 (Thompson and Adloff, 1960: p. 26). These four territories would be administered as a single colony until 1960, moulding domestic operations and providing a shared background of institutional incoherence and unpreparedness through which similar initial conditions would immediately manifest, if to varying extents (ibid; Yates, 1996: p. 105). Since gaining independence, however, these four states have diverged significantly, both in terms of their institutional performance and development outcomes. Specifically, Gabon stands out as one of the most developed states in sub-Saharan Africa in contrast to middling performance by Congo and outcomes in Chad and CAR, which are among the most disappointing in the world (UNDP, 2020). The central purpose of this thesis is to elucidate the factors and circumstances that have produced these divergent developmental trajectories in equatorial Africa, with a particular focus on the institutional processes by which Gabon has outperformed its regional counterparts.

This thesis is centred on identifying and capturing the factors behind Gabon's divergent performance and, therefore, the dynamics underlying its stand-out domestic circumstances and promoting development not seen in any of Congo, Chad, or CAR. In so doing, a baseline for the analysis offered is an initial set of shared conditions between these states, specifically their shared colonial

history, which moulded early post-independence trends that in turn moulded future outcomes. These four countries were governed collectively as French Equatorial Africa for the first six decades of the twentieth century, spanning a period roughly as long as their independence since. AEF has often been referred to as 'the Cinderella of the French Empire' due to its inadequate administrative staff and funding compared to its relative importance within the Empire (Naval Intelligence, 1942: p. 257). This juxtaposition yielded states which were distinctly underdeveloped domestically and primarily aimed at the extraction of domestic resources for external consumption (ibid). These dynamics, importantly, served to entrench political norms and priorities among indigenous leaders that would prove significant for their independent paths forward (Azavedo, 1998: p. 64; Yates, 1996: p. 105).

As *territoires*, policy was largely determined in Paris, with implementation left to the sole discretion of the Governor-General, based in Brazzaville, the capital of Congo (Naval Intelligence, 1942: pp. 259-260). Each of the *territoires* was under the discretion of a lieutenant-Governor who reported to the Governor-General in Brazzaville; the Governor-General served as the Governor of Congo, while the three lieutenant-Governors were based in Libreville, Bangui, and Fort Lamy (modern-day N'Djamena), the respective capitals of Gabon, CAR, and Chad (ibid). In this federalised system, each *territoire* had its own budget and the central administration had a separate budget for federation-wide concerns (ibid). The inadequacy of funding and administrators and incoherent oscillation between centralised and decentralised rule within these *territoires*, however, resulted in 'confusion and instability' and an uncertainty to administrative operations that yielded inconsistent and 'contradictory policies' (Thompson and Adloff, 1960: p. 25). The French colonisation and administration of its *territoires* in Equatorial Africa, therefore, was lacking in a coherence or stability to its priorities or governing structures, a legacy that would be bestowed upon the region's independent leaders (ibid; Clark, 2008: p. 57; Azavedo, 1998: p. 64; Yates, 1996: p. 105).

In the build up to and aftermath of independence, these four states' lack of preparedness for self-administration and -preservation would quickly become clear (ibid). The fate of these states'

inaugural regimes, furthermore, would be largely illustrative of and integral to the disparities that would evolve over the ensuing decades. All four inaugural regimes in the region would face domestic insecurity and be forcefully overthrown, but only one of them was swiftly reinstated by French intervention to never again face such significant challenges to its reign (Akum, 2018: p. 3; Eaton, 2006: p. 46; Lanne, 1997: pp. 270-271; O'Toole, 1997: p. 113; Yates, 1996: p. 111). The inaugural regime of Gabriel Léon M'ba in Gabon was toppled by a coup d'état in 1964, less than four years after gaining independence, but was reinstated and reinforced by France to a level and extent none of the other three countries, or most of France's former colonies, experienced (ibid; Gardinier, 1997: pp. 147-148; Chipman, 1989: pp. 170-171). This early security granted M'ba and his successor, Omar Bongo, virtual *carte blanche* to centralise control, cement patron-client relationships, and promote the exploitation of domestic resources that proved integral to record high economic growth in the opening decades of independence (Gardinier, 1997: pp. 146-148; Yates, 1996: pp. 105-117).

Despite an intimately shared history and similar initial conditions, therefore, the early dynamics and characteristics of the Gabonese state were significant for the intra-regional disparities at the core of this thesis' focus. This thesis, specifically, is centred on explaining development outcomes in equatorial Africa and, in so doing, investigating the ways in which Gabon has differed from its regional counterparts in its domestic circumstances and state operations to promote one of the most impressive development records in sub-Saharan Africa (UNDP, 2020). Gabon, Republic of Congo, Chad, and Central African Republic have all been assessed in previous studies as being 'neo-patrimonial' states characterised by personalistic and politicised distribution of resources, an excessive centralisation of executive authority, and misuse of public office for personal gain (V-Dem, 2020; Sigman and Lindberg, 2017: pp. 11-12). These systems can promote institutional dysfunction and inhibit development, but, importantly, the outcomes generated have come to be viewed as determined by their case-specific manifestation, domestic circumstances, and the formal capacities vested in the state (Mkandawire, 2015: pp. 573-578; Erdmann and Engel, 2007: p. 105).

While recent studies in this regard have come to assert the case-specificity of the impact of and outcomes from neo-patrimonialism, this has not always been the case (ibid). Specifically, neo-patrimonialism has long been an essentialised concept centred on the dysfunctional nature to domestic structures as having prevented the implementation of rational-legal policies or pursuit of development in Africa, Latin America, the Middle East, and elsewhere (Erdmann and Engel, 2007: p. 96). Many of these literatures have been criticised by scholars including Olukoshi (1998, 1999) and Erdmann and Engel (2007) for the generalised and inflexible treatment of neo-patrimonialism and associated attempts to impose Western 'modern' structures within these dysfunctional 'traditional' environments (Erdmann and Engel, 2007: p. 96; Olukoshi, 1998: p. 14). Recent literatures on neo-patrimonialism, however, have increasingly applied this concept toward an understanding of the discrete and therefore contingent nature of development processes in each individual African state (Mkandawire, 2015: pp. 565-594; Erdmann and Engel, 2007: p. 105).

Importantly, prior to this thesis there had yet to be an investigation of these processes among the neo-patrimonial states in equatorial Africa. Douglas A. Yates (1996) has come closest through evaluation of the 'rentier state' in Gabon, but comprehensive analysis of these states through the lens of neo-patrimonialism, individually or comparatively, is generally lacking within the existing literatures. All four states in equatorial Africa have historically been characterised by a personalistic nature to the distribution of resources and power and a tendency toward excessive centralisation of executive authority, making them clear examples of neo-patrimonialism. These states, furthermore, chime with more recent, nuanced literatures on neo-patrimonialism through their variance in outcomes despite obvious similarities in their governance structures and modes of accumulation, offering important insight into the variable operation of and outcomes from these systems. While this concept is typically employed toward evaluation of similar outcomes among such states, this thesis thus employs neo-patrimonialism, the variable manifestation of these systems, and their interaction with formal operations to explain the variable performance of and outcomes among these ostensibly similar, intimately linked, and comparatively under-studied countries.

This analysis of neo-patrimonial equatorial African states, their performance, and their outcomes is centred on a comparative case study analysis which employs historical explanations toward a theory-guided tracing of the processes moulding the disparate outcomes among these four states. More specifically, this thesis is aimed at explaining Gabon's long-standing outperformance of its regional counterparts. This analysis rests on the proposition that where a state is weak in its formal capacities or illegitimate in its interactions with society, it is less likely to remain secure and more likely to succumb to the dysfunction stoked by endemic neo-patrimonialism. Where a state is relatively legitimate and strong, however, it is more likely to remain secure and thus be more formally capable of surmounting informal dysfunction and pursuing development. Such dynamics and emphases have come to dominate recent literatures on neo-patrimonialism and the pursuit of development amidst these systems (e.g., Shkel, 2019; Mkandawire, 2015: pp. 565-594; Mann and Berry, 2015: pp. 35-40) and are central to the approach and perspective employed in this thesis. Specifically, this thesis explores the ramifications from variable domestic circumstances in equatorial Africa for the operation of informal neo-patrimonialism, formal capacities, and the pursuit of development in these four states. This thesis is, therefore, primarily concerned with the specific circumstances and dynamics which have proven conducive to outcomes in Gabon that far surpass its regional counterparts and rival almost any other state in the subcontinent (World Bank, 2020; UNDP, 2020).

Gabon in most recent data boasted the third highest *Gross National Income (GNI) per capita* (World Bank, 2020) and the fifth highest *Human Development Index (HDI)* rating in sub-Saharan Africa (UNDP, 2020). Gabon is among the few countries in the subcontinent to boast a 'high human development' rating and thereby stands in stark contrast to the declining 'medium human development' in Congo and 'low human development' in Chad and CAR (ibid). These latter two states, indeed, rank 187 and 188, respectively, out of 189 in global *HDI* ratings (ibid). These outcomes and the disparities therein are significant and have been cemented and exacerbated throughout much of these states' independent histories. Gabon has boasted the highest *GNI per capita* in the region since 1960 and experienced rapid economic growth in the 1970s that would further exacerbate these

economic differences to embed significant disparities in the comparative availability of resources to these young states (World Bank, 2020; Yates, 1996: pp. 41-51). This early and consistent exploitation of domestic resources in Gabon has been significant for the intra-regional disparities at the core of this thesis' analysis and, importantly, rests on the domestic circumstances, political dynamics, and formal capacities differentiating Gabon's experience and trajectory from those among its regional counterparts.

Fundamentally, this thesis is aimed at explaining the specific dynamics and circumstances distinguishing Gabon from its regional counterparts, the implications therefrom for the operation of formal and informal systems in these contexts, and the impact from these conditions on their comparative productivity and development. This will be conducted through an intra-regional comparative case study of equatorial Africa, employing the disparate experiences of these four ostensibly similar and intimately linked countries to understand the specific conditions in Gabon that have proven conducive to divergent outcomes. Specifically, this thesis is centred on addressing two key research questions:

(1) In what ways have domestic circumstances and state operations in Gabon differed from those in Congo, Chad, and CAR?

(2) How have these case-specific circumstances and dynamics resulted in such significant divergence between these ostensibly similar and intimately linked countries?

This thesis, in short, is aimed at explaining the differences in the domestic circumstances and formal and informal operations among these states, and the implications from these conditions for their respective and comparative pursuits of development. In assessing these dynamics moulding Gabon's disparate performance, then, the perspective and approach employed in the rest of this thesis are founded upon and contribute to key contentions and debates within the relevant literatures, which are important to briefly address here.

1b. Neo-Patrimonialism, State Capacity, and Development

Neo-Patrimonialism: Clientelism, Presidentialism, and Regime Corruption

The specific perspectives employed surrounding the interaction of neo-patrimonialism, formal capacities, and development will be addressed in further depth in Chapter 2, but it is important here to offer some insight into the literatures to which this thesis is contributing. Gabon, Congo, Chad, and CAR have all been assessed by previous studies as being neo-patrimonial states (V-Dem, 2020; Sigman and Lindberg, 2017: pp. 11-12), though there has yet to be a comprehensive analysis of these systems within any of these contexts. These four states are understudied within relevant socio-political literatures in comparison to their Anglophone counterparts, despite the potential insights offered up by these states. Neo-patrimonialism is characterised by the complex and case-specific institutionalisation of a combination of informal mechanisms and formal rational-legal structures (Erdmann and Engel, 2007: p. 105). These systems have long been viewed as inherently detrimental to formal operations and development in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and elsewhere (p. 96). In recent decades, this concept has been specifically applied to the context of sub-Saharan Africa as a 'core feature' of African states which, while not unique to the subcontinent, has been particularly potent in weakening formal institutions and impeding development (Bratton and van de Walle, 1994: p. 459).

Neo-patrimonial states are characterised by mechanisms linked to the personalistic distribution of public resources, excessive centralisation of executive authority, and allocation of funds for overtly political purposes, entrenching informal systems that can 'pervade' and distort formal institutions (Coppedge et al., 2020: p. 273). Clientelism, presidentialism, and regime corruption, in other words, represent the key mechanisms of neo-patrimonial systems. Such systems can narrow the distribution and allocation of public resources, delegitimise state actions, and contribute to institutional dysfunction and insecurity (Kelsall and Booth, 2010: pp. 3-7; Cammack and Kelsall, 2010: pp. 4-8; Englebert, 2000a: pp. 5-9). These outcomes are not universal nor are they automatic. Although many of the preceding literatures have emphasised the detriment from these systems, such interpretations have rested on an essentialisation of the African state and an assessment of these

systems through a lens that has tended to ignore the potential endogeneity to and benefits from these systems (Erdmann and Engel, 2007: p. 96). While acknowledging the significance of these systems, therefore, the perspective employed in this thesis departs from much of the preceding literature to emphasise the inherent variability to the impact of and outcomes from these systems.

The manifestation of clientelism, presidentialism, regime corruption, and overall neo-patrimonialism are inherently variable and dependent upon domestic circumstances and the formal capacity of the state. Outcomes from these systems are thus not determined by the mere presence or absence of neo-patrimonialism but, rather, the specific domestic circumstances, manifestation of these systems, and interaction between these and the state's formal institutions. While potentially 'devastating', these systems can promote development depending on their case-specific manifestation, the surrounding institutional and civil context, and ruling elites' incentivisation toward such ends (Mkandawire, 2015: pp. 573-578). This thesis is thus aimed at contributing to recent literatures on neo-patrimonialism and specifically those focused on neo-patrimonial developmentalism to investigate the comparative political economy of neo-patrimonialism in equatorial Africa and identify essential and contingent features of these systems that have been involved in moulding the disparate outcomes among these states. The approach employed toward assessing the impact of and outcomes from neo-patrimonialism within equatorial Africa, furthermore, rests on a specific assessment of the formal capacities vested with these states.

Formal State Capacities: Extraction, Coercion, and Administration

This thesis is centred on explaining through historical processes the divergent outcomes among the neo-patrimonial states in equatorial Africa. Despite a shared colonial heritage and similar political baselines, Gabon has proceeded to outperform its regional counterparts and attain outcomes that rival the most developed states in sub-Saharan Africa (World Bank, 2020; UNDP, 2020). The inherent variability to neo-patrimonial systems provides an integral foundation for explaining these disparities. This thesis' analysis, furthermore, rests on assessment of the interaction between these

informal systems and the formal capacities vested in the state to explain the key processes and operations distinguishing Gabon from its regional counterparts. The function of formal institutions within neo-patrimonial contexts can be impeded in the absence of legitimacy or an endogeneity between the state and society (Englebert, 2000a: p. 90). Where the state is legitimate and secure, however, it is more likely to strengthen formal rational-legal institutions, counteracting the influence of informal neo-patrimonialism and enabling the active pursuit of development (ibid; Erdmann and Engel, 2007: p. 105). Formal capacities and legitimacy, therefore, are central to the performance of a neo-patrimonial state and represent key avenues within such contexts through which disparate performance and outcomes might be generated.

To explore and explain the disparate performance of neo-patrimonial equatorial African states, then, analysis of their formal capacities for extraction, coercion, and administration plays a pivotal role in the overall assessment of the specific circumstances and operations moulding Gabon's divergent outcomes. These three forms of state capacity have been identified within recent literatures as distinctly endogenous and integral to development processes, with the absence of sufficient resources, security, or institutional coherence serving to undermine long-term objectives and impede development (Hanson and Sigman, 2019: pp. 8-9; Besley, Ilzetzki, and Persson, 2013: pp 218-219; Hendrix, 2010: pp. 273-277). Such formal capacities are central to the performance of a neo-patrimonial state and the extent to which it is able to avoid or surmount institutional dysfunction to pursue development. This thesis thus contributes to recent literatures in this regard through a specific assessment of the extractive, coercive, and administrative capacities operationalised by Gabon, Congo, Chad, and CAR, how these have interacted with their specific circumstances and manifestations of neo-patrimonialism, and the extent to which differences in these formal systems have promoted the divergent outcomes concerned.

The ability of a state, whether neo-patrimonial or not, to extract revenues, coerce support, and administrate effectively is integral to its formal capacity to coherently pursue development.

Where a state is unable to legitimately mobilise resources, remain stable, or enforce rules and norms, it is unlikely to avoid informal dysfunction and more likely to be impeded in its pursuit of long-term objectives. The formal capacities exhibited by the states in equatorial Africa, therefore, offer key insight into formal mechanisms that have been central to their performance and outcomes. As has been noted, Gabon is by far the most developed state in equatorial Africa and among the most developed in the subcontinent, based on key metrics (World Bank, 2020; UNDP, 2020). Development is, however, an inherently disputed idea with widely variable conceptualisations of the necessary conditions and processes. Though long centred on the detriment from such systems, importantly, neo-patrimonial literatures have increasingly come to recognise the potential for developmentalism among such states, an acknowledgement that is central to this thesis.

Neo-Patrimonialism and Development

A key aspect of the approach employed in this thesis is the inherent variability to the impact of and outcomes from neo-patrimonialism and the importance of domestic circumstances and formal capacities within these processes. In assessing the differences among equatorial African states and factors moulding their disparate outcomes, importantly, lenses for capturing their performance in pursuit of key objectives are vital. Specifically, this thesis will assess the development among these states based on their political, economic, and social outcomes. These areas offer important insight into domestic state-society relations, economic productivity, and the extent to which necessary services and basic needs have been delivered to their populaces (Barrett and Upton, 2013: p. 329; Evans, 2011: pp. 6-10; Cammack and Kelsall, 2010: pp. 2-6). Political, economic, and social development are thus central to the long-term performance of the state. These will reveal important aspects of the circumstances facing these four states and, specifically, how and to what extent the trajectory and outcomes in Gabon have been distinct from those in Congo, Chad, and CAR.

The active pursuit of development requires legitimate political systems, sufficient economic growth, and the active, coherent pursuit of key long-term objectives relevant to the alleviation of

poverty and improvement of citizens' day-to-day lives (Ghebremusse, 2015: p. 492; Evans, 2011: pp. 9-10; Sen, 1984: p. 496). Development, in other words, rests on the quality and quantity of benefits delivered to the populace and specifically the construction of an environment conducive to the active long-term provision of education, health care, and infrastructural necessities, 'as opposed to just high expenditures' (La Porta et al., 1999: p. 226). Such progress requires a political leadership sufficiently incentivised toward such ends and formal institutions which are capable of coherently implementing key policies (ibid). Where a state has constructed necessary mechanisms for extraction, coercion, and administration, therefore, it is expected to be more capable of responding to domestic needs and allocating resources toward productive ends. Such processes are central to the performance of a given state and its likelihood of obtaining key objectives related to political, economic, and social development, offering important insight into disparate performance or outcomes.

This thesis is aimed at explaining the widely divergent development outcomes among the states of equatorial Africa and the key processes moulding these states' performance and trajectories. The framework employed through the rest of this thesis and expanded upon in Chapter 2 to follow is centred on the operation of endemic neo-patrimonialism through the mechanisms of clientelism, presidentialism, and regime corruption; states' formal capacities for extraction, coercion, and administration; and the political, economic, and social development outcomes from these processes. This thesis is thus aimed at assessing the dynamics distinguishing Gabon from its comparatively underperforming counterparts in Congo, Chad, and CAR and the implications from these circumstances for Gabon's long-term pursuit of development. This analysis will offer important insight into the intra-regional disparities in equatorial Africa and, more generally, key processes and circumstances that can be conducive to development amidst the operation of neo-patrimonialism. Prior to an exploration of these processes and outcomes among these four states, the specific methods for analysis require explication. Whereas most studies in this area might aggregate data from a large selection of cases or focus narrowly on a single case, the intra-regional comparative case

study approach employed in this thesis provides illuminating insights into historical dynamics within a particularly under-studied set of countries in the heart of Africa.

1c. Methodological Reflections

Intra-Regional Comparative Case Study

The analysis in this thesis is centred on an intra-regional comparative case study analysis of Gabon, Republic of Congo, Chad, and Central African Republic to assess the specific dynamics and circumstances moulding their disparate performance since gaining independence. As Jan Vansina (1990) argued, the region of equatorial Africa has been particularly under-studied within socio-political literatures. Vansina (1990) attributed this relative dearth of scholarly interest to geographical limitations and 'ethnographers [having] lumped all of them together in a single cultural whole' (p. 5). Domestic observers, furthermore, pointed to the attention given to neighbouring countries like Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) as a key factor in the lack of attention given to those in equatorial Africa[1]. Whatever the reasons, this region of Africa has been particularly under-studied within relevant literatures, with works by scholars like Vansina (1990), Yates (1996), and Clark (2008) standing out as particularly comprehensive among a short overall list of works on this area. This relative dearth of relevant literatures despite the insights these countries offer into the diversity of circumstances facing ostensibly similar African states, importantly, largely inspired this thesis' analysis of their respective and comparative performance and outcomes.

As Goodrick (2014) summarised, '[c]omparative case studies involve the analysis and synthesis of the similarities, differences, and patterns across two or more cases that share a common focus or goal' (p. 1). These analyses are conducted over a specific period of time and are centred on exploring comparisons between multiple cases, frequently employing mixed methods to integrate and synthesise the insights from quantitative and qualitative forms of data (pp. 1-5). Comparative case

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[1] US Official, interviewed in Brazzaville, Congo on 30 August 2019 (Interview Number 11).

study analyses are thus centred on triangulating findings from various data sources to assess and confirm key processes or factors underlying specific outcomes (p. 6). Such studies are '*heuristic*', explaining outcomes or resolving problems based on preceding experiences (Bartlett and Vavrus, 2017: p. 6; emphasis in original). These are, therefore, centred on the dual objectives of exploring comparisons and contradictions among a selection of cases and tracing relevant processes across 'sites or scales' (ibid). Though scholars like Philips and Schweisfurth (2014) have argued that states do not provide an effective avenue for comparative analysis (p. 115), furthermore, such perspectives have been critiqued on the basis of the 'spatially- and relationally-informed' nature of comparative case studies, which enables these analyses to be conducted over various levels and scales of organisation, 'be they institutions or people, or both' (Bartlett and Vavrus, 2017: pp. 7-10).

The comparative case study analysis to be conducted in this thesis, in this vein, is founded on the application and examination of quantitative and qualitative metrics toward capturing the domestic circumstances, neo-patrimonialism, state capacity, and development outcomes in Gabon, Congo, Chad, and CAR. Fundamentally, this analysis is aimed at explaining the disparate conditions and trajectories exhibited by these four countries and, specifically, the dynamics underlying Gabon's divergent performance since independence. This thesis is, first and foremost, aimed at employing a combination of methods to investigate the experiences of these drastically under-studied cases and assess the 'similarities, differences, and patterns' impacting their trajectories since 1960 (Goodrick, 2014: p. 1). Though this comparative case study will be conducted at the state level, the applicability of this level of analysis to capturing domestic and regional dynamics in equatorial Africa is integral to the approach employed in this thesis and analysis of the spatial and relational aspects that are most significant within these contexts. Central to the specific comparative case study analysis to be conducted, furthermore, is the incorporation of historical explanations for the factors and processes moulding the variable outcomes in equatorial Africa.

Historical Explanation

Analyses incorporating historical explanations are aimed at making 'inferences about the causes of specific outcomes in particular cases' (Mahoney, Kimball, and Koivu, 2009: p. 116). These are, therefore, fundamentally centred on explaining outcomes that have occurred and specific patterns or dynamics impacting thereupon (ibid). Historical explanation is a common approach to be employed toward explaining specific outcomes throughout the social sciences, including in 'comparative-historical analysis' in sociology and 'approximately half' of studies in political science (pp. 116-117). Historical explanation, indeed, 'is a standard approach for case study and small-N research in general' (p. 117). These approaches are most clearly contrasted with aggregated studies which seek to generalise the impacts from certain variables (ibid). The findings from historical explanation, however, can be similarly generalisable, though for this methodological approach generalisability is a 'secondary concern' (p. 116).

Analyses employing historical explanation are fundamentally centred on 'the identification of causes of outcomes that have already occurred' (Mahoney, 2015: p. 202). Historical explanation, therefore, is a methodological approach which attempts to understand the 'sequences of events' or 'causal chains' involved in moulding certain outcomes within a selection of cases (ibid). Within historical explanation, causes can be 'necessary', 'sufficient', 'necessary and sufficient', 'SUIN', or 'INUS causes', the latter of which is most common (Mahoney, Kimball, and Koivu, 2009: pp. 117-128). Necessary causes are those without which a given outcome would not have occurred while a sufficient cause is one 'whose presence inevitably leads to the outcome, though the outcome can occur through other means as well' (ibid). Necessary and sufficient causes are 'rarely proposed' but centred on, self-explanatorily, factors that are both necessary and sufficient for a given outcome (ibid). A SUIN cause is one that is 'a *sufficient* but *unnecessary* part of a factor that is *insufficient* but *necessary* for an outcome' (ibid; emphasis in original). INUS causes, finally, are those which individually are neither necessary nor sufficient, but combined are '*jointly sufficient* for an outcome' (ibid; emphasis in original).

The historical explanation analysis conducted in this thesis is most accurately associated with an exploration of INUS causes, looking at factors which individually may be neither necessary nor sufficient for the pursuit or impediment of development but, combined, have served to contribute to the variance in outcomes between Gabon, Congo, Chad, and CAR. When applying historical explanation to comparative analysis of a narrow selection of cases, the primary concerns are 'with causal analysis, an emphasis on processes over time, and the use of systematic and contextualised comparison' (Mahoney and Rueschemeyer, 2003: p. 10). Such an analysis, then, is focused on explaining and identifying specific causal factors, analysis of historical sequences, and 'systemic and contextualised comparisons of similar and contrasting cases' (pp. 11-13). Historical explanation, in short, 'explains facts prevailing at one time by reference to facts prevailing at an earlier time' (White, 1943: p. 212). Such analyses can be conducted at various levels and durations of space and time and, importantly, emphasise the explication of current or more-recent conditions through analysis of those which came before (ibid; Mahoney and Rueschemeyer, 2003: p. 10). Within the context of equatorial Africa, this is executed through analysis of the historical experiences of these countries with specific reference to early dynamics and circumstances which have moulded the modern variance in development outcomes. This analysis, furthermore, rests on the combined application of historical explanation with a methodological approach of theory guided process tracing.

Theory Guided Process Tracing

As Mahoney (2015) noted, '[t]he method of process tracing is often used when analysts engage in *historical explanation*' (p. 202; emphasis in original). Likewise, the combination of an 'engagement with theoretical issues' and historical explanation has been identified as a methodological approach that has led scholars 'to major breakthroughs in conceptualizing the kinds of factors that drive macro processes of change' (Mahoney and Rueschemeyer, 2003: p. 6). Where historical explanation and process tracing are used in tangent, scholars are seeking to identify the key dynamics and factors, whether necessary, sufficient, or contributing, involved in shaping a given

outcome (Mahoney, 2015: p. 203). Such methodological approaches, furthermore, are aimed at identifying specific relationships and the significance of these factors for the outcomes concerned, employing historical analysis and a tracing of causation to explain the specific circumstances coalescing to mould certain outcomes (ibid). Identifying 'What Xs caused Y in case Z?' is a key challenge of theory construction or historical analysis and, importantly, can be aided by the application of process tracing (p. 212). This can occur through two potential processes: analysis of counterfactuals or, as is employed in this thesis, application of 'existing theory and inductive discovery' (pp. 213-215).

Whereas counterfactual analysis is centred on 'events whose counterfactual absence is relatively easy to imagine and potentially would eliminate the outcome of interest', the application of existing theories and inductive strategies for discovery are more aligned with the underlying application of historical explanation in this thesis (Mahoney, 2015: pp. 213-215). Specifically, within a methodology of process tracing, the history of a case or set of cases is analysed in depth to identify specific factors that might be causal factors based on previous theories and scholarly work (ibid). Analyses employing existing theories and strategies for 'inductive discovery', therefore, rest on the combined application of these theoretical foundations alongside an investigation of cases' historical patterns in search of explanations for specific outcomes (ibid). This is precisely the form of historical explanation and theory guided process tracing employed in this thesis, with an emphasis on historical factors identified in accordance with preceding literatures and theories which have potentially been significant for the independent divergence of equatorial African countries. When applied in this way, process tracing 'can yield sequential theories that combine existing causal factors and newly specified ones' (p. 217). The findings from such studies, furthermore, remain generalisable due to their grounding within 'more general' theories and propositions (ibid).

The combined application of historical explanation and theory guided process tracing such as is employed in this thesis, therefore, is centred on the analysis of a sequence of events within a given case or set of cases and application of existing theory toward identifying specific explanations for more

recent outcomes (ibid; Falleti, 2006: pp. 1-5). The explanations generated specifically apply to the historical processes within the established context(s) but importantly are applicable to assessment of general theories relevant to these processes (ibid). Application of this sort of approach, furthermore, has typically been employed 'to incorporate historical narratives within highly abstract theories and explanations in the social sciences', aimed at identifying specific historical processes and 'causal mechanisms' moulding certain outcomes (Falleti, 2006: pp. 1-7). The historical explanation and theory guided process tracing approach employed within the comparative case study analysis in this thesis, therefore, 'permits the study of complex causal relationships' and allows for analysis of key factors which may be individually insufficient but, in combination, can generate the variance in outcomes concerned (ibid; Mahoney, Kimball, and Koivu, 2009: pp. 117-128).   Integral to this analysis, furthermore, is the employment of both quantitative and qualitative forms of data toward capturing the key dynamics moulding historical processes and modern outcomes (Goodrick, 2014: p. 5).

Data Sources

In line with the methodological approach outlined to this point, this thesis incorporates a combination of quantitative and qualitative data sources toward examination of historical processes and explanation of modern outcomes. Comparative case study analyses frequently employ a mixed methods approach centred on application of data sources such as 'fieldwork visits, observation, interviews, and document analysis' in addition to other data collection methods (Goodrick, 2014: p. 1). Among the key circumstances under which such methods should be applied, importantly, are when asking 'how' or 'why' questions regarding key 'processes or outcomes' (p. 2). Comparative historical analyses, furthermore, have come to be centred on a synthesis of secondary and primary insights 'to combine apparently disparate approaches to data analysis or theory building' (Mahoney and Rueschemeyer, 2003: p. 420). In line with such an approach, this thesis employs a combination of historiographical and secondary insights, empirical data, aggregated expert assessments, and

interview data gained during fieldwork in the region toward explaining the 'how' and 'why' behind the specific dynamics and outcomes within equatorial Africa (Goodrick, 2014: p. 2).

Mixed methods approaches such as that employed in this comparative case study analysis are centred on a synthesis of insights to be gained from quantitative and qualitative data toward evaluating the validity of results or capturing a combination of observable and unobservable factors (Creswell, 2014: p. 43). In this vein, this thesis employs a mixed methods approach which applies empirical data relevant to key processes or outcomes alongside qualitative assessments and interview data to capture the complexity of circumstances moulding equatorial Africa's intra-regional variance. In addition to key empirical findings derived from sources including the World Bank (2020) and UNDP (2020), therefore, a centrepiece of the analysis in this thesis is the application of key expert assessments from sources including the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem, 2020) dataset, World Bank (2020), and Systemic Peace Project (2018). Integral to the analysis in Chapter 3, specifically, is the application of V-Dem's (2020) *neo-patrimonial rule index* and its components, which provide a numerical rating to ground and clarify specific differentiating dynamics in the manifestation of neo-patrimonialism between Gabon and its counterparts. This *index* and the component *indices* for *clientelism, presidentialism,* and *regime corruption* are rated from 0 to 1, with lower scores indicating 'a normatively better situation…and higher scores a normatively worse situation' (Coppedge et al., 2020: p. 273).

Application of V-Dem's (2020) expert assessments serves an integral role in the triangulation of findings in this thesis' analysis of domestic circumstances and neo-patrimonialism in equatorial Africa. Specifically, these qualitative assessments are employed to capture key characteristics among these states that are not easily measured but offer important comparative lenses into the key similarities and differences in these states' operations (Pemstein, et al., 2020: pp. 8-10; Creswell, 2014: p. 43). These will add to the insights gained from empirical and interview data to offer an important triangulation of findings in assessing the specific ways in which domestic circumstances in Gabon have

been distinct and served to promote comparatively impressive outcomes. Similar expert assessments will be employed in Chapters 4 and 5 toward analysis of the 'institutionalised democracy' (Polity V, 2018), 'fragility' (Systemic Peace, 2018), administrative rigorousness and impartiality (V-Dem, 2020), and 'statistical capacity' (World Bank, 2020) of these four states, with the specific components and ratings therefor described in detail alongside their presentation. The specific triangulation of findings to which these qualitative indices contribute, importantly, rests on the application of insights gained from interviews conducted during the author's time in the region in the summer of 2019.

Interview Data

In addition to historiographical and secondary insights, empirical data, and expert assessed qualitative metrics, interview data collected while the author was in Libreville, Gabon (2 weeks) and Brazzaville, Republic of Congo (2 weeks) between August and September 2019 provides important insight into relevant conditions and dynamics. Interviews in this period were conducted in person, open-ended, semi-structured, and aimed at understanding the specific circumstances moulding these states' experiences based on the perspectives from key domestic observers. A total of twenty individuals or groups were interviewed during this period, with the full list of interviews and pertinent details included in the Appendix[2]. Individuals interviewed by the author ranged from UN and US officials to domestic activists and academics, local business owners, and key figures in government Ministries. All those interviewed had either been contacted by the author prior to departure or, as was the case for most, were the product of a snowballing process, often through preceding interviewees. Sampling via snowballing, importantly, can serve an integral role in studies like this and, specifically, enables the researcher to gain access to relevant individuals or groups that might be difficult to access otherwise (Naderifar, Goli, and Fereshteh, 2017: p. 2).

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[2] List of interviews can be found in the Appendix and includes reference to interviewees' title, location, and the date of the interview. References to interviews within the body of the thesis will be included in footnotes, noting the numerical identifiers, titles, dates, and locations of interviewees in accordance with the Appendix.

Data such as this from this region of Africa is generally lacking within relevant literatures, likely attributable to security concerns, environmental conditions, and, as was frequently encountered by the author, the difficulty some individuals have in speaking openly about sensitive topics related to government mismanagement, corruption, and similar issues (Schwickerath et al., 2016: p. 14). Interviews in this sort of study can be integral to capturing 'real life' in these contexts, can give relevant conditions 'a human face', and can 'help capture the unspoken' (ibid). Application of the interview data gained toward analysis and explanation of the historical circumstances moulding the intra-regional variance in equatorial Africa, therefore, serves an important role within this thesis and provides vital insight into domestic and regional conditions that cannot be assessed from behind a desk alone. Such data is central to the mixed methods approaches often employed within comparative case study analyses and thus serves a vital role in this thesis' broader aims of revealing the specific processes underlying Gabon's divergence from its regional counterparts (Goodrick, 2014: pp. 1-2). While limited, therefore, the array of insights gained from domestic observers during this period are central to this thesis' overall efforts at explaining the dynamics and circumstances shaping these states' respective and comparative performance.

For a variety of reasons, most of the interviews conducted were not recorded, with the data collected largely consisting of handwritten notes confirmed with the interviewees at the time and typed up after the fact. Quotes provided are derived either from the singular recorded interview (Interview Number 03) or were explicitly noted at the time by the author and confirmed with the interviewee in person. All individuals interviewed have been anonymised within this thesis to protect their identities and allow them to feel free to express their honest opinions without fear of retribution, in line with similar studies in this area (Schwickerath, 2016: p. 14; Antonakas, Giokas, and Konstantopoulos, 2013: pp. 582-583). Interviews conducted were semi-structured and generally ranged from one to three hours in length, with the specific topics addressed and structure of the interviews moulded by the individual concerned and, in some cases, the setting in which these were conducted. Most interviews were conducted with a single individual, but in a few cases the author

met with a group of several individuals with whom a single interview was conducted; these are referenced and identified accordingly in the text and Appendix.

Interviews with UN and US officials were conducted in their offices, but most other interviews occurred in more informal settings ranging from an individual's home or garden to a public restaurant. The flexibility in interview style was imperative to the author's ability to gain access to as many individuals and perspectives as possible within a limited overall window of time. Some interviewees were available for follow-up discussions to gain clarification or elaboration on their responses and gauge their feelings on the subjects addressed, though these were generally informal and did not involve detailed notetaking beyond verification of key points. The data gained from these interviews is employed throughout the three findings chapters to follow toward substantiation of the trends and dynamics evident within the concurrently presented historiographical, secondary, empirical, and expert-assessed insights, serving an integral role in the comparative case study analysis and methodological specifications employed in this thesis.

1d. Structure of the Thesis

Building from this foundation, the rest of this comparative case study analysis centred on historical explanation and theory guided process tracing will proceed as follows. First, **Chapter 2** to immediately follow will focus on explicating and elaborating on the theoretical foundations and framework employed in the rest of the thesis, providing an important grounding and basis for analysis. While certain aspects of this framework have been touched upon in this introductory chapter, Chapter 2 will offer an important review and synthesis of relevant literatures surrounding the operation of neo-patrimonialism, clientelism, presidentialism, and regime corruption; implications for and the importance of states' formal capacities for extraction, coercion, and administration; and the perspectives employed toward defining and capturing political, economic, and social development outcomes. These literatures offer crucial insight into the approach and perspective employed in the rest of the thesis and provide an important foundation for the lenses employed in Chapters 3, 4, and

5.   While there is no consensus on the 'best' way to capture any of these, importantly, the multidimensional mixed methods approach employed in this thesis is integral to bridging the gap between many of the literatures on neo-patrimonialism and development. Chapter 2 will conclude with an overarching synthesis of the insights and perspectives moulding this thesis' approach and, importantly, will set out the key theoretical contentions on which the rest of the analysis is founded.

Following provision of this theoretical foundation, **Chapter 3** will present the first findings of the thesis, though the approach employed therein is itself multidimensional and mixed in its methods. Specifically, Chapter 3 will be focused on the circumstances in these countries since independence and how these have shaped the operation and manifestation of neo-patrimonialism in these contexts. This will primarily be conducted through a historiographical analysis of these four states in a comparative context through application of secondary sources and interview data but will likewise employ V-Dem's (2020) *neo-patrimonial rule index* and its components to provide an integral, numerical, and comparative lens through which to capture key features of, and differences in, the manifestation of neo-patrimonialism among these four states. This chapter explores and evaluates the circumstances and informal operations shaping these states' trajectories and, specifically, the ways in which Gabon's experience has been distinct from, and similar to, those in Republic of Congo, Chad, and Central African Republic. Chapter 3 is thus central to the broader analysis in this thesis and provides an important lens into key factors and dynamics underlying Gabon's comparative success since gaining independence.

Building from this foundational analysis of these states' domestic circumstances and informal operations, **Chapter 4** will employ quantitative and qualitative metrics to capture the formal extractive, coercive, and administrative capacities of Gabon, Congo, Chad, and CAR. These three capacity sets are integral to development processes, are mutually influential, and represent key factors in determining the impact from endemic neo-patrimonialism. Neo-patrimonial systems are characterised by a case-specific balance between formality and informality whereby a strengthening

of formal rational-legal capacities can weaken neo-patrimonialism and enable developmentalism. Chapter 4, in this vein, is specifically aimed at assessing the formal capacities for extraction, coercion, and administration vested within these four states, if and how these have been distinct in Gabon, the interaction of formal and informal operations within these contexts, and how these capacities have been shaped by the domestic circumstances outlined in Chapter 3. A state able to expand its formal capacities is more likely to avoid much of the detriment from informal dysfunction and pursue development; Chapter 4 thus provides vital insight into the formal processes impacting development trajectories and outcomes among these neo-patrimonial equatorial African states.

Chapter 5, the final findings chapter of this thesis, will apply the insights gained into the domestic circumstances and informal neo-patrimonialism (Chapter 3) and formal capacities (Chapter 4) among Gabon, Congo, Chad, and CAR to explore their development outcomes and the extent to which Gabon has outperformed its regional counterparts. Specifically, Chapter 5 will explore the political, economic, and social development of these four states to capture their comparative performance in ensuring the stability of political operations and delivery of civil liberties; promoting economic growth and poverty alleviation; and delivering advancements in health, education, and overall 'human development', based on key metrics. The findings of this chapter will capture manifest implications from these states' domestic circumstances, neo-patrimonialism, and formal capacities for the operation, productivity, and developmentalism of their states. Chapter 5 thus provides a vital set of insights into the specific outcomes from the processes assessed in the preceding chapters and, therefore, is crucial to this thesis' aims of explaining how and to what extent a variance in outcomes among these states has resulted from the circumstances detailed in this thesis. **Chapter 6**, finally, will synthesise the insights gained from Chapters 2 through 5, address the research questions posed, and summarise the contribution offered. This concluding chapter will restate the aims behind this thesis, summarise the key findings from the preceding analysis, and discuss overall conclusions drawn from these findings. The penultimate section will briefly point to a future research agenda opened up by the thesis' findings before the final section explicates the author's concluding statements.

Chapter 2

Neo-Patrimonial Development: A Theoretical Framework

2a. Introduction

This thesis is centred on explaining the variable development outcomes among the states of equatorial Africa through analysis of their historical circumstances, informal operations, and formal capacities. Gabon, Republic of Congo, Chad, and Central African Republic were all *territoires* under the auspices of French Equatorial Africa until 1960 but have, since gaining independence, diverged significantly in their domestic circumstances and development outcomes. Specifically, Gabon is among the most developed states in sub-Saharan Africa while the other three have been far less successful (UNDP, 2020). All four of these states are, to varying extents, characterised by neo-patrimonial operations and informal mechanisms related to the personalistic or clientelistic distribution of resources, excessive centralisation of presidential authority, and corrupt abuse of public office (V-Dem, 2020), but the specific manifestation of these systems is far from universal and has come to mould their performance and outcomes. The variability of these systems, importance of domestic circumstances, and implications from these conditions for Gabon's divergent performance are at the core of this thesis' focus. This chapter, toward these ends, synthesises perspectives on neo-patrimonialism; states' formal capacities for extraction, coercion, and administration; and paths toward political, economic, and social development, providing an important theoretical basis for investigation of the historical processes moulding the region's institutional performance and development outcomes.

Neo-patrimonialism is centred on the disruption of formal institutions by 'personalistic forms of authority' linked to the operation of clientelism, presidentialism, and regime corruption (Coppedge et al., 2020: p. 273). The potential dysfunction from endemic neo-patrimonialism 'takes place within a framework of, and with the claim to, legal-rational bureaucracy' but is characterised by 'a mixture

of two co-existing, partly interwoven, types of domination: patrimonial and legal-rational bureaucratic domination' (Erdmann and Engel, 2007: p. 105). These systems have long been viewed as impediments to development in Africa (p. 96), but scholars have increasingly recognised the inherent variability to neo-patrimonial operations (Mkandawire, 2015: pp. 573-578; Kelsall and Booth, 2010: pp. 3-7). Specifically, recent literatures on neo-patrimonialism or neo-patrimonial developmentalism have come to emphasise the centrality of domestic circumstances and formal capacities to avoiding the potential dysfunction that can be stoked by clientelism, presidentialism, and regime corruption (ibid). Although these systems are 'essentially redistributive in nature' (Englebert, 2000b: p. 9), there have been 'many' instances in which neo-patrimonialism has accompanied economic growth and development (Mkandawire, 2015: p. 578).

As Thandika Mkandawire (2015) has argued, the outcomes from endemic neo-patrimonialism are inherently variable and dependent upon the specific circumstances impacting upon a given state's priorities and prospects (pp. 565-594). Such propositions are at the core of this thesis' analysis and offer important insight into the divergent paths that the countries of equatorial Africa have taken since gaining independence in 1960. Gabon has attained a level of development that dwarfs those in Congo, Chad, and CAR (UNDP, 2020) despite similar initial conditions and shared neo-patrimonial norms. Indeed, Gabon is among the five most developed states in sub-Saharan Africa according to key metrics (World Bank, 2020; UNDP, 2020) despite being classified as being almost as neo-patrimonial as the most neo-patrimonial states in the subcontinent (V-Dem, 2020). These conditions stand in stark contrast with the states of Congo, Chad, and CAR (World Bank, 2020; UNDP, 2020) and thus offer important insight into the diversity of outcomes from these informal systems and key processes moulding the divergence between these states since independence.

These disparities despite shared foundations have prompted this thesis' core research questions: (1) in what ways have domestic circumstances and state operations in Gabon differed from those in Congo, Chad, and CAR? and (2) how have these case-specific circumstances and dynamics

resulted in such significant divergence between these ostensibly similar and intimately linked countries? Neo-patrimonial developmentalism is moulded by the legitimacy, capacity, and stability of the state and the implications from these conditions for the productivity of domestic rent allocation (Cammack and Kelsall, 2010: pp. 4-6). These factors are case specific and result in a specific balance between formality and informality that is central to a country's prospects for avoiding or diminishing the dysfunction bred by neo-patrimonialism (Mkandawire, 2015: pp. 573-578; Erdmann and Engel, 2007: p. 105). Where the state is capable and elites are incentivised 'to implement sound policies', the potential detriment from neo-patrimonialism can be diminished and the state can pursue development (Kelsall, 2018a: p. 29; Ghebremusse, 2015: p. 492).

The present chapter, toward elaborating and supporting these propositions, will explore and synthesise the insights to be gained from preceding literatures related to neo-patrimonialism, state capacity, and development, organised in accordance with the analytical findings presented in the chapters to follow. Section 2b to immediately follow will be centred on the key perspectives related to the operation of and impact from endemic neo-patrimonialism, clientelism, presidentialism, and regime corruption. Section 2c will focus on the important role of formal state capacities for extraction, coercion, and administration within relevant processes. Section 2d will review and synthesise literatures and perspectives related to states' political, economic, and social development. Section 2e, finally, will synthesise the insights gained, offer the key contentions on which this thesis' analysis is founded, and conclude. The theoretical propositions established in this chapter are integral to the overall approach employed in this thesis and the application of existing theories to trace the institutional processes and dynamics moulding the historical divergence and modern outcomes in equatorial Africa.

Neo-patrimonialism is not inherently detrimental to formal capacities or the pursuit of development, but weak, illegitimate, or unstable formal operations can constrain the state's ability to productively manage domestic resources, potentially stoking institutional dysfunction and inhibiting

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development (Mkandawire, 2015: pp. 573-594; Cammack and Kelsall, 2010: pp. 4-6). The emphases on unproductive redistribution and 'power maximization' inherent to these systems can promote insecurity, narrow avenues for legitimacy, and constrain the state's capacities for development (Englebert, 2000b: p. 9). Where the state is legitimate and secure in its authority, however, this potential detriment can be avoided and the state can actively pursue development (Mkandawire, 2015: pp. 573-578). In reviewing and synthesising the theoretical foundations for this perspective on neo-patrimonial development, the section to immediately follow first turns its attention to literatures focused on the manifestation of and impact from neo-patrimonialism and related mechanisms of clientelism, presidentialism, and regime corruption.

2b. Neo-Patrimonialism: Clientelism, Presidentialism, and Regime Corruption

This chapter is fundamentally aimed at establishing the theoretical foundation and contentions central to the forthcoming analysis and evaluation of interactions between neo-patrimonialism, formal state capacities, and development within equatorial Africa. Literatures on neo-patrimonialism are rooted in issues of Weberian (1978) legitimacy or authority, having first experienced a growth in popularity in the 1960s as issues of rentier states, personal rule, and corruption were increasingly emphasised in evaluating state (under)performance in Africa, Latin America, and elsewhere (Erdmann and Engel, 2007: pp. 97-98). Within these systems, '[i]nformality and formality are intimately linked to each other in various ways and by varying degrees' (p. 105). The impact from this case-specific balance, while potentially 'devastating', has not proven universally inimical to the active pursuit of development, however (Mkandawire, 2015: pp. 565-594). The inherent variability to the manifestation of and impact from neo-patrimonialism within development processes has been a centrepiece of recent literatures (e.g., Shkel, 2019; Mkandawire, 2001, 2015; Booth and Golooba-Mutebi, 2012; Kelsall, 2011; Kelsall and Booth, 2010; Cammack and Kelsall, 2010) and is central to this thesis' analysis.

Neo-patrimonial systems 'combine clientelistic political relationships, strong and unconstrained presidents and the use of public resources for political legitimation' toward the

entrenchment of 'personalistic forms of authority [that] pervade formal regime institutions' (Coppedge et al., 2020: p. 273). Clientelism, presidentialism, and regime corruption thus represent the key mechanisms characterising and moulding a neo-patrimonial state (pp. 273-275). Toward these ends, the subsections to follow will be centred on synthesising the insights to be gained from literatures related to the operation of and impact from clientelism, presidentialism, and regime corruption as key components of neo-patrimonial systems. Where a state is constrained by neo-patrimonialism, the application of domestic resources can be less productive and focused on narrow short-term objectives, particularly given the potential instability promoted by these systems (Englebert, 2000b: p. 9) and the self-perpetuating nature of such conditions (Elbadawi and Ndung'u, 2005: p. 20). Where the state is stable, legitimate, and capable, however, the dysfunction promoted by endemic neo-patrimonialism can be diminished and the state can actively pursue long-term objectives related to development (Mkandawire, 2015: p. 578).

In providing an important foundation for this perspective and the analysis to follow in the rest of this thesis, this chapter will first turn its attention to the operation of clientelism and the central role played by these systems in the operation of a neo-patrimonial state (Kelsall and Booth, 2010: pp. 3-7). Clientelism is characterised by 'the targeted contingent distribution of resources…in exchange for political support' (Coppedge et al., 2020: p. 273) and is thus illustrative of the productivity, or lack thereof, of domestic resource mobilisation and allocation (Kelsall and Booth, 2010: pp. 3-7). Where domestic rents are allocated toward narrow, unproductive objectives, such 'rentier states' can be moulded by a constriction of formal capacities, limitations on economic growth potential, and, consequently, significant impediments to development and security (Yates, 1996: pp. 24-25; Mahdavy, 1970: pp. 428-431). Perspectives on clientelism and rentier states were central to the emergence of a concern with neo-patrimonialism in the twentieth century and thus provide important insight into the nature, priorities, and productivity of the state's use of domestic resources within such contexts (Kelsall and Booth, 2010: pp. 3-7; Erdmann and Engel, 2007: p. 98).

Clientelism and Rentier States

States characterised by clientelism have come to be associated with a 'high rate of dependence on extraction and export of natural resources' and a 'high propensity to corruption, poor governance, mass poverty, societal fragmentation and violent conflicts (including civil wars)' (Omeje, 2008b: p. 14). The narrow application of state resources toward political ends characterising these systems can wield significant influence over the formal capacities, security, and priorities of the state and promote dysfunctional social and economic performance inimical to the objectives of development (ibid; Kelsall and Booth, 2010: pp. 3-7). These systems are integral to the operation of neo-patrimonialism and the overall impact from these systems (ibid; Coppedge et al., 2020: pp. 273-275). Stronger clientelism is expected to contribute to institutional dysfunction, the unproductive use of resources, domestic insecurity, and other potential obstacles to development (ibid). Though not inherently impeding development (Mkandawire, 2015: p. 578), therefore, the operation of endemic clientelism in the absence of sufficient formal capacities or a legitimacy to authority can be highly damaging for economic performance and development prospects (Omeje, 2008b: p. 14).

This first aspect of neo-patrimonialism thus represents a 'particularly crucial' factor in these systems which can yield variable but potentially anti-developmental outcomes (Kelsall and Booth, 2010: p. 3). Hossein Mahdavy (1970) provided an important early foundation for these perspectives through his analysis of the 'rentier state' in Iran and specifically the clientelistic systems surrounding that country's exploitation of natural resources. Such processes had, according to Mahdavy (1970), served to significantly mould the formal capacities and priorities of the state, narrowing the distribution of resources and concentrating power among a small set of ruling elites (pp. 466-467). Similar issues have been assessed by scholars including Chaudhry (1989), Yates (1996), Karl (1997), Ross (2001), and Omeje (2008a, b) as the potential dysfunction generated by and variable manifestation of these systems have increasingly come to be appreciated for their impact on stability, formal capacity, and development capabilities (Omeje, 2008b: p. 14). Such contributions offer vital

insight for this thesis' analysis and indicate clear factors resulting from and moulding the dysfunctional application of domestic resources within such contexts (ibid).

Douglas A. Yates (1996) offered an important addition to these literatures within the context of equatorial Africa. Specifically, Yates (1996) conducted a comprehensive analysis of the Gabonese 'rentier state' and 'the massive influence wielded by export revenues on the national income and public finance of Gabon, particularly from the petroleum sector' (p. 41). Such an analysis stands out among the literatures on equatorial Africa and provides important insight into key factors involved in Gabon's superior performance by comparison to its 'institutionally weak' but similarly 'personalized' counterparts (Reno, 1998: p. 15). Yates (1996) argued the Gabonese state in the formative years of independence was characterised by 'post-imperial imperialism' and a 'dominance-dependence relationship' with France that had served to promote security and rapid economic growth, legitimise the Gabonese state, and enable the further exploitation of domestic resources (pp. 41-51). This early establishment and entrenchment of a case-specific form of clientelism in the Gabonese context contributed to an early divergence from its regional counterparts and distinguished Gabon from most other Francophone African countries shortly after independence (ibid; Clark, 2008: p. 228; Chipman, 1989: pp. 169-171).

Where a state has effectively centralised control over domestic rents, clientelism can potentially strengthen its abilities for managing resources and insulate the economy from dysfunctional 'rent capture' (Bach, 2011: p. 284). Bach (2011), however, argued that, in the case of the Philippines, the strength of domestic clientelism and impact of these systems on economic processes had 'stemmed from the weakness of the state in its dealings with economic circles' (ibid). As Kelsall and Booth (2010) summarised, 'the way in which clientelism is bound up with the creation, utilization, and distribution of economic rents, and whether this occurs in an organised, or unorganised way' is integral to the extent to which these systems impede economic growth or development (p. 3). In the absence of formal capacities or where the state is unable to consolidate its

control over power and resources, the authority and legitimacy of ruling elites is likely to be limited, stoking short-term strategies for power and wealth maximisation (pp. 3-5).

Clientelism can 'rapidly erode' formal institutions, impede the productive allocation of resources, and weaken 'bureaucratic forms and norms' (Leftwich, 2007: p. 86), but where 'resources are abundant' and the state is capable, 'clientelism might contribute to regime stability' (Arriola, 2009: p. 1345). These systems are characterised by a personalistic and loyalty-based distribution of domestic resources for political or economic benefit (Médard, 2014: p. 88). In the absence of a strong, centralised executive authority and a legitimate 'political leadership…to exercise effective control', endemic clientelism and neo-patrimonialism can weaken the state, promote instability, and impede development (Kelsall and Booth, 2010: p. 5; Omeje, 2008b: p. 14). Despite having been viewed as instrumental to the success of neo-patrimonial developmental states like Indonesia, Malaysia, and Rwanda (Booth and Golooba-Mutebi, 2012: p. 383), therefore, the centralisation of rents 'is not sufficient *in and of itself*' (Kelsall and Booth, 2010: p. 7; emphasis in original). As Kelsall and Booth (2010) argued, 'rent-creation, rent-seeking, rent-distribution, and rent-utilization…must be oriented *to the long term*' (ibid; emphasis in original).

There exists within the literature on clientelism an important debate surrounding the potential for a non-elitist interpretation of clientelism that considers the 'distribution of power across organizations' rather than 'between elites' (Khan, 2018: p. 5). Specifically, the political settlements literatures represented by scholars like Gray and Whitfield (2014), Whitfield and Buur (2014), Hirvi and Whitfield (2015), Behuria, Buur, and Gray (2017), Khan (2017, 2018), and Kelsall (2018b) have emphasised the potential for a more competitive form of clientelism shaped by the power dynamics and hierarchies operating within society and centred on complex patron-client relations between domestic capitalists, ruling elites, and other domestic interests. While these literatures align with neo-patrimonial perspectives in defining clientelism as being characterised by 'patron-client networks and political mobilisation through the exchange of political support in return for material benefits' (Hirvi

and Whitfield, 2015: p. 135), significant debate exists surrounding 'the logics driving clientelism' (p. 136). Mushtaq Khan (2017, 2018) provided an important foundation for consideration of 'clientelist political settlements', with these works challenging Weberian perspectives on legitimacy and asserting that, in contrast to the neo-patrimonial perspective, clientelism is 'driven by structural factors – the economic structures of developing countries' rather than the personalistic interests of ruling elites (Hirvi and Whitfield, 2015: pp. 139-140).

While the approach employed in this thesis agrees that 'democratisation does not necessarily weaken clientelist politics and can even reinforce it' (p. 140), it aligns more closely with recent literatures on neo-patrimonialism and specifically a retention of the perspective that clientelism, at least among the countries of equatorial Africa, has been more significantly shaped by ruling elites' interests and behaviour than by inherent structural factors. Such emphases on elite interests and actions moulding the formal and informal structures in equatorial Africa have dominated preceding works on this region (e.g., Akum, 2018; Mehler, 2011; Giroux, Lanz, and Sguaitamatti, 2009; Clark, 2008; Eaton, 2006; Lanne, 1997; O'Toole, 1997; Yates, 1996) and are thus integral to the approach employed in this thesis' analysis. Importantly, both the political settlements and neo-patrimonialism schools of thought agree on a key aspect of clientelism that is central to the approach employed in this thesis: the inherent variability and case-specificity of the outcomes from such informal operations (ibid). While the explanations provided for high or low clientelism within a given state may be at odds, therefore, the implications from these systems for the operation of the state and its ability to actively pursue development, and the variety of plausible outcomes therefrom, are largely consistent. Specifically, a wide range of scholars including Arriola (2009), Kelsall and Booth (2010), Booth and Golooba-Mutebi (2012), Hirvi and Whitfield (2015), Mkandawire (2015), and Behuria, Buur, and Gray (2017) have all argued that, depending on domestic circumstances or structural factors, clientelism has the potential to be beneficial to a given state.

These processes require a strong centralised authority (Kelsall and Booth, 2010: p. 7). Given sufficient circumstances, in other words, clientelism and presidentialism can be employed together as 'salient aspects of successful developmental states' (Mkandawire, 2015: p. 578). In assessing the development of neo-patrimonial states and investigating the factors moulding significant disparities, then, the operation of presidentialism is of central concern (ibid; Kelsall, 2011: pp. 81-82). Where the state has effectively centralised its control over domestic rents, it is more likely to distribute these equitably, manufacture legitimacy, remain stable, and pursue development (ibid; Kelsall and Booth, 2010: pp. 5-7). The operation and effectiveness of presidentialism within a neo-patrimonial state, therefore, serves an integral role in promoting key long-term objectives and enabling the productive application of clientelism or neo-patrimonialism (ibid; Coppedge et al., 2020: pp. 273-274). A central authority that is weak, insecure, or illegitimate, importantly, is unlikely to surmount informality or actively pursue development, irrespective of the resources available to the state (ibid).

Presidentialism and 'Centralised Patronage'

As the second aspect of neo-patrimonialism, presidentialism represents a key factor in determining the manifestation of and impact from these systems (ibid). Much like clientelism, presidentialism can promote developmentalism, but the outcomes generated are moulded by the case-specific form these systems take and the domestic circumstances involved (Mkandawire, 2015: p. 578). Presidentialism describes the 'systemic concentration of political power in the hands of one individual' (Bratton and Van de Walle, 1997: p. 63), determined by 'the extent to which the [p]resident is free from constraints by other institutions or actors' (Coppedge et al., 2020: pp. 273-274). Strong central leadership and the long-term productive application of domestic rents are integral to the developmental capabilities of a neo-patrimonial state (Kelsall and Booth, 2010: pp. 5-8). A lack of effectively centralised control can inhibit 'political freedom' and promote 'policy uncertainty' (Feng, 2001: p. 288), relegating the state to cycles of 'political instability and everyday uncertainties' (Debos, 2011: p. 426). Domestic circumstances and the 'behaviour among national rulers', in short, wield

significant influence over the operation of the state and the outcomes from its specific balance between formality and informality (Goldsmith, 2001: p. 84).

The centralisation of authority, the legitimacy thereof, and the implementation of a coherent 'long-horizon approach to rent management' are central to the security of the state or pursuit of development amidst endemic neo-patrimonialism (Kelsall, 2011: p. 82). The excessive or illegitimate centralisation of authority, however, can inhibit mechanisms for accountability, competition, or efficiency and prove counter-productive for development (Fukuyama, 2005: pp. 94-103). The legitimacy and security of authority within such contexts requires a case-specific endogenous balance between centralisation and decentralisation; where the state is overly (de)centralised, it can be constrained in its formal capacities and pursuit of development (ibid). While 'centralizing control over rents' has been instrumental to the success of neo-patrimonial developmental states, therefore, excessive centralisation or the absence of a coherent long-term strategy can hinder economic processes, diminish legitimacy, and stoke insecurity (Kelsall and Booth, 2010: p. 10; Fukuyama, 2005: pp. 94-103; Englebert, 2000a: p. 90).

In institutionalising a system of presidentialism conducive to the pursuit of development the state requires an effective balance between formal and informal sources of authority (Erdmann and Engel, 2007: p. 105; Englebert, 2000a: p. 90; Weber, 1978: p. 215). Highly presidential states are less likely to remain legitimate or pursue development in the absence of the formal capacity to incentivise rulers to pursue '[t]he optimal mix of repression and loyalty-building measures' and implement coherent 'redistributive or developmental policies' (Hanson, 2015: p. 310). Scholars like Hutchcroft (1998) and Shkel (2019), furthermore, have revealed the distinctly variable outcomes from presidentialism, with 'oligarchic patrimonialism' and the maintenance of traditional authority structures potentially inhibiting rational-legal bureaucratic structures and formal state capacities (Hutchcroft, 1998: p. 20). Scholars such as Howell (2006), Beeson (2009), and Knight (2013, 2014), on the other hand, have argued that in archetypal developmental states like South Korea, Japan, and

China presidentialism and the centralisation of authority have aided in promoting the coherent pursuit of long-term objectives related to development (Knight, 2014: pp. 1336-1337).

As Sara Ghebremusse (2015) summarily argued, developmental states require a 'development-oriented political leadership' and 'a willingness to implement sound policies' which promote 'socio-economic development initiatives', 'growth', and 'broader development' (p. 492). Where power is concentrated among a narrow elite, the state relies upon strong formal capacities to produce incentives for the coherent pursuit of long-term objectives related to development (ibid; Hanson, 2015: p. 310). Endemic presidentialism is not inherently detrimental to these processes and, indeed, can help promote state developmentalism given sufficient domestic circumstances and elite incentivisation toward productive ends (Mkandawire, 2015: p. 578). The 'systemic concentration of political power in the hands of one individual' (Bratton and Van De Walle, 1997: p. 63), therefore, can enable the active application of 'centralised patronage' (Kelsall, 2018a: p. 29), preserve the stability and legitimacy of the state (Englebert, 2000b: p. 9), and promote the productive mobilisation and distribution of domestic rents (Cammack and Kelsall, 2010: pp. 4-6).

While potentially detrimental to development processes, presidentialism and clientelism can be conducive to developmentalism given sufficient domestic circumstances and endogenous systems (Mkandawire, 2015: p. 578; Arriola, 2009: pp. 1342-1345; Fukuyama, 2005: pp. 94-103). Divergent outcomes from neo-patrimonialism, therefore, are derived from the variable manifestation of these systems and the specific domestic circumstances moulding the demands on and resources available to the state (Mkandawire, 2015: p. 594). These processes can narrow avenues for resource distribution and stoke short-term approaches among ruling elites, but the effective centralisation of authority and personalisation of rent management inherent to neo-patrimonialism can enable the productive and 'disciplined' long-term employment of 'centralised patronage' (Kelsall, 2018a: p. 29; Cammack and Kelsall, 2010: pp. 2-6). Where states are impeded by the operation of regime corruption or other sources of institutional dysfunction, however, these processes can be inhibited and the state

can be limited in its capacities to plan or implement long-term policies (Oluwatobi et al., 2015: pp. 6-7).

In addition to an effective centralisation of authority (Fukuyama, 2005: pp. 94-103), a developmental state requires 'a favorable institutional environment' (Oluwatobi et al., 2015: p. 8) and 'behaviour among national rulers' conducive to the long-term pursuit of productive objectives (Goldsmith, 2001: p. 84). Where institutions are weak or corruption operates unimpeded, the state's ability to 'sustain growth and development' will be limited (Oluwatobi et al., 2015: p. 8). Endemic presidentialism and clientelism can benefit development processes given sufficient domestic circumstances and formal capacities (Mkandawire, 2015: p. 578). The dysfunction entrenched by regime corruption, however, can obstruct these processes and contribute to anti-developmental outcomes including 'chronic poverty, political instability, low literacy levels, [and] widespread income inequality' (Mahagaonkar, 2008: p. 7). This third and final component of neo-patrimonial systems, therefore, is highly influential in moulding a neo-patrimonial state's prospects for advancing formal capacities or pursuing development (ibid; Goldsmith, 2001: p. 84).

Regime Corruption and 'Institutional Failure'

Neo-patrimonial states are characterised by 'clientelistic political relationships, strong and unconstrained presidents and the use of public resources for political legitimation' (Coppedge et al., 2020: p. 273). While clientelism and presidentialism are variable in their manifestation and implications, the third and final component of these systems, regime corruption, is a 'kind of institutional failure' that can limit the 'responsiveness' of the state and impede 'the implementation of…goals and agendas' (Oluwatobi et al., 2015: pp. 6-7). Where the state is illegitimate or lacking effective institutions, corruption can impede the state's formal capacities, promote anti-developmental outcomes, and reinforce the detriment from informality and insecurity (ibid; Mahagaonkar, 2008: p. 7; Goldsmith, 2001: p. 84). Such processes are not automatic nor are they universal, however; the outcomes from these systems are largely determined by the actions and

priorities of key ruling elites (Goldsmith, 2001: p. 84) and the capacity of formal institutions to surmount such dysfunction (Oluwatobi et al., 2015: pp. 7-8).

As Abu, Karim, and Aziz (2014) found in their study of Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) countries, 'corruption, political instability and economic development appear to cause each other' (p. 50). Specifically, they found a complex relationship between instability, development, and corruption whereby an increase in instability or the resources available to the state, in the absence of necessary formal mechanisms, can contribute to an expansion of corruption 'in the long term' (p. 53). An unstable or illegitimate environment 'destroys physical capital and displaces human capital…[,] disrupts production activity…[,] and encourages the violation of property rights, including lack of guarantee for contracts', contributing to an expansion of corruption and 'adversely affect[ing] the economy' (pp. 56-57). As scholars including Brunetti, Kisunko, and Weder (1998) and Keefer (2007, 2010) have argued, furthermore, corruption is associated with increased insecurity, 'an uncertain environment', impeded capacities for enforcing rules and norms, and 'lower investment and growth' (Keefer, 2007: p. 817; Brunetti, Kisunko, and Weder, 1998: pp. 353-354).

Unbridled regime corruption, in other words, can promote domestic volatility, 'economic mismanagement', and 'poor social service provision', impeding formal capacities and development (Hendrix, 2010: p. 275; Collier and Hoeffler, 2004: p. 567). As Abrahamsen (2000) argued, however, corruption can contribute to 'good governance' by strengthening the informal sectors of the economy and enabling an expansion in domestic economic activity (p. 50). Regime corruption, in the presence of sufficient resources, elite incentivisation, and formal capacities, can improve the distribution of rents and function of the domestic economy (ibid). In the absence of strong formal capacities or within an unstable or illegitimate environment, on the other hand, a corrupt state will likely be characterised by an 'ambiguity of objectives' (Stiglitz, 1989: p. 32). This can further weaken institutions and limit the stability and legitimacy of the state, contributing to and exacerbated by impoverishment, inequality, instability, and inadequate service delivery (ibid; Mahagaonkar, 2008: p. 7).

These characteristics of neo-patrimonialism can weaken a state's rational-legal bureaucratic structures and reinforce institutional dysfunction (Leftwich, 2007: p. 89). Corruption is specifically thought to 'advance opportunistic behavior among economic agents and then increase transaction costs', providing significant hindrances to economic growth and development (Oluwatobi et al., 2015: p. 15). Nye (1967), however, was among the earliest scholars to argue that corruption could be beneficial to development processes, specifically by advancing 'capital formation', 'cutting red tape', and promoting 'entrepreneurship and incentives' (pp. 419-420). Bates (2005), similarly, identified potential benefits from corruption, particularly through providing a more-equal distribution of incomes and strengthening incentives therefor (p. 42). Specifically, Bates (2005) argued that '[f]inancial corruption and the apportionment of privileged access…both create private incentives' for the effective maintenance and implementation of key policy agendas (p. 101). Corruption is potentially detrimental to economic and development processes, but improvements in 'cooperation, trust, and institutional efficiency…can offset' the detriment from this aspect of neo-patrimonialism (Woolcock and Narayan, 2000: p. 238).

As Woolcock and Narayan (2000) argued, endemic corruption can be an important mechanism for reinforcing social capital, but this requires formal institutions that are strong, legitimate, and open to civil input (ibid). Beeson (2009), furthermore, identified developmental states like Japan and China as having been characterised by variable levels and forms of corruption which were endogenous to their states and 'posed little direct threat to the developmental project' (p. 25). Where the operation of regime corruption and application of domestic rents is effectively and endogenously centralised within a state that is formally capable of pursuing key objectives, these systems can thus be instrumental to development processes (ibid; Fukuyama, 2005: pp. 94-103). Where institutions are lacking legitimacy or the trust of citizens, corruption is expected to expand as economic growth contracts (Englebert, 2000a: p. 5). Where corruption is centralised and mobilised through a strong and effective state, on the other hand, these circumstances can generate 'smaller distortionary

effects' (Bardhan, 1997: p. 1325) and contribute to improved economic and administrative capacities (Nye, 1967: pp. 419-420).

Neo-patrimonialism and related systems are thus inherently variable and moulded by the strength and legitimacy of formal institutions, surrounding domestic circumstances, and elite priorities (Mkandawire, 2015: pp. 565-594). As has been evident throughout the propositions outlined above, these conditions, though potentially detrimental to state processes and development, have not been universal or automatic hindrances in and of themselves (ibid; Beeson, 2009: p. 25). Where states are insecure, illegitimate, or lacking the necessary institutional strength, endemic neo-patrimonialism and related conditions are expected to wield greater influence (ibid; Oluwatobi et al., 2015: p. 8). Development within such contexts requires expanded legitimacy and formal capacities able to counteract the informal mechanisms related to clientelism, presidentialism, and regime corruption (Englebert, 2000a: p. 90). A state that is able to extract and mobilise resources, coerce support for or acquiescence to its rule, and administrate effectively, in other words, is more likely to surmount the dysfunction from endemic informality, manufacture legitimacy, and pursue development (Hanson and Sigman, 2019: pp. 7-8).

2c. Formal State Capacities in Neo-Patrimonial Contexts

This chapter is centred on exploring and synthesising the theoretical propositions and contentions moulding this thesis' analysis of divergent performance and outcomes among the neo-patrimonial states of equatorial Africa. As Section 2b outlined, neo-patrimonialism is characterised by the operation of endemic clientelism, presidentialism, and regime corruption and can, given sufficient conditions, weaken formal institutions and impede development. The impact from these systems, importantly, is not universal nor are they inherently deleterious for development. As will be made clear in this section, the extractive, coercive, and administrative capacities of the state are central to its prospects for avoiding informal dysfunction and pursuing development. The formal capacities vested in a state are mutually dependent and integral to its ability to be productive, secure, and

legitimate (Hendrix, 2010: pp. 273-277). Put simply, a neo-patrimonial state is more likely to pursue

development if it can productively mobilise resources, remain stable, and perform key rational-legal

bureaucratic functions (ibid).   While specific conceptualisations vary widely, scholars including

Acemoglu, Johnson, and Robinson (2001), Fearon and Laitin (2003), DeRouen and Sobek (2004), Collier

and Hoeffler (2004), Hendrix (2010), and Hanson and Sigman (2019) offer important propositions and

consistencies that are central to the perspective employed here and in Chapter 4.

As Hendrix (2010) argued, formal capacities are 'conspicuous both in [their] absence and

presence'; stronger, more capable states are less likely to experience civil conflict and more likely to

wield institutions conducive to the pursuit of development (pp. 273-277). States that exercise control

over their constituents, coherently strategize, and administrate effectively are expected to be more

successful (Hanson and Sigman, 2019: p. 5). Neo-patrimonialism, on the other hand, can diminish the

legitimacy, security, and capacity of the state (Englebert, 2000a: pp. 5-9). Where these systems

weaken bureaucratic structures or challenge the 'rule of law' and 'the trust of citizens in their

institutions', the economic environment and pursuit of development are expected to be more volatile

and constrained (ibid). A state able to legitimately extract revenues, identify and coerce potential

rivals, and 'redistribute resources and power', on the other hand, is more likely to be productive and

secure (Hendrix, 2010: p. 273). In other words, states able to 'accommodate' or 'repress' domestic

actors are more likely to be stable, legitimate, and formally capable (ibid). When explaining divergent

performance among ostensibly similar states, the capacity of formal institutions is thus integral to the

manifestation of neo-patrimonialism and variable modern outcomes from these systems

(Mkandawire, 2015: p.578; Englebert, 2000a: p. 90).

While the personalisation of revenue management inherent to neo-patrimonial systems can

potentially inhibit the state's formal capacities (Toulabor, 1995: p. 108), the mobilisation and

application of key resources are integral to the productivity of domestic economic processes (Odero,

2017: p. 95). Central to these processes is the extent to which citizens 'recognise the state's demand

for taxation as appropriate or legitimate' (Lieberman, 2010: p. 38). The absence of a legitimacy or security to rule or effective administrative structures can contribute to the further entrenchment of neo-patrimonialism and perpetuate dysfunction inimical to the construction of strong formal capacities (ibid; Englebert, 2000a: p. 90; Cammack and Kelsall, 2010: pp. 3-5). Specifically, legitimacy has been viewed by scholars like Englebert (2000a) as central to the capacity of the state, the impact thereon from neo-patrimonialism, and its long-term economic performance (pp. 5-9). Likewise, McLoughlin (2015) argued that the 'provision of vital public services' such as 'health, education, water, and sanitation' is a 'key source of legitimacy' (pp. 341-343). The extent to which the state is able to extract, mobilise, and productively employ domestic resources is thus endogenously related to its legitimacy, with the absence of a legitimate authority to rule undermining capacity and a lack of capacity or resource distribution likewise subtracting from the legitimacy of the state (ibid).

Central to these processes is the overall stability of the state and its 'ability…to continue functioning' (Gilley, 2006: pp. 51-52), with civil conflict or a forceful ascension to power potentially promoting crises of legitimacy (Bratton and Van de Walle, 1994: p. 480). Legitimacy and capacity are thus mutually dependent, central to development processes, and moulded by the extent to which the state is able to remain stable to pursue long-term objectives and deliver key services. A state unable to extract sufficient resources, maintain domestic security, or administrate effectively through formal institutions, in other words, is unlikely to be legitimate, which is likely to further undermine its formal capacity and impede its long-term prospects. States' extractive, coercive, and administrative capacities are thus intimately connected, mutually influential, and crucial for a state's ability to pursue development (Hanson and Sigman, 2019: pp. 7-8; Arriola, 2009: pp. 1341-1342). Extractive capacities, firstly, are central to these processes; a state that is unable to mobilise domestic resources effectively and productively is more likely to succumb to institutional weakness, instability, and underdevelopment (Hendrix, 2010: p. 276).

Extractive Capacities and Economic Productivity

The revenues extracted by the state have been identified as central to long-term economic growth (Odero, 2017: p. 95) and formal capacities for regulation and coercion (Lieberman, 2010: p. 38). States that can extract greater revenues are more likely to remain stable and pursue development than those unable to mobilise necessary resources (Hendrix, 2010: p. 276). Instability or informality can weaken the state's formal capacities and narrow the avenues for revenue collection, management, and distribution (Arriola, 2009: pp. 1341-1342). Such conditions are 'likely to foster a short-term expected political time horizon' and promote 'economically inefficient actions' (Fosu, 2003: p. 71). The ability of a given state to mobilise and productively apply domestic resources is thus central to the security and legitimacy of the state (Englebert, 2000b: p. 23) and the extent to which it is able to employ domestic rents toward developmental ends (Omeje, 2008b: p. 10). The extractive capacities vested within a given state, in other words, are central to development processes and the state's ability to overcome the dysfunction bred by endemic neo-patrimonialism (Odero, 2017: p. 95; Hendrix, 2010: pp. 273-277; Erdmann and Engel, 2007: p. 105; Englebert, 2000a: p. 90).

Extractive capacities are associated with the state's ability to mobilise sufficient revenues, tax effectively and legitimately, and collect necessary information (Hendrix, 2010: p. 275). As findings from scholars like Kugler and Arbetman (1997) and Feng, Kugler, and Zak (2000) have demonstrated, 'states that extract more tax revenue are more capable than states that extract less…[and are] associated with a lower likelihood of conflict onset' (Hendrix, 2010: p. 276). Put simply, the ability of the state to mobilise and productively employ domestic resources is central to its prospects for development (Odero, 2017: p. 95). Rentier scholars like Chaudhry (1989), Karl (1997), Ross (1999), and Omeje (2008a, b), however, have argued that the revenues generated by, or relative wealth of, a given state can obscure limitations in its formal capacities and specifically its ability to legitimately mobilise taxes from its population (Omeje, 2008b: pp. 10-14). A state exhibiting high growth without the ability or legitimacy to extract tax revenues, therefore, is less capable than one possessing the authority to effectively, consistently, and justifiably tax its population (ibid; Hendrix, 2010: p. 275).

Where a state is illegitimate or insecure in its authority, there is likely to be 'greater uncertainty regarding future economic policy' which can 'adversely affect investment and, consequently, physical capital accumulation' (Aisen and Veiga, 2011: p. 17). Chronic instability or civil conflict, therefore, can be deleterious for the formal capacity of the state and its prospects for economic growth or development (ibid; Arriola, 2009: p. 1342). Similarly, the informality and personalistic distribution of resources characteristic of neo-patrimonial systems can impede the state's ability to employ formal mechanisms toward the collection of taxes or mobilisation of domestic resources (Toulabor, 1995: p. 108). Where a state lacks the formal capacity to mobilise necessary revenues, prospects for development are likely to be limited as economic processes remain centred on the extraction and distribution of domestic rents among a narrow set of elites (Mahdavy, 1970: p. 431). Instability and informality, furthermore, can promote 'economically inefficient actions', inhibit the coherent pursuit of long-term objectives, and constrain economic growth, with 'exports…likely to bear the major brunt of the adverse effects' (Fosu, 2003: pp. 70-71).

Informality or periods of civil conflict are thus likely to impact negatively upon the export profile and economic makeup of a given country, with stability and legitimacy central to the productivity and efficiency of the economy (ibid; Collier and Hoeffler, 2004: p. 574). A lack of favourable domestic circumstances can impede 'physical capital accumulation' (Aisen and Veiga, 2011: p. 17), the distribution of public resources (Omeje, 2008b: p. 10), and long-term prospects for economic growth (Arriola, 2009: pp. 1341-1342). Where the state's actions and demands for taxation are viewed as legitimate, on the other hand, it is more likely to be capable of coherently managing and distributing domestic resources toward long-term objectives (Kelsall, 2011: p. 82; Lieberman, 2010: p. 38). The extractive capacities and legitimacy vested within a given state's formal institutions, in other words, are integral to its ability to remain stable, strengthen formal institutions, or pursue development (ibid; Toulabor, 1995: p. 108). Extraction of resources in the absence of mechanisms for their productive application, however, can limit the state's ability to pursue long-term priorities or deliver economic reform (Knight, 2014: p. 1338).

Extractive capacities are critical for 'policy making, the monitoring of economic activity, the administration of complex laws, and judicial and punitive enforcement' (Lieberman, 2002: p. 92), but the expansion of these capacities in the absence of domestic security or a legitimate authority to rule can perpetuate inequality, entrench neo-patrimonial operations, and promote civil conflict (Cammack and Kelsall, 2010: p. 4). Where institutions are stable, legitimate, and effective, the state is more likely to employ domestic resources equitably (Besley, Ilzetzki, and Persson, 2013: pp. 218-219). The security, legitimacy, and coercive capacities of the state, therefore, are vital; a state lacking these capacities is likely to employ 'a shorter-term expected political time horizon' and be less effective and efficient in its pursuit of development (Fosu, 2003: pp. 70-71; Englebert, 2000a: p. 90). The legitimacy of the state and its ability to remain secure are crucial for its formal capacity, the operation of neo-patrimonialism, and its ability to pursue or sustain development (Dincecco, Fenske, and Onorato, 2015: p. 2; Hendrix, 2010: p. 277; Cohen, 1988: p. 10).

Coercive Capacity and (In)Stability

The legitimacy, stability, and coercive capacity of the state are central to its prospects for advancing formal institutions, surmounting informal dysfunction, or pursuing development (ibid). Where the state is lacking in legitimacy or the formal capacity to manufacture security, it is more likely to fall victim to neo-patrimonial dysfunction and be impeded in its overall capacity to perform core functions (Cammack and Kelsall, 2010: p. 4; Englebert, 2000a: p. 90). States' coercive capacities, therefore, are central to their abilities to productively employ domestic resources, manufacture strong formal institutions, or pursue development (Cohen, 1988: p. 10). An expansion of these capacities can 'prevent civil war' (Dincecco, Fenske, and Onarato, 2015: p. 2) and improve 'fiscal capacity' (p. 13). Mechanisms for coercion in the absence of formal capacities for extraction or administration, however, can be limited in their impact and potentially lead to further conflict (Hendrix, 2010: p. 277; Gupta, de Mello, and Sharan, 2001).

As Aisen and Veiga (2011) argued, 'political instability is associated with greater uncertainty', inhibiting the implementation of economic policies and the accumulation of 'physical capital' (p. 17). A state unable to productively mobilise and employ domestic resources is less likely to remain stable and more likely to succumb to neo-patrimonial dysfunction (Omeje, 2008b: pp. 10-14). The economic production of a given state, likewise, is 'highly correlated' with 'military, administrative, and bureaucratic capacities' (Hendrix, 2010: p. 274), revealing the mutually reinforcing relationship between states' extractive, coercive, and administrative capacities (ibid; Hanson and Sigman, 2019: pp. 7-8). As Acemoglu, Chaves, Osafo-Kwaako, and Robinson (2013) argued 'a weak state is one which does not possess a monopoly on the use of violence, does not have a modern bureaucracy, and is unable to raise taxes' (p. 7). Where any of these capacities are limited, the state is likely to be constrained in its performance of core functions or strengthening of formal institutions (pp. 1-7).

The security, legitimacy, and coercive capacity of a given state are thus central to its prospects for extracting revenues, administrating effectively, or pursuing development (ibid; Michalopoulous and Papaioannou, 2015a: p. 33). A state unable to establish a 'monopoly on the use of violence' is likely to be lacking in necessary formal capacities or legitimacy, relegating it to cycles of insecurity and informality (ibid). Civil conflict, furthermore, is associated with a deepening of poverty and can be self-perpetuating in the absence of the necessary formal coercive capacities (Elbadawi and Ndung'u, 2005: p. 20). Where the state is lacking such capacities, the operation of endemic neo-patrimonialism can constrain its formal structures, limit its legitimacy, and promote divisions within society that can prompt civil conflict and institutional dysfunction (Englebert, 2000a: p. 104). Where authority is centralised, but the development of society is slow, legitimacy is 'partially determined by…coercive capacities' (Cohen, 1988: p. 17). A state that has not delivered 'popular benefits' is likely to rely on an expansion in its coercive capacity to counteract discontent and avoid potential challenges to the authority of ruling elites (p. 10).

In the absence of the delivery of necessary services or pursuit of development, expansions in coercive capacity can be potentially deleterious for legitimacy as rulers seek to employ their 'monopoly of coercive power to obtain the maximum take in taxes and other exactions' (Olson, 1993: p. 569). While coercive capacities can benefit the security of the regime and enable the pursuit of development (Cohen, 1988: pp. 10-17), these benefits are limited and dependent upon the priorities, formal capacities, and legitimacy of the state (Olson, 1993: p. 569). As the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) (2010) put it, '[c]apacity and legitimacy are distinct but interdependent. Legitimacy strengthens capacity because the state can rely mainly on non-coercive authority...[which] allows states to better manage competing interests and to design and implement policies that are responsive to citizens' needs' (p. 20). A state that is legitimate and possesses a monopoly over the use of force within its territory, in other words, is more likely to manufacture strong institutions, overcome informality, and pursue development (ibid; Acemoglu, Chaves, Osafo-Kwaako, and Robinson, 2013: p. 7; Olson, 1993: p. 569).

As Mann and Berry (2015) identified in studying Rwanda, successful neo-patrimonial states have been characterised by 'the coercive manner in which developmental state policies have been implemented' (pp. 35-36). While such coercive tactics 'can potentially fuel conflict' in the absence of legitimacy or necessary formal rational-legal capacities (Gould and Winters, 2013: p. 317), a state able to identify and coerce potential rivals and 'redistribute resources and power' will be more stable, secure, and consistent in its pursuit of development (Hendrix, 2010: p. 273). Where ruling elites are able to establish legitimacy, manufacture formal capacities for coercion, and 'expand their patronage-based coalitions', they are more likely to surmount or avoid instability, strengthen formal institutions, and pursue development (Arriola, 2009: p. 1340). Put simply, neo-patrimonial development rests on 'the character and capacity of the state' (Leftwich, 1993: p. 620). If a state is incapable of coercing support or performing core duties, it is less likely to be legitimate or secure and more likely to fall victim to informal dysfunction or instability (Arriola, 2009: pp. 1340-1342).

Expansions in coercive capacity in the absence of strong extractive and administrative capacities can drive further conflict and instability (Gould and Winters, 2013: p. 317). Such capacities have been central to preceding neo-patrimonial developmental states (Mann and Berry, 2015: pp. 35-36), but mechanisms for coercion in the absence of those for surveying the populace or promoting the productive distribution of resources and power will be limited in their benefits for a given state (ibid; Hendrix, 2010: pp. 273-275). Where a state fails to construct strong rational-legal bureaucratic structures, it will likely rely disproportionately on its coercive capacities and struggle to establish a monopoly over the use of force (ibid). A state that has demonstrated significant capacities for extraction and coercion through sustained economic growth and security, on the other hand, is likely to have manufactured strong rational-legal bureaucratic structures and 'administrative capacity' (Hanson and Sigman, 2019: pp. 7-8; Collier and Hoeffler, 2004; Englebert, 2000a: p. 45).

Administrative Capacities and Rational-Legal Legitimacy

Neo-patrimonialism and instability can limit private investment, promote the 'inefficient allocation of resources', and hinder economic growth (Ndulu and Van de Walle, 1996: p. 6). The resulting 'uncertainties' can constrain economic processes (ibid) and, importantly, are largely indicative of distinct limitations in the state's 'administrative capacity' (Englebert, 2000a: p. 45). While coercive and extractive capacities are likewise central to these processes, the presence of strong rational-legal bureaucratic structures is integral to the performance of a neo-patrimonial state (ibid). The expansion of a state's administrative capacities can promote the legitimate institutionalisation of long-term objectives, which can reinforce extractive and coercive capacities and serve to advance the formal capacity of the state to pursue development (Hendrix, 2010: pp. 274-275). The administrative capacities of a given state, therefore, are central to its overall performance, the specific manifestation of neo-patrimonialism, and its potential for long-term development (ibid; Hanson and Sigman, 2019: pp. 7-8; Englebert, 2000a: p. 45).

A state's formal administrative capacities are indicative of its capabilities for effectively implementing long-term policies, surveying the populace, and enforcing key rules and norms (Hendrix, 2010: p. 276). Where these are lacking, the state is less likely to be secure and legitimate and more likely to succumb to neo-patrimonialism dysfunction (Englebert, 2000a: p. 45). If a state is stable and legitimate, however, it is more likely to be coherent, effective, and characterised by strong administrative capacities (Besley, Ilzetzki, and Persson, 2013: pp. 218-219). States 'with more capable bureaucracies experience fewer civil conflicts' and are better prepared for the coherent pursuit of long-term objectives (Hendrix, 2010: p. 277). A state that can enforce rules and norms, strengthen citizens' faith in formal institutions, and administrate effectively is more likely to be stable, surmount informal dysfunction related to neo-patrimonialism, and be productive and consistent in its pursuit of development (ibid; Englebert, 2000a: pp. 5-12).

Administrative capacities have been identified as integral to the success of developmental states in Africa, Asia and elsewhere (Mkandawire, 2015: pp. 565-594; Howell, 2006: p. 275; Johnson, 1982: pp. 265-274). Scholars like Johnson (1982), Wade (1988, 1990), Amsden (1989, 1992), Weiss (2000), Chang (2004), and Howell (2006), specifically, have pointed toward such capacities and 'the strategic role of the state in guiding the processes of industrialization and modernization' (Howell, 2006: p. 275). Chalmers Johnson (1982), for instance, argued that 'administrative guidance has done more than any other…practice' to differentiate the Japanese state from concurrent developmental states, reinforce its active pursuit of industrialisation, and ensure the coherent enforcement of domestic rules and norms (p. 265). Such processes rely upon the quality and endogeneity of domestic institutions, without which informality will operate unimpeded, the state will be unable to 'enforce property rights', and 'economic mechanisms that will lead to institutional persistence' will be weakened (Acemoglu, Johnson, and Robinson, 2001: p. 1376).

The state thus requires substantial and endogenous administrative capacities to enable the long-term coherent pursuit of key objectives relevant to economic growth or development (ibid;

Howell, 2006: p. 275). As Mkandawire (2001) argued, the state's formal capacity is moulded by 'institutional, technical, administrative and political' factors which require 'the autonomy of the state from social forces so that it can use these capacities to devise long-term economic policies unencumbered by the claims of myopic private interests' (p. 290). As Gennaioli and Voth (2012) found, furthermore, 'administrative centralization' has promoted long-term improvements in states' extractive capacities and productivity 'on a large scale' (p. 10). Where administrative capacities are expanded, those for extraction and coercion, and overall prospects for the active long-term pursuit of development, are expected to follow suit (ibid; Hanson and Sigman, 2019: pp. 7-8; Evans, 2011: pp. 10-16). The 'modernisation of administrative life', in other words, 'is a key, but often neglected, aspect of the development process in general and policy implementation in particular' (Pritchett, Woolcock, and Andrews, 2012: p. 3).

Peter Evans (2011) argued that 'more efficient administrative structures ultimately depend on new forms of embeddedness' between the state and society, making 'state-society ties…the crux of the problem of constructing a twenty-first century developmental state' (p. 10). As Evans (2011) demonstrated in the cases of Brazil and South Africa, where institutions are capable and endogenous to the surrounding society they can contribute to 'capability expansion' and development (pp. 13-16). Likewise, administrative capacities have long been found to aid in the construction of legitimacy (Willis, 1988: pp. 87-88) and viewed as central to the overall strength and stability of the state (Crook, 1989: p. 213; Jackson and Rosberg, 1982: p. 5). '[A]dministrative *centralization*' can promote 'accountability' and 'foster the implementation of socioeconomic reforms' (Gennaioli and Rainer, 2007: p. 219; emphasis in original). Strong centralised administrative structures, therefore, are integral to the overall formal capacity of the state and its ability to overcome neo-patrimonial dysfunction or pursue development (ibid; Hendrix, 2010: p. 277; Englebert, 2000a: p. 45).

The efficacy of and balance between extractive, coercive, and administrative capacities are central to the overall formal capacity of the state and its likelihood of overcoming endemic informality

or pursuing development (Hanson and Sigman, 2019: pp. 7-8; Collier and Hoeffler, 2004; Englebert, 2000a: p. 45). The legitimacy and formal capacity of state institutions are central to the active pursuit of development (Evans, 2011: pp. 10-16) and have proven crucial to the success of preceding neo-patrimonial developmental states (Mann and Berry, 2015: pp. 35-36). While this thesis is centred on assessment of formal and informal operations, importantly, analysis of these processes is fundamentally aimed at testing explanations for the disparate performance and outcomes among ostensibly similar neo-patrimonial states. As has stood out in the propositions discussed to this point, the impact from these systems is far from universal and development outcomes within such contexts vary depending on the specific manifestation of neo-patrimonialism, the formal capacities of the state, and the surrounding domestic circumstances (ibid; Mkandawire, 2015: pp. 565-594; Cammack and Kelsall, 2010: pp. 2-6).

2d. Defining and Capturing Neo-Patrimonial Development

The purpose of this chapter is to establish the theoretical basis for this thesis' analysis of equatorial Africa and ground within the relevant literatures the processes and explanations to be emphasised, serving an integral role in the theory guided process tracing methods employed to explain the region's divergent outcomes. Toward these ends, this chapter has, to this point, discussed and synthesised literatures related to neo-patrimonialism and state capacity, emphasising the case-specific interaction between and outcomes from different forms of informality and formality. As has been evident throughout this chapter so far, the manifestation of and impact from neo-patrimonialism are inherently variable and depend upon the specific domestic circumstances and formal capacities moulding state actions (Mkandawire, 2015: pp. 565-578; Englebert, 2000a: p. 90). Given this variability, a diverse range of scholars including Uricoechea (1980), Roett (1984), Hutchcroft (1998), Bach (2011), and Mkandawire (2001, 2015) have all pointed to a similar diversity of implications from these conditions for long-term development.

While potentially constraining formal capacities, the inherent variability to these dynamics has yielded a similar variability to neo-patrimonial states' ability to pursue development (Mkandawire, 2015: pp. 565-570). These informal systems can serve as impediments to the development process, but their specific manifestation and impact on the formal capacities, legitimacy, and priorities of the state ultimately wield significant influence over development outcomes (ibid; Kelsall and Booth, 2010: pp. 3-7; Fosu, 2003: pp. 70-71; Englebert, 2000b: p. 23). Endemic clientelism, presidentialism, and regime corruption can reduce the state 'to a merely instrumental role' (Englebert, 2000a: p. 5). Where the state can avoid such dysfunction and productively manage domestic resources and patronage, however, it is more likely to be legitimate and coherent in its pursuit of development (Arriola, 2009: p. 1340). Neo-patrimonial developmentalism, in other words, relies on the state's capacities and priorities and the extent to which these align around the coherent pursuit of key long-term objectives (Leftwich, 1993: p. 620).

In assessing the performance of neo-patrimonial states, therefore, their specific outcomes in pursuing and delivering political, economic, and social development are of central concern. Neo-patrimonial developmentalism requires a case-specific balance between centralisation, 'inclusiveness', legitimacy, and 'disciplined rent-collection' (Cammack and Kelsall, 2010: pp. 2-6). In the absence of endogenous political systems, political elites can be 'encouraged….to take a short-term view of rent allocation', limiting the likelihood of the state coherently pursuing long-term objectives (Kelsall and Booth, 2010: p. 27). The first sub-section to follow, in this vein, will build on the work of scholars like Hegre et al. (2001), DeRouen and Sobek (2004), Hendrix (2010), and Hanson and Sigman (2019) to synthesise insights surrounding states' formal political development. This will be followed by similar emphases on the economic performance and delivery of key social needs within such contexts, but the pursuit of these long-term objectives can be impeded significantly by the absence of legitimate and accountable political systems (Englebert, 2000a: pp. 5-6).

Political Development and Civil Liberties

Political systems are 'those structured social relationships in which values are authoritatively allocated, or in which it is determined "who gets what, when, how"' (Morrison and Stevenson, 1971: p. 347). Political development, therefore, is not only relevant to the distribution of power within a given society but is likewise linked to the manifestation of informality, the distribution of resources, and the extent to which these are aimed toward the long-term pursuit of development (ibid; Feng, 2001: p. 288). As Feng (2001) argued, 'countries that have difficulties initiating or executing successful development programs are typically those with political systems that make it difficult to develop freedom, with governments that do not have consistent policy strength, or with political regimes that are simply unstable' (p. 288). In other words, a lack of stability, coherence, or incentivisation among the state and ruling elites can impede development and promote informality (ibid).

Samuel P. Huntington (1965) defined political development as 'the institutionalization of political organizations and procedures', centred on the '*rationalization*', *'national integration*', and 'competitiveness' of the state (pp. 386-388; emphasis in original). Building from this foundation, scholars including Tilly (1978), Hegre et al. (2001), DeRouen and Sobek (2004), and Hendrix (2010) have treated states' political systems as central to their formal capacities for development and ability to remain stable (Hendrix, 2010: pp. 276-277; Hegre et al., 2001: pp. 33-34). Where a state is unable to manufacture the necessary mechanisms for legitimacy, accountability, and elite incentivisation, it is more likely to succumb to institutional dysfunction and less likely to coherently pursue long-term development (Ghebremusse, 2015: p. 492; Kelsall and Booth, 2010: p. 27; Cammack and Kelsall, 2010: pp. 2-6). Where the state is legitimate and insulated from anti-social interests, on the other hand, it is more likely to overcome informality, expand formal capacities, and pursue development (Kelsall and Booth, 2010: pp. 3-7; Mkandawire, 2001: p. 290). The political development of the state and elite behaviours promoted by these systems, therefore, are integral to a neo-patrimonial state's prospects for development (Goldsmith, 2001: p. 84).

The relationship between neo-patrimonialism, political systems, and development is not entirely straightforward, however; '*vigorous* multi-party competition', for instance, can promote 'a short-term view of rent allocation' among ruling elites and potentially inhibit the pursuit of neo-patrimonial development (Kelsall and Booth, 2010: p. 27; emphasis in original). Where the political systems employed are not endogenous to the surrounding society or conducive to capable and legitimate formal institutions, supposed political development can be counterproductive and serve to further entrench informal dysfunction (ibid; Oluwatobi et al., 2015: p. 8; Fukuyama, 2005: pp. 94-103). As Englebert (2000b) argued, '[f]ormal institutions…will be more likely to be more efficient…the more they are congruent with informal institutions and norms, the more they are endogenous to their societies, and the more they are historically embedded in domestic social relations' (pp. 10-11). Political development thus requires strong, endogenous, and legitimate institutions capable of holding elites accountable and promoting the productive use of resources (ibid; Omeje, 2008b: p. 10).

A 'propensity for systemic political crises' can weaken ruling elites' authority and limit their ability to coherently organise the productive long-term management and application of domestic resources (Englebert, 2000b: p. 12). Stability, legitimacy, and 'inclusiveness' are thus crucial for the state's ability to overcome informal dysfunction or pursue development (ibid; Cammack and Kelsall, 2010: pp. 2-6). Democratisation in and of itself, furthermore, is not inherently beneficial to these processes (Evans, 2004: p. 37). The expansion of formal capacities or pursuit of development requires systems which are endogenous to the surrounding society and conducive to the coherent pursuit of long-term objectives (ibid; Fukuyama, 2005: pp. 94-103). A legitimate state is thus one which boasts strong formal institutions, wields a legitimacy to authority gained through civic trust, and is 'less repressive…of citizens' civil liberties' (Englebert, 2000a: p. 154). Beyond the specific systems employed, then, political development is centred on '[t]he level of political and civil rights, the stability of such rights dispensations, and the efficiency with which political and civil institutions function' (Fedderke and Klitgaard, 1998: p. 460).

Integral to the delivery of civil liberties and provision of citizens' basic rights are the resources available to the state, the productivity of the allocation thereof, and the extent to which these are centred on the long-term pursuit of key socioeconomic objectives (ibid; Arriola, 2009: p. 1345; Englebert, 2000a: p. 154). Where the state is characterised by an absence of 'political freedom' or the presence of 'political instability, and policy uncertainty', these conditions are expected to weaken 'government capacity' and impede the productive application of domestic resources (Feng, 2001: p. 288). Political, economic, and social improvements within a given state are thus mutually dependent and can combine to mould domestic patterns relevant to stability and overall development (Alcántar-Toledo and Venieris, 2014: p. 316). Where multi-party democracy has been institutionalised in the absence of adequate resources, formal capacities, or sufficiently incentivised political elites, such progress is unlikely to benefit the overall capabilities or development of the populace (Ghebremusse, 2015: p. 492; Kelsall and Booth, 2010: p. 27; Evans, 2004: p. 39).

Economic growth and the productive application of domestic resources are vital for the overall development of a state (Kelsall, 2018a: p. 29; Acemoglu, 2005: p. 432; Fosu, 2002b: p. 9). Neo-patrimonialism can distort the distribution of resources and manufacture an institutionalised emphasis on the maintenance of power at the expense of the productive distribution of domestic rents (Englebert, 2000a: p. 5). These patterns can weaken the formal capacities of the state, promote anti-social political systems, and impede the pursuit of development (Omeje, 2008b: p. 10). While such outcomes are not inherent or automatic, importantly, the nature, productivity, and allocation of domestic resources is integral to the benefits to be derived from formal transformations or other forms of development (Mkandawire, 2015: p. 578; Kelsall and Booth, 2010: pp. 3-7; Arriola, 2009: p. 1345). In assessing the impact from a state's neo-patrimonialism, formal capacities, or political development, therefore, the economic development of the state has long been viewed as central to these processes, the alleviation of poverty, and a state's overall prospects for development (Mberu et al., 2017: p. 324; Acemoglu, 2005: p. 432; Fosu, 2002b: p. 9).

The manifestation and operation of neo-patrimonialism within a given context can impede the mobilisation and distribution of domestic resources, narrowing the benefits to be derived from economic growth and limiting overall prospects for development (Kelsall and Booth, 2010: pp. 3-7; Omeje, 2008b: pp. 9-10; Englebert, 2000a: p. 5). Where the state is capable and legitimate, however, economic growth is central to its ability to expand formal capacities, remain secure, and meet citizens' basic needs (Fosu, 2002b: p. 9). As Acemoglu (2005) argued, '[e]verything else equal, greater economic growth is good for those holding power. It will create greater returns on the assets that they possess, and also greater incomes that they can tax or expropriate' (p. 432). While economic growth alone 'is…not sufficient' for development (Fosu, 2002b: p. 9), a state that is able to mobilise significant domestic resources and actively deliver long-term economic growth is more likely to remain secure and pursue legitimate objectives (Acemoglu, 2005: p. 432). Economic improvements thus provide an important lens into a given state's prospects for and progress toward development (Ngague and Manfred, 2015: pp. 655-660; Evans, 2011: pp. 6-10; Fong, 2009: pp. 473-477).

Within neo-patrimonial contexts, the 'disciplined' application of domestic rents and 'centralised patronage' is central to the formal capacities of the state and its likelihood of coherently pursuing productive long-term objectives (Kelsall, 2018a: p. 29; Cammack and Kelsall, 2010: pp. 2-6). Such progress requires 'strong bureaucratic integrity' and formal institutions capable of effectively regulating economic activity, enforcing rules and norms, and holding elites accountable (Vaughan and Gebremichael, 2011: p. 8). Where states are formally capable, resources are 'abundant', and elites are incentivised to coherently pursue key long-term objectives, they are more likely to surmount the dysfunction from endemic informality and enable the pursuit of development (ibid; Arriola, 2009: p. 1345). While metrics for economic growth may not capture important aspects of development like 'high levels of unemployment, poor housing and poverty' (Carmody and Owusu, 2016: p. 70), therefore, they provide insight into potential 'low productivity' and the overall quality and coherence

of the state's efforts to advance domestic interests (Barrett and Upton, 2013: pp. 329-331; Vaughan and Gebremichael, 2011: pp. 8-9).

Where neo-patrimonialism distorts the state into 'a set of resources' employed toward the maintenance of rulers' authority, economic growth is expected to be limited and prospects for expanding formal capacities or pursuing development are expected to follow suit (Englebert, 2000a: p. 5). Where ruling elites are sufficiently incentivised and promote the productive allocation of resources, on the other hand, economic growth can foster the long-term pursuit of development (Ghebremusse, 2015: p. 492; Omeje, 2008b: pp. 9-10). A given state's prospects, therefore, largely rest on economic processes and the extent to which growth is distributed productively and efficiently (Mberu et al., 2017: p. 324). As Omeje (2008b) summarily argued, however, 'developing economies with high rate of dependence on extraction and export of natural resources have a correspondingly high propensity to corruption, poor governance, mass poverty, societal fragmentation and violent conflicts' (p. 14). Economic growth in the absence of domestic reinvestment or with an exclusively external orientation can thus exacerbate the dysfunction from endemic neo-patrimonialism and impede the pursuit of development (pp. 10-14).

Underdevelopment and specifically the persistence of slums conditions in sub-Saharan Africa have come to be associated with 'scarce livelihood opportunities for the poor, exposure to pernicious health conditions, and low access to social services' (Mberu et al., 2017: p. 324). Economic development, therefore, cannot be focused purely on the 'stages of economic growth' identified by early scholars like Harrod (1939), Domar (1946), Solow (1956, 1970), and Rostow (1959, 1990) or a narrow emphasis on 'long run growth' and 'standard neoclassical conditions' (Easterly, 1997: p. 2; Solow, 1956: p. 66). Rather, economic development, particularly amidst endemic neo-patrimonialism, requires the productive and coherent mobilisation and distribution of domestic resources, strong formal state capacities, and elite incentivisation toward such ends (Mberu et al., 2017: p. 324; Debos, 2011: p. 426; Hendrix, 2010: p. 277). Where economic growth is impressive, but the state is stricken

by informality, insecurity, or institutional dysfunction, the benefits for the populace will be limited (Omeje, 2008b: pp. 10-14).

As a population comes to be starved of vital resources or opportunities for economic advancement, 'slum incidence' is expected to increase as the 'manifestation of underinvestment' becomes increasingly prevalent within citizens' day-to-day lives (Fox, 2014: pp. 191-193). Such conditions have 'been linked to the inability…to promote the level and type of economic growth that would hasten the reduction of poverty' (Mberu et al., 2017: p. 324). Economic stagnation or underdevelopment can thus be self-perpetuating and serve to deepen the extent and manifestation of impoverishment or underdevelopment within a given context (ibid). Where the state is formally 'capable', able 'to pursue collective goals coherently', and characterised by a 'public discussion and interchange', however, it is more likely to deliver key services and actively pursue development (Evans, 2011: pp. 9-10; Evans, 2004: p. 31). Within a capable and legitimate context, an increase in economic activity or domestic incomes can contribute to similar improvements in meeting citizens' basic needs or expanding 'capabilities' (Evans, 2011: p. 6). If the state wields 'efficient administrative structures' and an 'embeddedness' within society, economic growth can be crucial for the pursuit of development (pp. 9-10).

Economic growth 'is a necessary…condition' for development, but it is 'not sufficient' in the absence of strong formal institutions and a coherent drive to apply the benefits derived toward developmental ends (Fosu, 2002b: p. 9). While economic growth can be helpful '[e]verything else equal', increased national income in the absence of stability, formally capable institutions, or incentivised elites is unlikely to promote significant expansion of citizens' capabilities or provision of basic needs (Evans, 2011: pp. 6-10; Acemoglu, 2005: p. 432). The active and successful pursuit of development, therefore, requires not only the growth of the economy, but the application of garnered resources toward increased domestic 'productivity', 'infrastructural development', and citizens' basic needs (Barrett and Upton, 2013: pp. 329-331). Development, particularly in neo-patrimonial contexts,

requires more than just 'abundant' resources (Arriola, 2009: p. 1345). The legitimacy, capacity, and longevity of the state are largely moulded by the extent to which resources have been applied productively and toward the delivery of social or 'human' development (UNDP, 2020; Evans, 2011: pp. 6-10; Englebert, 2000b: pp. 10-11).

Social and 'Human' Development Outcomes

Economic growth in the absence of capable formal institutions, incentivised elites, or legitimate priorities is unlikely to benefit the populace or contribute to social development (ibid; Evans, 2011: pp. 9-10). Where the state is characterised by insecurity or a lack of legitimacy, it will struggle to 'deliver the goods' or incentivise elites to coherently pursue key long-term objectives (Englebert, 2000a: pp. 5-6). A state that possesses 'capable public bureaucracies' and 'embeddedness' with the surrounding society, on the other hand, is likely to employ an increase in economic activity toward the pursuit of key objectives relevant to the health and 'capabilities' of its populace (Evans, 2011: pp. 6-10). As La Porta et al. (1999) argued, '[g]overnment performance of a given country should be assessed…by evaluating the quality of public good provision such as schooling, infant mortality, literacy, and infrastructure' (p. 226). Rather than depending on 'just high expenditures', therefore, 'well-functioning' states are able to deliver key services and coherently apply formal institutions toward such ends (ibid).

In short, improvements in citizens' 'physical quality of life' should be the emphasis of development processes and the evaluation thereof (Mbaku, 1988: p. 100; Morris, 1978: pp. 231-232). Such concerns have been integral to conceptualisations of 'capability-enhancing developmental states', 'twenty-first century developmental state[s]', and states able to deliver 'human development' (UNDP, 2020; Evans, 2011: pp. 6-10; Moran et al., 2007: p. 471; Fosu, 2002b: p. 9) and are central to the approach applied in Chapter 5 toward capturing such outcomes among the states of equatorial Africa. Economic growth, human development, and 'social policy' are linked to an 'inextricable' extent and centred on the state's identification and coherent pursuit of 'collective goals' (Evans, 2011: pp. 6-

10). Some scholars have argued that 'human development policies might…weaken the incentive structures that help to sustain the developmental state' (Knight, 2014: p. 1344), but a state unable to translate economic growth into human development is unlikely to remain legitimate or secure in the long term (Evans, 2011: pp. 6-10; Elbadawi and Ndung'u, 2005: pp. 20-21).

While there remains a strong 'belief that growth is transformed to human development' in the long term, '[i]n the short or medium run…such transformation is not automatic' (Fosu, 2002b: p. 9). Human development is 'the ultimate goal of economic activity', can be derailed by 'political instability', and is more significantly impacted upon by 'reducing income inequality' than economic growth by itself (pp. 9-10). The nature and equity of resource distribution and extent to which the benefits from economic growth are applied toward key social objectives, therefore, are integral to the success of the state in pursuing long-term human development (ibid; Evans, 2011: pp. 6-10; La Porta et al., 1999: p. 226). Where the state is characterised by instability or is illegitimate, its prospects for social or human development are limited (Fosu, 2002b: pp. 9-10). Poverty, instability, and other sources of dysfunction or underdevelopment, furthermore, can be self-perpetuating in the absence of a legitimate authority to rule and capable institutions, irrespective of the economic growth generated (ibid; Englebert, 2000a: pp. 5-9; La Porta et al., 1999: p. 226).

The overall development of a given state thus relies on concurrent improvements in areas related to political, economic, and social development (ibid). Where political systems are illegitimate, unstable, or inconsistent and economic benefits do not counteract poverty, these conditions can be self-perpetuating and mutually reinforcing (Elbadawi and Ndung'u, 2005: p. 20; Feng, 2001: p. 288). Such circumstances can weaken 'government capacity', impede the productive application of domestic resources, and contribute to further impoverishment, instability, and underdevelopment (ibid). Where the state has instituted progress toward formal political development and generated substantial economic growth, furthermore, the benefits for a given populace are 'not automatic' and depend largely on 'the structure of the economy, the distribution of income and the policy choices

made' (Ranis and Stewart, 2005: p. 4). Where the state is not formally capable or incentivised to equitably distribute resources, it is less likely to remain legitimate or deliver social or human development in the long term (ibid).

Preceding neo-patrimonial developmental states like Rwanda have been centred on sustained economic growth, the application of garnered resources toward key social and infrastructural ends, and the important role to be played by a strong central state in these processes (Mann and Berry, 2015: pp. 25-26). Neo-patrimonial developmentalism thus rests on the productive, centralised mobilisation and management of domestic resources and the incentivisation of key domestic actors to direct these toward productive and social ends (Kelsall, 2018a: p. 29; Cammack and Kelsall, 2010: pp. 2-6). A state that is legitimate and capable is more likely to 'deliver the goods' and advance the development of its citizens (Englebert, 2000a: pp. 5-6; La Porta et al., 1999: p. 226). Chapter 5 of this thesis, in this vein, is centred on an analysis of political, economic, and social development outcomes among the states of equatorial Africa, applying insights on the domestic circumstances, neo-patrimonialism, and formal capacities of these states from Chapters 3 and 4 to assess the extent to which these factors and conditions have aligned to advance significant disparities between Gabon and its regional counterparts in their pursuit of development.

This chapter has revealed the inherently complex nature to the relationship between neo-patrimonialism, formal capacities, and development and the outcomes from these conditions. These processes are largely determined by case-specific domestic circumstances and the priorities moulding state and elite actions (Mkandawire, 2015: pp. 565-578). The specific manifestation of neo-patrimonialism, the formal capacities and legitimacy vested in the state, and the extent to which ruling elites are incentivised are central to a state's prospects for overcoming informal dysfunction and pursuing development (Ghebremusse, 2015: p. 492; Kelsall and Booth, 2010: pp. 3-7; Englebert, 2000a: p. 90). Where elites are adequately incentivised and the state is capable of the coherent long-term pursuit of key socioeconomic objectives, it is more likely to be legitimate and stable than where

resources are subjected to a narrowing of avenues for distribution (ibid; Englebert, 2000a: pp. 5-9). Neo-patrimonialism can impede these processes, but as has been evident throughout this chapter, such detriment is not automatic nor is it universal and 'many' states have surmounted these conditions to deliver long-term development (Mkandawire, 2015: p. 578).

2e. Conclusion

This chapter has been fundamentally aimed at synthesising the insights to be gained from preceding literatures on neo-patrimonialism, state capacity, and development toward provision of the framework and contentions behind the analyses in the rest of this thesis. This foundation is integral to the methodological approach employed in the forthcoming chapters and the active application of this theoretical background to investigate the processes and factors moulding the divergent outcomes between Gabon, Republic of Congo, Chad, and Central African Republic. The manifestation of and outcomes from neo-patrimonialism are inherently variable and dependent upon the specific domestic circumstances impacting upon the state and society (Mkandawire, 2015: pp. 565-594). The case-specific manifestation of neo-patrimonialism is integral to the influence of these systems and extent to which they breed institutional dysfunction, illegitimacy, or impediments to rent allocation (ibid; Kelsall and Booth, 2010: pp. 3-7). Where formal institutions are strong, legitimate, and endogenous to the surrounding society, a neo-patrimonial state can overcome the dysfunction stoked by endemic clientelism, presidentialism, and regime corruption and, potentially, employ these systems toward productive and social ends (ibid; Englebert, 2000a: p. 90).

Neo-patrimonial developmentalism rests on the formal capacities of the state for extraction, coercion, and administration and the extent to which these have proven conducive to the political, economic, and social development of its society (ibid; Hanson and Sigman, 2019: pp. 7-8; Evans, 2011: pp. 6-10; Hendrix, 2010: pp. 273-277). As has been evident throughout this chapter, neo-patrimonialism is not inherently inimical to the pursuit of development and can, given sufficient domestic circumstances and institutions, be employed toward productive ends (Mkandawire, 2015:

pp. 573-578). Such outcomes are far from automatic (ibid), but this perspective on the potential for neo-patrimonial developmentalism is central to the approach employed in the rest of this thesis. This chapter, toward these ends, has provided an important foundation for this thesis' analysis of the patterns and circumstances involved in Gabon's divergent performance. The chapters to follow will test these propositions within the contexts of equatorial Africa, evaluating the extent to which domestic circumstances and state operations in Gabon have differed from those in Congo, Chad, and CAR to yield divergent and comparatively impressive outcomes.

A state seeking to pursue development amidst neo-patrimonialism requires strong formal institutions and sufficiently incentivised ruling elites to surmount domestic informality and productively apply domestic resources (Oluwatobi et al., 2015: p. 8; Ghebremusse, 2015: p. 492; Mkandawire, 2015: pp. 565-578). Where a state is formally capable of extracting resources, coercing support, and administrating effectively, it is more likely to surmount informal dysfunction and promote political, economic, and social development (ibid; Hanson and Sigman, 2019: pp. 7-8; Hendrix, 2010: pp. 273-277). Building from these propositions and the literatures reviewed and synthesised above, this thesis' comparative case study analysis is founded on a series of key theoretical contentions:

1) Neo-patrimonial developmentalism rests on the formal capacities of the state, the political leadership in place, and the extent to which these promote the allocation of domestic resources toward productive ends relevant to political, economic, and social development. Where a state is unable to extract resources, coerce support, or administrate effectively, it is less likely to become developmental and more likely to succumb to neo-patrimonial informality and the institutional dysfunction potentially stoked by endemic clientelism, presidentialism, and regime corruption.

2) Where the state is able to productively and equitably mobilise and distribute resources, it is more likely to be legitimate and stable in its operations than where growth is minimal or rent allocation is constricted. If the state is illegitimate or insecure it is unlikely to benefit from the revenues mobilised and more likely to succumb to the dysfunction from endemic informality, impeding its pursuit of development. A state unable to administrate effectively is likewise unlikely to remain secure, manufacture legitimacy, or be productive. The extractive, coercive, and administrative capacities of a state are thus interdependent and mutually-reinforcing, with the absence of any of these forms of formal capacity likely to impede the active pursuit of development.

3) Where a neo-patrimonial state succumbs to the dysfunction stoked by endemic clientelism, presidentialism, and regime corruption, its formal capacities are likely to be weak and progress toward development limited. Where formal capacities and informal neo-patrimonialism are in relative parity, on the other hand, the state is more likely to adopt a long-term approach to revenue management and pursue political, economic, and social development. The pursuit of development amidst endemic neo-patrimonialism, therefore, rests on the formal capacities of the state, the incentivisation of ruling elites, and the extent to which domestic circumstances promote long-term development.

Neo-patrimonial developmentalism, in short, rests on domestic circumstances, the formal capacities of the state, the behaviour and priorities of ruling elites, and the extent to which these promote the active coherent pursuit of long-term objectives.

This chapter has provided an important foundation for this perspective and has served to explicate the propositions moulding this thesis' analysis. Specifically, the literatures detailed and

synthesised above have elucidated the variability to the manifestation of and impact from neo-patrimonialism (Mkandawire, 2015: pp. 565-594), the important role of formal capacities and legitimacy therein (ibid; Englebert, 2000a: p. 90), and the implications from the case-specific balance between formality and informality for the priorities of political elites and extent to which the state actively pursues development (ibid; Kelsall, 2011: p. 82; Cammack and Kelsall, 2010: pp. 2-6; Erdmann and Engel, 2007: p. 105). These perspectives offer important insight into key aspects involved in moulding development outcomes in Africa and elsewhere and, when synthesised and applied as they are in this thesis, provide important insight into historical dynamics moulding long-term disparities among ostensibly similar states characterised by endemic neo-patrimonialism.

Although high neo-patrimonialism is not necessarily indicative of low capacity for development, a lack of consistency, endogeneity, or legitimacy can impede state operations and allow endemic informality to weaken formal capacities (Mkandawire, 2015: pp. 565-578; Erdmann and Engel, 2007: p. 105; Englebert, 2000a: p. 90). Such has been clear throughout this chapter's review and synthesis of relevant literatures. To what extent are the specific domestic circumstances and operations in Gabon distinct from those in Congo, Chad, and CAR, however? As this chapter has made clear, neo-patrimonial developmentalism rests on the specific balance between formality and informality within a given country, the stability of the domestic environment, and a political leadership incentivised toward productive ends (ibid). Where significant disparities exist among ostensibly similar states, therefore, their historical circumstances and specific manifestations of neo-patrimonialism are of central concern. Chapter 3 to immediately follow, in this vein, will explore these dynamics among the four equatorial African states and, specifically, the extent to which neo-patrimonialism and domestic circumstances in Gabon have differed from those in Congo, Chad, and CAR to promote the variable outcomes at the core of this thesis' focus.

Chapter 3

Neo-Patrimonialism and Intra-Regional Divergence in Equatorial Africa

3a. Introduction

This thesis is aimed at investigating the circumstances and operations moulding variable outcomes among the states of equatorial Africa. All of Gabon, Republic of Congo, Chad, and Central African Republic have institutionalised the personalistic, highly centralised, and corrupt practices characteristic of neo-patrimonial systems (V-Dem, 2020). As was made clear in Chapter 2, however, the specific manifestation of and outcomes from these systems are far from universal and moulded by domestic circumstances, formal capacities, and the extent to which ruling elites are incentivised toward productive ends. Where the state is able to strengthen formal capacities for extraction, coercion, and administration, it is more likely to surmount the dysfunction from informal clientelism, presidentialism, and regime corruption to pursue political, economic, and social development. Toward testing these propositions and investigating development outcomes in equatorial Africa, this chapter explores and assesses key dynamics moulding these states' performance, explicitly seeking to address this thesis' first core research question and reveal the extent to which domestic circumstances and state operations in Gabon have differed from those in Congo, Chad, and CAR.

Gabon, Republic of Congo, Chad, and Central African Republic have all been evaluated here and in previous studies as being neo-patrimonial (V-Dem, 2020; Sigman and Lindberg, 2017: pp. 11-12) and characterised by systems for the clientelistic or personalistic distribution of resources, excessive centralisation of presidential authority, and corrupt abuse of public office for personal gain (Hansen, 2020: pp. 4-17; O'Toole, 1997: pp. 113-115; Clark, 1997b: p. 63; Yates, 1996: pp. 41-51). All four of these states were *territoires* under the auspices of French Equatorial Africa until 1960 and, as will become clear as this thesis' analysis proceeds, have experienced significant divergence in their

outcomes despite these shared foundations and neo-patrimonial norms (ibid; UNDP, 2020; V-Dem, 2020). As was emphasised in Chapter 2 and will be demonstrated further as the thesis' analysis proceeds, outcomes from these systems are inherently variable and determined by domestic circumstances, the forms of clientelism, presidentialism, and regime corruption employed, and the formal capacities wielded by the state (Mkandawire, 2015: pp. 565-594; Erdmann and Engel, 2007: p. 105; Englebert, 2000a: pp. 5-9). This chapter, in this vein, is aimed at investigating the circumstances and processes involved in promoting performance and development outcomes in Gabon that far exceed those among its regional counterparts and rival the most developed states in sub-Saharan Africa (World Bank, 2020; UNDP, 2020).

Gabon is among the five most developed countries in sub-Saharan Africa based on key metrics and has far surpassed the middling performance in Congo, let alone outcomes in Chad and CAR that are among the most disappointing in the world (World Bank, 2020; UNDP, 2020). Such extreme intra-regional disparities are at the core of this thesis' focus and, importantly, have been moulded by historical dynamics and circumstances within these states that served to promote within Gabon sustained extraction of resources, long-standing security, and, consequently, ruling elites and formal institutions able to pursue key long-term objectives (ibid; Yates, 1996: pp. 41-51). Toward these ends, this chapter provides an important foundation for the rest of the analysis in this thesis through evaluation of the historical dynamics and informal operations within these states to apply the theoretical insights gained in Chapter 2 toward explanation of the processes moulding their historical circumstances and modern outcomes. This analysis, furthermore, rests on the application of a mixed methods approach and the synthesis of insights to be gained from secondary sources, interview data, and expert-assessed indices toward historiographical analysis of these states' experiences.

As was discussed in Chapter 1, the analysis in this chapter is centred on the application of secondary sources and interview data alongside V-Dem's (2020) expert assessments to capture the specific historical patterns moulding domestic circumstances, neo-patrimonialism, and modern

outcomes among the countries of equatorial Africa. Specifically, V-Dem's (2020) expert-assessed *neo-patrimonial rule index* and its components are employed to provide important numerical (0-1) ratings[3] and comparative lenses to assess the clientelism, presidentialism, regime corruption, and overall neo-patrimonialism within these states. These ratings are available from 1960 to 2019, emphasise intra-state comparability (Pemstein et al., 2020: pp. 8-10), and serve an integral role in the application of the theoretical contentions established in Chapter 2 and triangulation of findings toward capturing key factors that are difficult to measure otherwise (ibid). These will thus aid in this chapter's overall efforts at revealing key organisational processes moulding these states' disparate performance. The rest of the chapter, toward these ends, is structured accordingly: section 3b to immediately follow focuses on the interaction between historical patterns related to (in)stability and clientelism within these contexts; section 3c emphasises the role of presidentialism and centralised authority structures in moulding these states; section 3d discusses the importance and consistency of regime corruption throughout the region; and section 3e synthesises these insights through assessment of the overall neo-patrimonialism operating in Gabon, Congo, Chad, and CAR. The final section will conclude.

This chapter employs a synthesis of insights gained from secondary sources, interview data, and V-Dem's (2020) expert assessments toward elucidating the specific dynamics, circumstances, and historical manifestations of clientelism, presidentialism, and regime corruption impacting the performance of the states of equatorial Africa. This historiographical comparative case study analysis is aimed at applying the theoretical contentions established in Chapter 2 toward explanation of the specific circumstances and operations within Gabon and how these have differed from those in Congo, Chad, and CAR. The insights gained, therefore, are central to the specific process tracing efforts in this thesis and the application of historical explanations and established theories toward identifying the factors moulding Gabon's long-standing divergence from its regional counterparts. This chapter, in

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[3] As was noted in the *Methodological Reflections* in Chapter 1, V-Dem's (2020) *indices* range from 0 to 1, with lower scores indicating weaker clientelism, presidentialism, regime corruption, or overall neo-patrimonialism and higher scores indicating the opposite.

short, captures to what extent and in what ways domestic circumstances and informal operations in Gabon have been different from, or similar to, those in Congo, Chad, and CAR.

Gabon was evaluated by V-Dem's (2020) experts as being almost as neo-patrimonial as Congo and Chad and more neo-patrimonial than CAR. The outcomes within these countries, therefore, cannot be explained by the mere absence or presence of neo-patrimonialism but, rather, have been determined by the specific manifestation of endemic clientelism, presidentialism, and regime corruption and the domestic circumstances moulding these patterns. Gabon is by far the least 'fragile' state in this region, has been largely secure since early in its history, and has proceeded to record economic and human development performance that dwarf those among its former fellow-*territoires* (World Bank, 2020; UNDP, 2020; Systemic Peace, 2018; Clark, 2008: p. 228; Yates, 1996: pp. 41-51). Gabon has, furthermore, boasted the lowest rating in V-Dem's (2020) *clientelism index* in the region for all but two years since gaining independence, indicating the least particularistic distribution of resources among these four countries (Coppedge et al., 2020: pp. 273-274). Clientelism is 'particularly crucial' to the operation of neo-patrimonialism and, therefore, provides an important lens into the circumstances moulding divergent performance among ostensibly similar neo-patrimonial states (Kelsall, 2018a: p. 29; Kelsall and Booth, 2010: pp. 3-7).

With these dynamics in mind, section 2b to immediately follow will first turn its attention to the specific operation of clientelism among these four countries, as assessed by V-Dem's (2020) experts, and the historical processes involved in moulding and preserving Gabon's region-low status in this first component of neo-patrimonialism. Importantly, and central to the analysis in this chapter, the specific relationship between stability and clientelism in Gabon has been integral to its overall performance. Though Gabon has long been viewed as a 'rentier' state, the relative absence of instances of insecurity and infrequency of political turnover in Gabon have preserved the nature to rent distribution established in the formative years of independence and, importantly, at no point prompted the rapid expansion of particularistic revenue distribution as can characterise these systems

(Yates, 1996: pp. 41-51). Such dynamics have been moulded by Gabon's unique circumstances and stability, promoted rapid economic growth and development, and, as is made clear in Figure 3.1 below, have enabled and been enabled by the relative weakness of clientelism within this context according to V-Dem's (2020) experts.

3b. Clientelism, Early Independence, and Disparate Trajectories

Figure 3.1 Clientelism Index Results
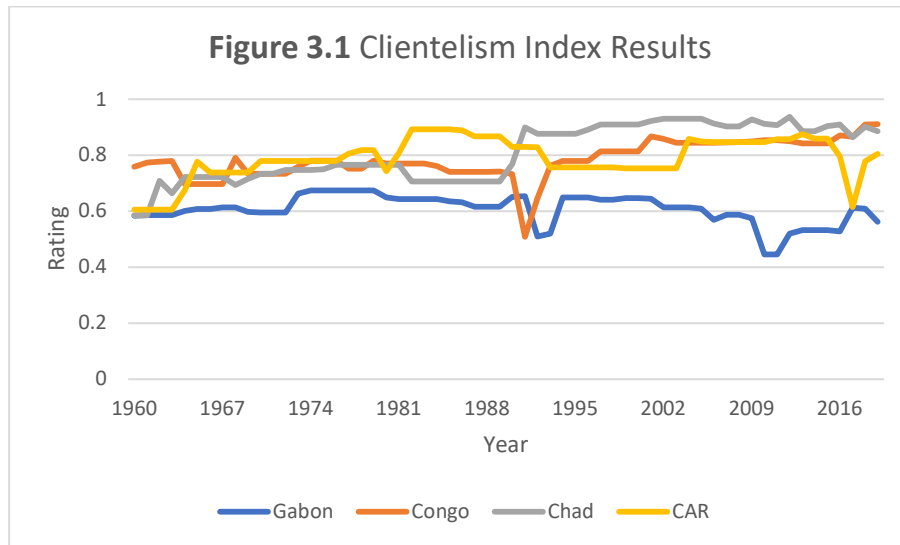
(V-Dem, 2020)

This chapter is fundamentally aimed at revealing the historical dynamics, domestic circumstances, and manifestations of neo-patrimonialism in Gabon, Republic of Congo, Chad, and Central African Republic and, in so doing, provides an important foundation for explaining the disparate outcomes among these states. These disparities, importantly, have been linked to the comparative stability of the Gabonese state and the consequent consistency to its formal and informal operations (Brubaker and Druet, 2020: pp. 17-18; Gardinier, 1997b: pp. 147-148). Consistency can be integral to the effectiveness, credibility, and success of a state, with policy 'oscillations' or other disruptions to the operation of the state potentially impeding its ability to attract investment or incentivise ruling elites to pursue long-term objectives (Feng, 2001: p. 288; Ranis, 1992: p. 98). A lack of consistency can promote the dysfunctional operation of informal systems, impede the operation of formal institutions,

and thereby inhibit the pursuit of development and stability of the state (ibid). Gabon's stability and specifically the restoration and reinforcement of its inaugural regime was rare among France's former African colonies and provided this small state with a security and legitimacy to rule that was largely absent elsewhere (Chipman, 1989: pp. 170-171). These dynamics were founded on the records and productivity of these states in the decades after gaining independence (Clark, 2008: p. 228) and have, based on V-Dem's (2020) assessments, aided in consolidating within Gabon the weakest clientelism in equatorial Africa for all but two years since 1960.

The stability and absence of civil conflict in Gabon has been important for its historical and modern performance and has become so deeply entrenched that some observers have concluded that these conditions are 'cultural'[4]. These dynamics were established in the formative years of independence and would wield significant influence over the comparative mobilisation, management, and application of domestic resources in Gabon, Congo, Chad, and CAR in this period and those to follow (Clark, 2008: p. 228; Lanne, 1997: pp. 270-271; O'Toole, 1997: p. 113; Yates, 1996: p. 111). All four of these countries gained independence from France in 1960, but the fates of their inaugural regimes would immediately differentiate the legitimacy and security of the Gabonese state from the rest of the region (ibid; Akum, 2018: p. 3; Eaton, 2006: p. 46). Gabon officially gained independence on 17 August 1960, with the country's first executive, Gabriel Léon M'ba, serving as 'the country's first prime minister and "real" head of government' before officially cementing his presidential authority by early 1961 (Yates, 1996: p. 105). Distinct from all of Gabon's history to follow, however, President M'ba was overthrown less than four years after assuming office (p. 111).

Despite rhetorically supporting democratisation, M'ba's increasingly authoritarian nature manifested through his behaviours and efforts to co-opt opposition to consolidate power, immediately challenging the legitimacy and security of this France-favoured regime (Yates, 1996: pp.

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[4] UNAIDS Official, interviewed in Libreville, Gabon on 14 August 2019 (Interview Number 01). This individual argued that 'they [Gabonese] are not violent' and 'maybe it's cultural' when discussing factors behind Gabon's stand-out stability and lack of civil conflict.

106-111). As a result, President M'ba was briefly toppled by a coup d'état in February 1964 (ibid). In contrast to most of France's former colonies including Congo, Chad, and CAR, however, Gabon's first president was swiftly reinstated via French intervention to provide a security to rule that would be integral to its standout performance in the decades to follow (ibid; Chipman, 1989: pp. 170-171). M'ba's restoration, the subsequent security to rule enjoyed by this state, and the nature of early defence agreements between Gabon and France granted the inaugural president in this context a platform of stability and legitimacy he clearly lacked otherwise and allowed for the steady centralisation of power in the latter years of his reign (Gardinier, 1997b: pp. 146-148). The inaugural regimes in Congo, Chad, and CAR were not so fortunate.

All of Gabon, Republic of Congo, Chad, and Central African Republic experienced early instability that challenged the security of their inaugural regimes. In contrast to the restoration of power and consequent consolidation of authority in Gabon under President M'ba (Yates, 1996: pp. 106-111), however, the challenges faced by the other countries' first executives would be disastrous for their reign and the domestic circumstances in these contexts (Akum, 2018: p. 3; Lanne, 1997: pp. 270-271; O'Toole, 1997: pp. 113-114). A former mayor of Brazzaville popular among the Lari peoples of the Pool region, Abbé Fulbert Youlou, for instance, was the first president of Republic of Congo, heading a regime described by Clark (1997b) as 'mildly corrupt, directionless in domestic policy, and deferential to France' (p. 63). President Youlou's early efforts at consolidating power were crippled by the inherited parliamentary system (ibid), prompting him to centralise power under a sole official political party, the Democratic Union for the Defence of African Interests (UDDIA); this move would prove fatal for Congo's inaugural regime (Akum, 2018: p. 3). The apparent illegitimacy of this centralising action was met by *les trois glorieuses*: three 'glorious' days in August 1963 in which political riots led by labour unions, educated youth, and bureaucrats would drive popular opposition to the regime and result in President Youlou's fall (ibid).

Not entirely unlike the Gabonese experience, Congo's first president's efforts to centralise power, consolidate control, and co-opt opposition through the narrow distribution of domestic rents challenged the regime's legitimacy and prompted a popular uprising that would topple this regime less than four years after gaining independence (Eaton, 2006: p. 46). The lack of French intervention in this case, however, indicates the extent to which Congo's inaugural regime had failed to establish the legitimacy, economic production, or external ties as were central to the preservation of the Gabonese regime (Clark, 2008: p. 228). Specifically, as has been argued by scholars including Yates (1996) and Clark (2008), the early restoration and preservation of the Gabonese state was driven by the patron-client relations between this small state and the French metropole, which promoted clientelistic systems driven by the rapid extraction of domestic resources for external consumption (ibid; Yates, 1996: pp. 41-51). These systems were an integral factor in France's desire to maintain the security of the Gabonese state and a key distinction between this state and its counterparts (ibid).

In contrast to the Congolese experience, in short, the entrenchment, operation, and consistency of domestic clientelism and the specific manifestation thereof in Gabon was crucial to its early success and the prevention of civil conflict such as has characterised its regional counterparts (ibid). Much like the regime of President Youlou in Congo, the inaugural regime in Chad was characterised by frequent instances of insecurity and would eventually be forcefully overthrown (Eaton, 2006: p. 46; Lanne, 1997: p. 270). François Tombalbaye was Chad's first president but would entrench an unequal distribution of power and resources and ethnic resentment within Chadian society that prompted rebellions in 1965 and 1968, French intervention in 1969, Libyan intervention in 1972, and the assassination of President Tombalbaye in April 1975 (Lanne, 1997: pp. 270-271). Despite lasting for more than a decade, the inaugural regime in Chad thus demonstrated little ability on behalf of the state to establish a monopoly on the use of force or productively and coherently employ domestic resources toward the stabilisation and legitimisation of the state (Styan, 2013: pp. 239-242), in clear contrast to its counterpart in Gabon.

Republic of Congo and Chad, in the first years of independence, were both characterised by a frequency of civil conflict and the volatility and institutional incoherence that can result from such circumstances (ibid; Eaton, 2006: p. 46). Gabon, in contrast, was similarly insecure early on but experienced a security and legitimacy to rule following the restoration of President M'ba that was integral to the stability and success of the Gabonese state going forward (Gardinier, 1997b: pp. 146-148). These dynamics, furthermore, were centred on the intricate patron-client relationships and defence cooperation agreements between Gabon and France which served to promote rapid economic growth and formal institutions capable of productively employing resources toward the legitimisation of the state and development of society (ibid; Clark, 2008: p. 228; Yates, 1996: pp. 41-51). Put simply, Gabon's relative productivity and the intricate ties Gabonese elites maintained with the French metropole were central to this state's early divergence from its regional counterparts (ibid).

While it might appear on first reading that the early stability and success in Gabon was down to external factors surrounding its relationship with France, Yates (1996) and Clark (2008) have been among those to emphasise the importance of the relative legitimacy and behaviour of domestic elites in promoting these disparate patterns within equatorial Africa. Specifically, Clark (2008) argued that the comparative apathy characterising Republic of Congo's relations with the French metropole was down to a lack of legitimacy on behalf of the country's rulers, drawing explicit contrast with circumstances in Gabon (pp. 229-230). In other words, the specific legitimacy manufactured by the Gabonese state under Presidents M'ba and Bongo through positive economic performance, domestic reinvestment, and key services improvements promoted the maintenance of patron-client networks within Gabon and between Gabon and France that were integral to its success and stability, in clear contrast to regimes in Congo, Chad, and CAR (ibid).

Republic of Congo, Chad, and Central African Republic have been comparatively volatile and characterised by illegitimate rule whereas the stability and productivity of the Gabonese state was

central to its success and favourable relations with the French metropole (ibid). Despite experiencing insecurity early in its independent history similar to that in Congo, Chad, and CAR, Gabon thus manufactured through its comparative productivity and the actions of early ruling elites an environment that was attractive and conducive to foreign investment and the maintenance of close economic ties with the former metropole. The other states, on the other hand, were characterised by comparative illegitimacy and inconsistency that would undermine efforts to establish or maintain similar domestic or international networks. The early insecurity of all the states in the region and these standout implications from Gabon's early and long-standing security are most evident through the dynamics in CAR.

Central African Republic's first president David Dacko was toppled in 1965, replacing a France-favoured regime with a colonel and future 'life president' and 'emperor' whose authoritarian tendencies would dominate the opening decades of independence in CAR (O'Toole, 1997: pp. 113-114). This foundation of instability in CAR would culminate in a 'hopeless'[5] situation in the absence of a 'strong regime' able to manufacture legitimacy or security[6]. Much like the inaugural regimes in Chad and Congo, in short, the reign of CAR's first president was short-lived and would give way to an authoritarian state that further stoked domestic divisions and provoked a persistence to civil conflict in this context that remains in place today (ibid; Gebremichael et al., 2018: p. 6; Isaacs-Martin, 2016: p. 33; Batianga-Kinzi, 2014: p. 60; Berg, 2008: pp. 21-27). Despite the variance in the duration of their inaugural regimes, all three of these states were characterised by an early history of violence and legitimisation of force as a means for gaining power in this early period that contributed to the dynamics and circumstances moulding their distinct underperformance (Giroux, Lanz, and Sguaitamatti, 2009: pp. 4-5; Clark, 2008: p. 118).

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[5] US Official, interviewed in Libreville, Gabon on 15 August 2019 (Interview Number 02).
[6] Assistant Director of Mining, interviewed in the Pool region of Congo on 29 August 2019 (Interview Number 10). This individual specifically argued that the only way to stabilise a state like CAR was through the establishment and maintenance of a 'strong regime' able to retain control.

The early experiences in Congo, Chad, and CAR thus significantly contrasted with the early security enjoyed by the Gabonese regime and were central to the intra-regional disparities that have evolved over the decades since (Clark, 2008: p. 228). The comparative stability in Gabon, importantly, would be further cemented through the installation of an intricate network of mercenaries and French advisors following the successful 1964 intervention (Yates, 1996: pp. 105-117) and the peaceful ascension of Omar Bongo to the presidency in 1967, having served as M'ba's Vice President since 1966 (Gardinier, 1997b: pp. 146-148). Omar Bongo's ascension to the presidency would be the last executive transfer of power in the country until his death by natural causes in 2009, at which point his son and the country's current president, Ali Bongo Ondimba, assumed office (Ahmadou, 2009). Since this early period, the country has been dominated by 'one big group' that controls access to power and resources, which has been a key factor in its stability and success[7].

The end of the 1960s and beginning of the 1970s would thus be a highly significant period for the overall trajectory of the Gabonese state and the precise balance between formal capacities and informal operations therein (Gardinier, 1997b: pp. 146-148). While the other three states were all stricken by desperate regimes and civil conflict, the stability of the Gabonese regime ensured a consistency and productivity to domestic operations that was absent elsewhere in the region (ibid; Clark, 2008: p. 228). This early and long-standing security, furthermore, was centred on and promoted a specific manifestation of clientelism which was integral to its early security and productivity (Yates, 1996: pp. 41-51). Such dynamics are immediately evident in this state's comparative ratings in V-Dem's (2020) *clientelism index*, presented in Figure 3.1 above, and specifically its clear proclivity for retaining the weakest clientelistic systems in equatorial Africa, according to V-Dem's (2020) experts.

As was emphasised in Chapter 2, clientelism and its impact on the distribution of domestic resources are key factors in the operation of neo-patrimonialism and the potential dysfunction stoked

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[7] UNAIDS Official, interviewed in Libreville, Gabon on 14 August 2019 (Interview Number 01). This individual argued that 'there's on big group' that has ruled the country since the early years of independence and that 'even if the head is weak, the surrounding body is strong', indicating that even executive transfer would not be enough to undermine these systems.

by these systems (Kelsall, 2018a: p. 29; Kelsall and Booth, 2010: pp. 3-7). Where clientelism is significant and operates unimpeded, the state is less likely to direct resources toward productive long-term objectives (ibid). Specifically, clientelism is defined in the V-Dem Codebook as 'the targeted, contingent distribution of resources (goods, services, jobs, money, etc) in exchange for political support', considering indicators for 'vote-buying', 'particularistic vs. public goods', and 'whether party linkages are programmatic or clientelistic', based on expert assessments (Coppedge et al., 2020: pp. 273-274). Where a state's *clientelism index* score is higher, this is indicative of a system centred on the maintenance of patron-client relations and application of these toward the maintenance of ruling elites' positions, with low scores indicating the opposite. It is thus significant that Gabon's rating in V-Dem's (2020) *clientelism index* remained the lowest in equatorial Africa for all but one year (1961) in the opening decades of independence and was by far the most stable state in the region in this regard between 1960 and 2019. Gabon gained independence with a *clientelism index* score of 0.584 compared to 0.585 in Chad, 0.606 in CAR, and 0.759 in Congo, and importantly did not experience any major fluctuations from this starting point. Gabon's rating in the *clientelism index* ranged from 0.584 to 0.613 between 1960 and 1970 and has at no point surpassed 0.700, reaching an all-time high of 0.675 in 1974-1979. Such narrow alterations to these scores are unique to Gabon among these four states and offer important support for the proposition that stability can be significant in mitigating the impact from domestic clientelism (Cammack and Kelsall, 2010: pp. 4-6).

The volatility in the *clientelism index* ratings for Congo, Chad, and CAR, in contrast, demonstrate the impact their foundation of insecurity had on the incidence of 'targeted contingent distribution of resources…for political support' (Coppedge et al., 2020: p. 273) in these contexts. Each of these three states' inaugural regimes was forcefully overthrown, establishing an early tendency toward civil conflict and promoting the narrow distribution of domestic resources toward political ends, according to V-Dem's (2020) assessments. While Gabon's stability at a relative low point in *clientelism index* ratings was established in the formative decades of independence, Congo, Chad, and CAR all experienced significant shifts in this metric in this period. Chad, the only state to boast a lower

clientelism index rating than Gabon at any point in the first three decades of independence, demonstrates the early volatility of these three states well. Chad's score in this *index* ranged from 0.585 to 0.734 in the first decade of independence, going from the lowest *clientelism index* score in the region in 1961 to the highest in the region in 1964 and foreshadowing the high levels to be attained by this state in subsequent decades.

Chad would proceed to record the highest *clientelism index* score in equatorial Africa consistently from 1991 to 2017, achieving the region's all-time high score in this *index* (0.938) in 2012. CAR and Congo, like Chad, were relatively volatile in their ratings in this early period and would proceed to reach peaks that far exceeded Gabon's ratings. Specifically, CAR and Congo's ratings in the *clientelism index* ranged from 0.606 to 0.780 and 0.697 to 0.791 between 1960 and 1970, respectively; CAR would peak at 0.893 in 1982-1985 while Congo would achieve its all-time high of 0.911 in 2019. Gabon, in contrast, has at no point between 1960 and 2019 reached a score as high as 0.700, with its rating in this *index* remaining relatively consistent with the exception of key periods in which it declined to as low as 0.446 (2010-2011). Though Gabon's *clientelism index* rating received a slight increase in the formative years of Omar Bongo's rule (from 0.595 in 1970-1972 to 0.675, its all-time high, in 1974-1979), the overall stability and consistency of operations in Gabon by comparison to its regional counterparts clearly stand out in this *index*.

Such initial findings from V-Dem's (2020) *clientelism index* indicate a distinct stability to the nature of resource distribution and allocation in Gabon in these early decades and point to the importance of this consistency in domestic operations to the state's active pursuit of development through significant resource extraction, trade, and economic growth (Clark, 2008: p. 228; Yates, 1996: pp. 42-50). Early dynamics in Gabon, in short, were characterised by a security to rule which promoted more productive management and distribution of domestic resources than was present in Congo, Chad, and CAR, providing an important foundation for legitimacy and future success (ibid). Such patterns offer important lessons for the pursuit of neo-patrimonial developmentalism, and the

importance of a given regime's stability for the behaviour and priorities of the state and ruling elites. As was discussed in Chapter 2, a state that is stable and legitimate is more likely to effectively centralise rent management and apply garnered resources toward productive ends (Cammack and Kelsall, 2010: pp. 4-6; Englebert, 2000a: p. 90).

Neo-patrimonial development rests on the productivity of 'rent centralisation' and implementation of a 'long-horizon approach to rent management' (Kelsall, 2011: p. 82). Such processes rely on the stability and legitimacy of the state (ibid; Englebert, 2000b: p. 9). In the context of Gabon, the specific manifestation of clientelism and nature of the state moulded by its early security was significant for domestic productivity and its prospects for development (Clark, 2008: p. 228; Yates, 1996: pp. 41-51). These systems promoted within the first two decades of independence the most significant economic growth on record for the region in three consecutive years (1974-1976) (World Bank, 2020). The dynamics in this early period granted Gabon an economic and institutional foundation unrivalled within the region (Clark, 2008: p. 228; Yates, 1996: pp. 106-111). Gabon's early security and comparative capability for productively managing centralised rents are reiterated in its *clientelism index* ratings and yielded a stability to rule and foundation for development that has been integral to the disparities that have evolved since (ibid).

While Republic of Congo, Chad, and Central African Republic all recorded *clientelism index* ratings in 2019 that were higher than they were in the 1960s and 1970s, Gabon's 2019 rating was lower than it was in these formative decades. Gabon's scores in this *index* have steadily declined over the course of the past few decades, in clear contrast with the volatility and overall upward trajectories in all of Congo, Chad, and CAR. These trends have served to preserve and improve upon region-low clientelism in Gabon according to V-Dem's (2020) expert assessments and, as was made clear by the propositions in Chapter 2, point toward a domestic environment in which the unproductive personalistic distribution of domestic rents has been less significant, providing important insight into the state's potential for neo-patrimonial developmentalism (Kelsall, 2011: p. 82; Kelsall and Booth,

2010: pp. 3-7). The shifts that occurred throughout equatorial Africa in the 1980s and 1990s, importantly, would further mould these trajectories and cement the disparities between the other three states and Gabon.

Republic of Congo, Chad, and Central African Republic all experienced significant upheaval at the end of the twentieth century which culminated in increased clientelism in these contexts, according to V-Dem's (2020) *index*. These patterns align with the expectations and contentions set out in Chapter 2 and indicate the clear role played by Gabon's comparative stability in preserving these systems and preventing dysfunctional expansions that could be inimical to the pursuit of development (ibid; Englebert, 2000b: p. 9; Yates, 1996: pp. 41-51). All four of these states at the end of the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s established formal multi-party democratic systems, following subcontinental and global trends, but the transition in Gabon would be unique from those among its counterparts (Gardinier, 1997b: pp. 152-155; Yates, 1996: pp. 129-132). Omar Bongo, who in the words of one interviewee was 'loved' by the Gabonese people[8], was the only president in equatorial Africa to retain power throughout this period and would come to represent an important manifestation of continued French influence in the subcontinent (ibid).

François Mitterand, France's president from 1981 to 1995, represented an important shift within the former metropole toward staunch advocacy for the democratisation of its former colonies (Yates, 1996: p. 7) but came to be associated in Gabon with the maintenance of 'the status-quo Gaullist institutions' and the overall preservation of 'Bongo's Gabon' (p. 129). While the push toward democracy that spread throughout the region and subcontinent wielded significant influence over political operations in Congo, Chad, and CAR, therefore, even this formal period of systemic transition in Gabon failed to challenge the reign of Omar Bongo (ibid). Instead, this period served to provide a renewed security and legitimacy to the Gabonese state that would be crucial to its continued lack of

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[8] UNOCA Official, interviewed in Libreville, Gabon on 22 August 2019 (Interview Number 05). This official specifically stated 'people loved Omar Bongo' and were generally loyal and deferential to the country's long-standing president (Interview 05).

civil conflict or significant challenges to the authority of the regime (ibid). In Congo, Chad, and CAR, in contrast, similar transitions to multi-party democracy served to reinforce the comparative volatility, dysfunction, and institutional weakness with which their states had come to be associated and, in each case, stoked further insecurity and conflict (Hansen, 2020: pp. 13-14; Giroux, Lanz, and Sguaitamatti, 2009: pp. 4-5; Clark, 2008: p. 228; Reno, 1998: p. 15; Lanne, 1997: p. 274).

That is not to say, of course, that Gabon was not affected by this formal transition; despite the sustenance of Omar Bongo's rule, the 1990 constitution officially brought his single party state to an end and opened the door for a competitiveness and accountability within political processes that had been absent prior to this period (Gardinier, 1997b: pp. 153-155). Rather than challenging the regime or destabilising the country, however, this transformation of political operations in Gabon ultimately served to legitimise the regime of Omar Bongo and, in contrast to its regional counterparts, was not accompanied by a dissolution into civil conflict (ibid). While Gabon was relatively stable following its 1990 political transition in response to domestic and external pressures (ibid; Yates, 1996: p. 128), indeed, Chad and Congo both experienced their most recent significant instances of civil conflict in this same period, culminating in both instances in a forceful transition of executive authority (Hansen, 2020: pp. 13-14; Akum, 2018: p. 5; Clark, 2008: p. 251; Lanne, 1997: p. 274).

Not unlike those in Congo and Chad, the democratically elected regime established in CAR in this period would not last for long and would be plagued by repeated instances of domestic insecurity leading up to its eventual collapse (Giroux, Lanz, and Sguaitamatti, 2009: p. 5; Berg, 2008: p. 21). All three of these states, in other words, were significantly impacted upon by these formal transitions to multi-party democracy, moulding domestic circumstances and, in each case, resulting in a forceful transfer of power or dissolution into civil conflict (ibid; Hansen, 2020: pp. 13-14; Akum, 2018: p. 5; Clark, 2008: p. 251; Lanne, 1997: p. 274). Though Gabon's rating in the *clientelism index* significantly declined in this period (from 0.654 in 1991 to 0.51 in 1992), furthermore, this shift was rather brief and by 1994 Gabon had returned to its relative baseline (from 0.52 in 1993 to 0.649 in 1994-1996) and

resumed its slow, steady downward trajectory. The other three states, in contrast, were significantly impacted upon by these formal transitions, both in their domestic circumstances and their ratings in V-Dem's (2020) *clientelism index*. Despite similar circumstances among these three states, however, the nature and impact from this insecurity was not identical, as is evident in their *clientelism index* ratings in this period.

Republic of Congo formally transitioned to multi-party democracy in 1992, temporarily transforming domestic politics (Akum, 2018: p. 5; Clark, 1997b: p. 67) and briefly but significantly diminishing the extent to which ruling elites engaged in the politicised and personalistic distribution of resources, according to V-Dem's (2020) assessments. Denis Sassou-Nguesso, Congo's current president, had been in power since 1979[9] but was faced with domestic struggles which left the country virtually bankrupt by 1990 and forced the regime to accept the formal transition to multi-party competition (Clark, 2008: pp. 213-214; Eaton, 2006: p. 47; Clark, 1997b: p. 67). This formal transition was accompanied by a significant decline in Congo's *clientelism index* rating from 0.733 in 1990 to 0.509 in 1991, the lowest in the region that year. As the newly elected president of Congo, Pascal Lissouba, increasingly stoked ethnic violence[10], came to be viewed as illegitimate[11], and failed to deliver significant economic improvement (Akum, 2018: p. 5), importantly, Congo's *clientelism index* score would again surpass 0.700 by 1993 (to 0.763 from 0.647 in 1992).

Congo's ratings in the *clientelism index* in the 1990s point to an expanded emphasis in this context, even under democratic rule, on the dysfunctional and overtly political application of domestic

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[9] Denis Sassou-Nguesso's predecessor, General Joachim Yhombi-Opango, never fully consolidated his rule and was forced to resign by technical coup from within the ruling Congolese Labour Party (PCT) in 1979, to be replaced by Sassou-Nguesso (Clark, 1997b: pp. 64-65).

[10] Republic of Congo's political leaders have historically maintained militias of varying size to provide material backing for any push to assume power. The key militias in Congo in recent decades have been the Ninjas, led by Bernard Kolélas and Pastor Ntoumi; the Cobras, formed by Sassou-Nguesso; and the Mambas or Cocoye, founded by Sassou-Nguesso's temporary successor Pascal Lissouba (Clark, 2008: pp. 2-5; Herbst, 2000: p. 278).

[11] Director of Population and Development, interviewed in the Pool region of Congo on 03 September 2019 (Interview Number 12). This individual viewed Youlou as Congo's last legitimately elected president; they argued that Youlou and Massamba Débat were far more measured and effective in their approach than the presidents to follow, including Lisssouba, going so far as to describe Sassou-Nguesso as 'not far from Hitler'.

resources. Similar implications are evident from Chad's history and ratings in this period. The regime of Hisséne Habré was forced in 1989 to transition to multi-party competition but the manifestation of these new systems significantly moulded the operation of the state in this context (Lanne, 1997: pp. 273-274). Though Chad's 1989 constitution allowed for the first time for non-ruling party candidates to run for the National Assembly, the absence of judicial appointments and weakness of executive oversight institutionalised in this period ultimately did little to quell the domestic divisions and elite-level competitions that had come to dominate Chadian politics (ibid; Hansen, 2020: pp. 6-14). The 'openly authoritarian' state institutionalised under President Habré, therefore, was far from secure and would soon be forced to cede power (ibid).

Habré would be overthrown by Idriss Déby's Patriotic Salvation Movement (MPS) in December 1990 and the formal changes instituted during this period were significant for the trajectory and priorities of the Chadian state going forward (ibid). Chad's score in the *clientelism index* increased significantly following the 1989 constitution and 1990 overthrow, from 0.707 in 1989 to 0.899 in 1991. These shifts indicate increasingly politicised and personalistic distribution of domestic resources in this context and established a region-high rating in V-Dem's (2020) *index* that would be maintained until 2017. Chad in this period surpassed the previous record high *clientelism index* score for the region (0.893, CAR, 1982-1985) and would maintain this trajectory through its 1990 upheaval and forceful transition of executive power (Hansen, 2020: pp. 13-14; Lanne, 1997: p. 274). Like Republic of Congo and Chad, Central African Republic was stricken by the virtual dissolution of the rule of law; 'hardship, privation, and violence' (Batianga-Kinzi, 2014: p. 60); and a central state that was largely absent from its hinterlands (Van de Walle, 2001; Bierschenk and de Sardan, 1997), limiting the real benefits to be derived from its multi-party transition.

Although CAR became less clientelistic in this period, according to V-Dem's (2020) ratings (from 0.868 in 1987-1989 to 0.756 in 1993-1998), the return of civil conflict in 2003 and 2013, and concurrent reintroduction of authoritarian rule, would reinforce the ethnic divisions and volatility

established early in CAR's history (Gebremichael et al., 2018: p. 6; Isaacs-Martin, 2016: p. 33; Berg, 2008: pp. 21-27). These periods likewise contributed to the most significant twenty-first century shifts in *clientelism index* ratings in the region, from 0.753 in 2003 to 0.859 in 2004 and from 0.876 in 2013 to 0.614 in 2017 following the restoration of multi-party competition (Gebremichael et al., 2018: pp. 5-6). This experience is similar to the volatility evident in Congo and Chad but, importantly, is wholly distinct from the relative consistency of Gabon, both in terms of domestic circumstances and ratings in the *clientelism index*. Gabon, in short, has been by far the most stable and consistent state in the region, with the only real challenges to the sustenance of the regime of Omar Bongo surrounding the region-wide economic and political uncertainty in the 1990s (Ahmadou, 2009), trends that are reiterated in its ratings in V-Dem's (2020) *clientelism index*.

Gabon has demonstrated minimal alterations to its ratings in the *clientelism index* and has, for all but two years since independence, maintained the lowest rating in the region in V-Dem's (2020) assessments of these systems. The formal capacities for productively employing domestic rents implied by these ratings have, based on the theoretical contentions established in Chapter 2 and historical dynamics detailed above, provided for a superior foundation for the active pursuit of development, contributed to the security and legitimacy of the Gabonese regime, and enabled the minimalization of the potential dysfunction from endemic neo-patrimonialism within this context, providing an important foundation for its long-term stability and success. Such circumstances and outcomes are distinct from Congo, Chad, CAR, and most other Francophone African states (Clark, 2008: p. 228; Chipman, 1989: pp. 170-171) and have enabled the active pursuit of development in Gabon despite neo-patrimonialism on par with almost any state in sub-Saharan Africa (V-Dem, 2020; World Bank, 2020; UNDP, 2020).

Gabon has been the most stable and consistent state in equatorial Africa, characterised by the least significant manifestation of clientelism in the region, according to V-Dem's (2020) experts. This country has thus managed to employ domestic resources toward productive ends and 'shared the

wealth'[12] to an extent unrivalled by Congo, Chad, or CAR to enable early economic growth that provided an important foundation for modern success (World Bank, 2020; Yates, 1996: pp. 41-51). Such outcomes mirror those predicted by the propositions outlined in Chapter 2 and, specifically, point toward the productive long-term management and application of 'centralised patronage' within this context (Kelsall, 2018a: p. 29).   Such processes have been enabled by the lack of executive turnover in Gabon, granting ruling elites the ability to benefit from the presidential nature to rule to promote the centralised distribution of domestic rents toward productive ends. As is made clear in section 3c and Figure 3.2 below, furthermore, Gabon was assessed by V-Dem's (2020) experts as being almost as presidential as the most presidential state in the region but, like in the *clientelism index*, has been more consistent in this regard than any of Congo, Chad, or CAR.

3c. Presidentialism and 'Centralised Patronage'

Figure 3.2 Presidentialism Index Results
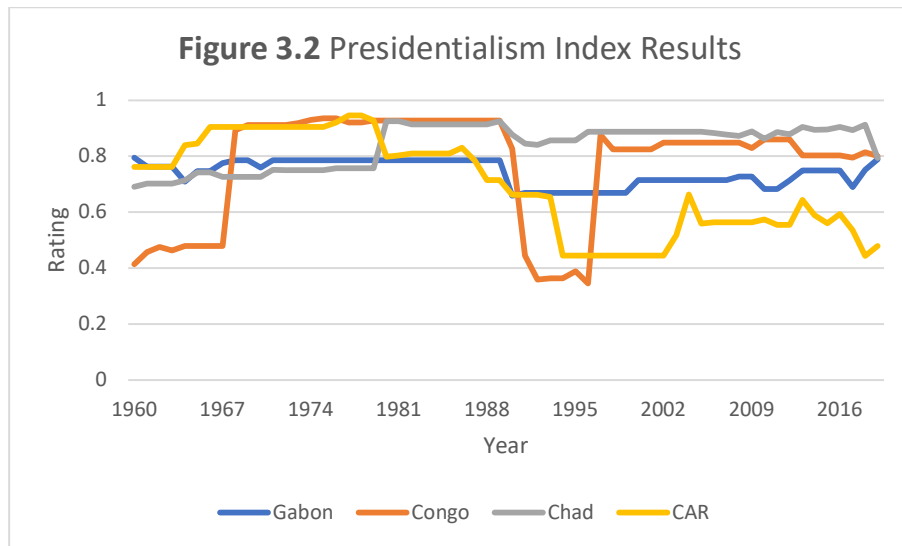
(V-Dem, 2020)

This chapter is fundamentally aimed at revealing and explaining key dynamics and processes moulding the historical and modern disparities between Gabon, Republic of Congo, Chad, and Central African Republic. As section 3b made clear, the early circumstances and dynamics in Gabon were entirely

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[12] US Official, interviewed in Libreville, Gabon on 15 August 2019 (Interview Number 02).

distinct from the comparative insecurity among its counterparts and served to promote the weakest and most consistent manifestation of clientelism in the region, according to V-Dem's (2020) assessments. These conditions promoted a more productive application of resources in Gabon and enabled economic growth in the formative decades of independence that provided an important foundation for future growth and development (World Bank, 2020). Integral to these systems was the consolidation and centralisation of power in the latter years of M'ba's reign and beginning of the Bongo dynasty, which enabled a greater security to rule and promoted the organised, centralised management and application of domestic resources, based on the findings to this point. To investigate these important dynamics moulding the divergent circumstances in Gabon further, this section is specifically focused on the manifestation of, and role played by, presidentialism within these contexts.

The stability, consistency, and centralisation of authority in Gabon were integral to its early performance and have been vital for its sustained success in the decades since (ibid; Yates, 1996: pp. 50-51). Such circumstances were rare among France's former colonies in Africa (Chipman, 1989: pp. 170-171). Much of this success was founded on the centralisation of power by the country's first president Gabriel Léon M'ba in the aftermath of the 1964 coup d'état and subsequent *carte blanche* granted to the single party state under his successor (Yates, 1996: pp. 105-117). While similar patterns of rule were evident in Congo, Chad, and CAR, the insecurity of these states and stronger manifestations of clientelism according to V-Dem's (2020) experts indicate distinctly personalised and illegitimate natures to authority and resource distribution in these contexts that have been significant for their comparative underperformance. As was noted in Chapter 2, neo-patrimonial developmentalism rests on the 'character and capacity of the state'; an illegitimate, insecure, or incapable state is unlikely to surmount informal dysfunction or pursue development (Leftwich, 1993: p. 620).

Presidentialism, or the 'systemic concentration of political power in the hands of one individual who resists delegating all but the most trivial decision making tasks' (Bratton and Van de

Walle, 1997: p. 63), has thus been central to the stability of Gabon and its productive application of domestic resources. V-Dem's *presidentialism index* considers indicators for 'executive respect for the constitution', non-legislative executive oversight, 'whether the legislature controls its own resources', whether the legislature investigates executive activities 'in practice', high and lower court independence, compliance with the high court and judiciary, and the 'autonomy of the electoral management body' (Coppedge et al., 2020: p. 274). The 'extent to which the president is free from constraints by other institutions or actors' (ibid) in Gabon has been central to its maintenance of security, productivity, and pursuit of development. Such dynamics clearly stand out in its comparatively high levels in V-Dem's (2020) *presidentialism index* presented in Figure 3.2 above and were centred on the one-party system in Gabon that was established in the aftermath of M'ba's restoration to power and consolidated under the reign of Omar Bongo (Gardinier, 1997b: pp. 146-148). As David E. Gardinier (1997b) observed, 'the single-party system provided Gabon with a new stability…[and] gave the president and the ruling class the means to perpetuate themselves in office' (p. 147). With French interests making revolt against the central state 'futile' in the formative decades of Bongo's reign, the president was able to employ his ethnic neutrality as a member of the relatively small Téké ethnic group to co-opt potential opposition and consolidate his centralised authority (ibid).

The early establishment of patron-client relations between Gabon and France and benefits derived from the security to rule in Gabon for the sustained extraction of resources were integral to the establishment and maintenance of a highly presidential state under Omar Bongo (Clark, 2008: p. 228; Yates, 1996: pp. 105-117). Importantly, the centrality of global patron-client relations between Libreville and Paris to the former's success despite Gabon's generally low *clientelism index* rating suggests V-Dem's (2020) evaluations may not sufficiently account for such global networks. In other words, the specific manifestation of and benefits from clientelism in Gabon were significant and, despite remaining comparatively weak themselves according to V-Dem's (2020) experts, these systems promoted the rapid centralisation of authority that was integral to the country's security and success (Clark, 2008: p. 228; Yates, 1996: pp. 105-117). These dynamics clearly contrasted with the

concurrent regimes in Republic of Congo, Chad, and Central African Republic, where domestic divisions, a lack of established resources, and other such obstacles precluded the same sort of favouritism and productivity as was enjoyed by Gabon (ibid; Eaton, 2006: p. 46; Lanne, 1997: pp. 270-271; O'Toole, 1997: pp. 113-120).

While Gabon was comparatively stable and productive amidst the consolidation and centralisation of Omar Bongo's presidential rule, Congo, Chad, and CAR were all far less secure or successful. As Chapter 2 made clear, these circumstances and disparities have the potential to be self-perpetuating and can weaken the formal capacity or legitimacy of the state (Elbadawi and Ndung'u, 2005: p. 20; Englebert, 2000a: p. 90). Such potentialities have been evident in the circumstances in Congo, Chad, and CAR by comparison to Gabon, have been integral to the specific operation of these states, and, importantly, are likewise evident within their results in V-Dem's (2020) *presidentialism index*. Congo, for instance, has experienced by far the most significant alterations to its ratings in the *presidentialism index* in equatorial Africa, a trend which began with the fall of its inaugural regime. Alphonse Massamba-Débat was the second president of Congo, toppling the regime of Abbé Fulbert Youlou and replacing the inherited parliamentary system with 'scientific socialism' and a single legal party, the National Movement of the Revolution (MNR) (Clark, 1997b: p. 64). The shifts initiated under President Massamba-Débat, importantly, represented a fundamental departure from the status quo political norms in Congo to that point (ibid).

Despite President Youlou having been favoured by France, the lack of French intervention differentiated Congo's early history from Gabon's and created a foundation for the rapid expansion of the country's personalistic politics and centralised concentration of power in the second half of the 1960s (Eaton, 2006: p. 46). As Massamba-Débat was working toward the consolidation of his rule in the latter years of the 1960s (ibid), furthermore, Congo's rating in the *presidentialism index* increased from 0.479 in 1964-1967 to 0.912 in 1969-1972. No other state in equatorial Africa has experienced such a significant or rapid alteration to its rating in V-Dem's (2020) *presidentialism index* at any point,

revealing the precise importance of these early shifts under President Massamba-Débat to the political norms that would dominate the rest of Congo's history (Clark, 2008: pp. 129-131). Likewise, domestic informants drew attention to the importance of this period of 'good' economic performance despite 'poor politics' under Massamba-Débat in moulding the operation of this state going forward[13].

Congo boasted the highest *presidentialism index* score in the region from 1969 to 1976 and again from 1979 to 1989, remaining above 0.900 in this *index* for the duration of 1969 to 1989. Based on V-Dem's (2020) expert assessments, therefore, the Congolese state in this period was characterised by a relative absence of constraints on the executive, which was consistent across regimes and central to the performance and priorities of the state in this context. Congo would have three heads of state after Massamba-Débat between 1969 and 1989, each of which was focused on the active consolidation of centralised rule, mostly fruitlessly (Clark, 1997b: pp. 64-65). Such an experience stands in stark contrast with Gabon, where Omar Bongo was president from 1967 until 2009 (Ahmadou, 2009). The stability and consistency provided by these domestic circumstances in Gabon, importantly, are reflected in its ratings in V-Dem's (2020) *presidentialism index*. Specifically, Gabon gained independence with a *presidentialism index* rating of 0.795, which remains its all-time high and would decline slightly in the first years of independence before finding a stable equilibrium under Bongo, scoring 0.786 from 1968 to 1989.

This trajectory in Gabon's *presidentialism index* rating is a far cry from those in Congo, Chad, and CAR, though Chad was similarly stable in these ratings prior to its dissolution into civil conflict at the end of the 1970s (Azavedo, 1998: p. 75; Lanne, 1997: pp. 270-271). Chad's scores in the *presidentialism index* steadily increased over the course of the 1960s and 1970s (from 0.691 in 1960 to 0.757 in 1979) but the single-year spike between 1979 and 1980, from 0.757 to 0.925, was indicative of a fundamental shift in domestic operations in Chad. The period of 1979 to 1982 represented 'the

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[13] Director of Population and Development, interviewed in the Pool region of Congo on 03 September 2019 (Interview Number 12). This individual argued that 'despite poor politics under Massamba Débat, the economy was good', which incentivised Massamba Débat and future presidents to retain such approaches.

demise of the [Chadian] state' (Azavedo, 1998: p. 75) as efforts to gain and consolidate control over the state repeatedly backfired and culminated in the thorough exacerbation of ethno-regional divisions (ibid; Lanne, 1997: pp. 270-271). Congo followed similar patterns and, importantly, both these states exhibited far higher levels of presidentialism in this period, according to V-Dem's (2020) assessments, than did Gabon at any point in its history.

Such disparate trajectories among these ostensibly similar states support the propositions outlined in Chapter 2 regarding the potential detriment from a nearly complete lack of constraints on executive authority (Fukuyama, 2005: pp. 94-103). Specifically, power that is completely centralised under a single authority can impede the construction of mechanisms for accountability, competition, or efficiency, limiting the legitimacy and security of the state (ibid). While 'centralizing control over rents' has been identified as integral to neo-patrimonial development, the absence of a 'long-term approach to rent-maximisation' can impede 'domestic investment' and stoke conflict in the absence of the necessary legitimacy to authority or formal capacities (Kelsall and Booth, 2010: p. 10; Englebert, 2000a: p. 90). These four states' early histories and experiences with V-Dem's (2020) *presidentialism index* are thus indicative of key distinguishing factors within Gabon, particularly under single party rule, which proved conducive to the security, legitimacy, and development of this state in stark contrast with the instability, illegitimacy, institutional weakness, and 'highly personalized' application of resources characterising each of its regional counterparts (Reno, 1998: p. 15).

Much like Congo and Chad, CAR experienced repeated instances of early volatility that threatened the very survival of the Central African state (O'Toole, 1997: pp. 113-120) and moulded it into a 'paper lion' amidst a 'hopeless' situation[14]. Central African Republic, indeed, was the most unstable equatorial African state in V-Dem's (2020) *presidentialism index* prior to 2000, increasing from 0.762 at independence to 0.905 in 1966, declining just as rapidly from 0.946 in 1977-1978 to 0.798 in 1980, and continuously declining through the 1980s and 1990s until reaching 0.446 in 1994-

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[14] US Official, interviewed in Libreville, Gabon on 15 August 2019 (Interview Number 02).

2002. While Gabon, Congo, and Chad all reached relative equilibrium points at some point in the twentieth century, in short, CAR's ratings in the *presidentialism index* were adjusted repeatedly until cementing its status as the least presidential state in the region from 1997 to 2019. The lack of consistency to domestic operations evident in these ratings, importantly, is indicative of the overall instability dominating CAR in the decades following the overthrow of its inaugural regime in 1965 (O'Toole, 1997: pp. 113-120). Similar dynamics moulded operations in Congo and Chad, providing important foils for the restoration, reinforcement, and maintenance of centralised rule in Gabon.

The noted shifts throughout the region in the 1990s, furthermore, served to significantly alter the nature of rule, if temporarily, in both Congo and CAR and correlated with important alterations to these states' ratings in V-Dem's (2020) *presidentialism index*. Although Gabon's 1990 shift to multi-party competition failed to threaten Omar Bongo's regime directly (Yates, 1996: pp. 129-134), even here there were some alterations to its ratings in V-Dem's (2020) *presidentialism index* which offer important insight into the operation of political institutions and nature to rule within these four states. Bongo retained power until his death in 2009 but the transition to multi-party competition in 1990 correlated with a rare alteration to the country's rating in this *index* as this long-standing regime was for the first time faced with a need to work toward the re-legitimisation of its authority (Gardinier, 1997b: pp. 149-153). Specifically, Gabon's *presidentialism index* rating went from 0.786 in 1971-1989 to 0.659 in 1990 and 0.669 from 1991 to 1999 as the constraints on executive authority notably increased in this period according to V-Dem's (2020) experts.

Despite failing to directly threaten the rule of Omar Bongo (Gardinier, 1997b: pp. 153-158), the country's shift to multi-party competition at the beginning of the 1990s was, according to V-Dem's (2020) assessments, accompanied by a weakening of the 'systemic concentration of political power in the hands of one individual' (Bratton and Van de Walle, 1997: p. 63) and a consequent strengthening of constraints on executive authority. These shifts contributed to an expansion in the competitiveness and accountability of the Gabonese state, reinforcing legitimacy and promoting the growth of its

fledgling 'democratic civil society'[15]. Gabon remained relatively stable in its rating in V-Dem's (2020) *presidentialism index* in the aftermath of this formal transition, despite a slight spike in recent years, and, importantly, has at no point experienced the sort of volatility that has characterised its regional counterparts. Congo, for instance, experienced a significant alteration to its *presidentialism index* rating surrounding its own transition to multi-party competition, declining from 0.927 in 1989 to 0.359 in 1992 and reaching as low as 0.346 in 1996.

In contrast to the experiences in Gabon and CAR, Congo's improvements toward a 'normatively better' situation based on V-Dem's (2020) assessments (Coppedge et al., 2020: p. 273) were rather short-lived and the country's score in the *presidentialism index* would spike in 1997 to 0.877 as Congo's displaced autocrat, Denis Sassou-Nguesso, returned to power amidst the country's dissolution into civil conflict (Clark, 2008: p. 251). Congo in 1997 reinforced the 'authoritarian and paternalistic politico-cultural norms that had held sway…before 1991' (ibid), gave in to Sassou-Nguesso's 'desire to retain power'[16], and restored a highly presidential system centred on the executive concentration of power, according to V-Dem's (2020) experts. Comparative and respective standings of these four states in the *presidentialism index*, importantly, have been relatively consistent since the 1990s, despite case-specific fluctuations including those in CAR surrounding its twenty-first century civil conflicts, the virtual collapse of its state (Gebremichael et al., 2018: p. 6; Isaacs-Martin, 2016: p. 33), and the perpetuation of 'power taken by guns'[17].

Gabon in 2019 received a *presidentialism index* rating of 0.790, barely less than its all-time high at independence (0.795) and nearly identical to the most recent ratings in Congo (0.800) and

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[15] Gabonese Activist, interviewed in Libreville, Gabon on 20 August 2019 (Interview Number 03). This individual argued that, despite the partial co-optation of civil society organisations and insufficient funding in this context, 'democratic civil society' overall is 'quite strong'.
[16] Gabonese Activist, interviewed in Libreville, Gabon on 20 August 2019 (Interview Number 03). This individual argued that 'things are getting worse' in Congo since Sassou-Nguesso's return to power and the state is dominated by corruption, embezzlement, and an overwhelming 'desire to retain power'.
[17] Gendarmerie Colonel, interviewed in Brazzaville, Congo on 06 September 2019 (Interview Number 17). This individual pointed to instances of civil conflict and 'power taken by guns' as central to the differences between Gabon and its three counterparts, especially CAR.

Chad (0.794). CAR, meanwhile, recorded a 2019 *presidentialism index* rating of 0.479 which was almost identical to its 1994-2002 rating (0.446) and remained the lowest in the region. As was noted in Chapter 2, importantly, the strength and legitimacy of the state rests on an endogenous, case-specific balance between centralisation and decentralisation; where the state is too (de)centralised, it can be constrained in its formal capacities, legitimacy, and security (Fukuyama, 2005: pp. 94-103). Where there is a weak, highly decentralised authority within an insecure context such as CAR, then, these circumstances can indicate distinct weaknesses in the formal capacity and legitimacy of the state and reveal important obstacles to its pursuit of development (ibid). 'Centralizing control over rents', in other words, is integral to neo-patrimonial development and rests on the legitimacy and effectiveness of central organising structures (Kelsall and Booth, 2010: p. 10).

Gabon's stable centralised rule, illustrated through the relative consistency of its *presidentialism index* ratings and the long-standing rule of the Bongo regime, has thus been integral to its productive mobilisation and application of domestic resources (Yates, 1996: pp. 105-117). These circumstances in Gabon have enabled development outcomes that rival almost any state in sub-Saharan Africa (World Bank, 2020; UNDP, 2020), despite being almost as neo-patrimonial as the most neo-patrimonial states in the subcontinent based on V-Dem's (2020) assessments (Sigman and Lindberg, 2017: pp. 11-12). Integral to the comparative security and performance of the Gabonese state has been the manifestation of presidentialism in this context and, specifically, the endogenous, effective centralisation of authority institutionalised under Omar Bongo (Gardinier, 1997b: pp. 146-148). Despite being nearly as presidential as Congo and Chad and more presidential than CAR based on V-Dem's (2020) *presidentialism index*, the consistency and productivity of the Gabonese state under centralised rule has been crucial to its divergence from these other states.

Republic of Congo, Chad, and Central African Republic have all been characterised by 'bad management' due to their repeated cycles of civil conflict[18], moulding the disparities between these three states and Gabon. Such circumstances can inhibit formal capacities and preclude the institutionalisation of necessary accountability or incentivisation structures, limiting legitimacy, inhibiting the productive distribution of resources, and constraining development (Mkandawire, 2001: p. 290). Even in the face of a recent executive transfer of power in 2009, on the other hand, there has been very little change to the nature of the state in Gabon or its ratings in V-Dem's (2020) *presidentialism index*. Omar Bongo died on 8 June 2009 and was succeeded by his son Ali Bongo Ondimba, who was elected in a September 2009 election riddled with claims of fraud and a rare instance of domestic uncertainty surrounding this first executive transition since 1967 (Ahmadou, 2009). Whereas Congo, Chad, and CAR were all characterised by an early and seemingly perpetual tendency toward civil conflict and executive turnover, the early security enjoyed by the Gabonese state and subsequent consolidation of authority under Omar Bongo was central to its success and continues to mould its operations and outcomes.

Tensions would erupt in the aftermath of Gabon's pivotal 2009 election, with André Mba Obame, formerly a reformist member of the ruling Gabonese Democratic Party (PDG), calling the results into question and declaring himself the rightful president under the National Union (UN) party in January 2011 (Freedom House, 2012). In response, the Gabonese state under the newly instated President Ali Bongo Ondimba dissolved the UN party, arrested Obame, and charged him with treason (ibid). Opposition parties would boycott the ensuing 2011 legislative elections, allowing the ruling PDG to capture 114 of the 120 seats available (ibid; BTI, 2020b: p. 5). This first executive transfer of power since 1967 provided for renewed domestic uncertainty and an increasingly vocal opposition, but the long-standing security, productivity, and effective centralisation of authority characterising

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[18] Gendarmerie Colonel, interviewed in Brazzaville, Congo on 06 September 2019 (Interview Number 17). This individual argued that instability and presidents who 'don't care about the population' had resulted in 'bad management' and weakened domestic institutions.

the Gabonese state would prove instrumental to the maintenance of this dynastic regime (ibid; Brubaker and Druet, 2020: pp. 17-18).

Despite a 'growth of repression' under Ali Bongo Ondimba[19] and the concentration of power among the ruling party in this period (ibid), the Gabonese state remained relatively consistent in its operations and priorities, as is evident in its *presidentialism index* ratings. Gabon's rating in this *index* capturing the 'extent to which the President is free from constraints by other institutions or actors' (Coopedge et al., 2020: p. 274), indeed, declined somewhat in the immediate aftermath of the 2009 election. Gabon's *presidentialism index* rating went from 0.727 in 2008-2009 to 0.683 in 2010-2011 before essentially returning to its pre-2009 level in 2012 (0.713). The moderately high *presidentialism* indicated by V-Dem's (2020) experts alongside an overall consistency in the nature to domestic operations in Gabon, importantly, have coincided with the sustained legitimacy of the regime even when faced with domestic insecurity and an executive transfer of power (Ahmadou, 2009). The other three countries' most recent transfers of executive power, in contrast, all coincided with noteworthy and long-standing alterations to their standing in this *index*.

These trends point to key factors involved in promoting in Gabon a stability and productivity to domestic operations that have been crucial to its comparative success in pursuing development. Similar dynamics were indicated by trends in V-Dem's (2020) *clientelism index* and, together, these patterns reveal important differentiating characteristics of the Gabonese state that have enabled its comparatively impressive outcomes. Specifically, as was discussed in Chapter 2, clientelism and presidentialism employed together 'can be salient aspects of successful developmental states' given the endogenous manifestation thereof, sufficient circumstances, and strong formal capacities (Mkandawire, 2015: p. 578; Arriola, 2009: pp. 1342-1345; Fukuyama, 2005: pp. 94-103). Such dynamics have, based on the findings to this point, been central to Gabon's success, with a strong

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[19] UNOCA Official, interviewed in Libreville, Gabon on 22 August 2019 (Interview Number 05). This individual stated they had observed a 'growth of repression' by the regime of Ali Bongo Ondimba as 'distrust' among the populace increased. Amidst these circumstances, they argued that 'true democracy' was unlikely.

central authority and comparatively weak clientelism combining to reinforce domestic security, enable productivity, and promote development. These patterns in Gabon have remained relatively consistent under Omar Bongo's successor (Brubaker and Druet, 2020: pp. 17-18).

Ali Bongo Ondimba has retained the Gabonese presidency for a dozen years as of the time of writing and has, in this period, consistently sought to counter through formal and informal means an increasingly popular opposition driven by the perceived illegitimacy of electoral processes and lack of accountability among ruling elites (ibid; Isbell and Bhoojedhur, 2018, 2020). President Bongo emerged victorious from his 2016 re-election campaign, but the threat posed to his reign by former Minister of Foreign Affairs Jean Ping would prompt a resurgence of informal mechanisms and the application of 'political corruption' to ensure the sustenance of his regime[20]. Widespread claims of fraud, particularly in Bongo's home province (where he infamously received 95% of the vote on 99.9% turnout[21]) (BTI, 2020b: p. 8), and Ping's refusal to accept the results fed into a period of unrest rare for this small country and for the first time challenged the reign of Omar Bongo's son (Brubaker and Druet, 2020: pp. 17-18). In response, the regime of President Ali Bongo Ondimba increasingly sought to re-legitimise itself through concentrated efforts to silence or co-opt opposition figures (ibid). Such tendencies and efforts to further centralise power are quite evident in Gabon's most recent results in V-Dem's (2020) *presidentialism index*.

Gabon's rating in the *presidentialism index* has increased in recent years as Ali Bongo Ondimba has increasingly faced domestic pressures and sought to reassert his authority in response (Brubaker and Druet, 2020: pp. 17-18). Specifically, Gabon's rating in this *index* went from 0.690 in 2017, closer to CAR than Chad in this regard, to 0.790 in 2019, almost identical to Chad and Congo. Indicated by these ratings is a clear and rapid expansion in the presidentialism in Gabon, pointing to a growth in the overall concentration of power in the hands of Ali Bongo Ondimba. Omar Bongo's son has, in

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[20] Gabonese Activist, interviewed in Libreville, Gabon on 20 August 2019 (Interview Number 03).
[21] Ali Bongo Ondimba won his re-election in 2016 with a total popular vote margin of just over 5,000; he gained more than 68,000 votes from his home province of Haut-Ogooué (BTI, 2020b: p. 8).

other words, increasingly centralised authority in recent years to insulate his regime from potential opposition and preserve the long-standing nature of this dynastic state (ibid). These dynamics have stood out throughout Gabon's ratings in V-Dem's (2020) *presidentialism index,* have been central to the performance of the Gabonese state since the opening decades of independence, and have promoted the productive application of domestic resources to an extent none of its regional counterparts can match. Such patterns have been evident throughout V-Dem's (2020) assessments of clientelism and presidentialism in this context and have rested, importantly, on the overall consistency of operations in Gabon.

While all of Republic of Congo, Chad, and Central African Republic have been characterised throughout their histories by insecurity, civil conflict, and forceful executive turnover, Gabon has remained largely immune from these patterns. These disparate circumstances have, based on the findings to this point, culminated in Gabon boasting the most consistent performance in the region in V-Dem's (2020) *clientelism* and *presidentialism indices*. These patterns in Gabon have moulded and been moulded by the specific manifestation and consistency of these systems within this context. Consistently recording region-low ratings in the *clientelism index* alongside comparatively elevated ratings in the *presidentialism index*, specifically, points to key factors determining the manifestation of neo-patrimonialism in this context and the impact from such informality on its domestic circumstances and overall performance. Regime corruption, the third and final component of neo-patrimonial systems to be assessed in this chapter, is likewise integral to these systems and, as was discussed in Chapter 2, has the potential to breed institutional dysfunction and exacerbate the detriment from endemic clientelism or presidentialism (Oluwatobi et al., 2015: pp. 6-7).

Corruption can inhibit government performance and prevent formal institutions and political elites from pursuing key long-term objectives (ibid). The consistency of clientelism and presidentialism in Gabon have been significant and intimately connected to the domestic circumstances and nature of rule in this context. Assessment of the specific operation and

manifestation of regime corruption will build on these findings to offer important insight into the extent to which neo-patrimonial informality has constrained formal institutions or bred dysfunction inimical to the pursuit of development in equatorial Africa (ibid). As is evident in Figure 3.3 below, importantly, this specific component of these states' neo-patrimonialism has been evaluated by V-Dem's (2020) experts as the most consistent aspect of these systems in the region. Though Gabon has been stable and consistent in its performance in V-Dem's (2020) *indices* to this point, the specific operation, manifestation, and consistency of regime corruption is indicative of key patterns moulding its overall performance and productivity.

3d. Regime Corruption and Operational Consistency

Figure 3.3 Regime Corruption Index Results
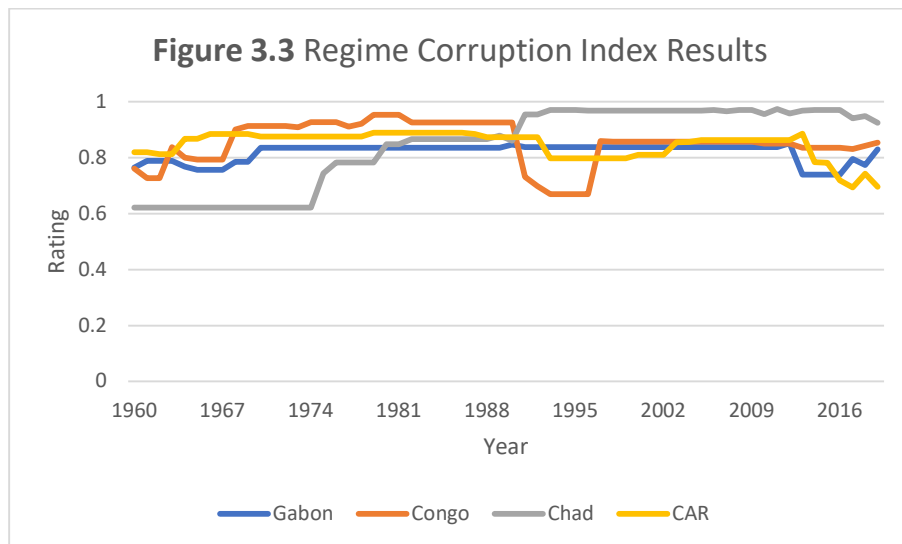
(V-Dem, 2020)

As Chapter 2 made clear, neo-patrimonial systems are characterised by the variable manifestation of and impact from endemic clientelism, presidentialism, and regime corruption. As has been clear in this chapter to this point, furthermore, Gabon, Republic of Congo, Chad, and Central African Republic have been similarly variable in their domestic circumstances and the specific manifestation and operation of clientelism and presidentialism within these contexts. Gabon has been the most stable and consistent state in equatorial Africa, both in its domestic circumstances and ratings in V-Dem's

(2020) *indices*, importantly characterised by the weakest manifestation of clientelism among these four states based on these assessments. The early security of the Gabonese state, effective employment of centralised presidential rule, and comparatively apolitical distribution of resources, based on these findings, have been integral to its performance and relative success. Regime corruption, the third and final component of these systems, has been the most consistent of these informal systems among these four countries according to V-Dem's (2020) experts and is central to the dysfunction bred by or detriment from a country's neo-patrimonialism.

Corruption represents a 'kind of institutional failure…[which] inhibits government's responsiveness to both indigenous and foreign entrepreneurs and creates bottlenecks to the implementation of their goals and agendas' (Oluwatobi et al., 2015: pp. 6-7). As was noted in Chapter 2, therefore, the productivity of a given economy and potential detriment from regime corruption rely on 'a favorable institutional environment' which can allow the state to 'sustain growth and development…[and] enabl[e] the innovation process' (p. 8). Scholars like Goldsmith (2001), furthermore, have viewed the dominant interests and priorities among ruling elites as central to the potential detriment from corruption or productivity of the domestic economy (p. 84). Corruption is thus not detrimental in and of itself but, rather, its effects are moulded by domestic circumstances and specifically the presence of key factors including 'chronic poverty, political instability, low literacy levels, [and] widespread income inequality' (Mahagaonkar, 2008: p. 7). Put simply, expansions in the *regime corruption* operating within a given state can be symptomatic of overall domestic dysfunction and limit the economic growth potential of a given state (p. 13).

V-Dem's *regime corruption index* considers indicators for 'executive embezzlement', 'executive bribes', 'legislative corruption', and 'judicial corruption' (Coppedge et al., 2020: p. 275), capturing patterns explicitly linked to 'the conceptualization of corruption in literature on neopatrimonial rule' (p. 274). Whereas the *clientelism index* was centred on the flow of public resources and patron-client relations within key political institutions, *regime corruption* is thus centred

on evaluating specific dynamics relevant to the potential siphoning of specific resources or acceptance of financial compensation to sway political outcomes or judicial decisions (ibid). Although a high *regime corruption index* rating may be indicative of significant informal constraints on institutional operations (Oluwatobi et al., 2015: pp. 6-7), the consistency exhibited by Gabon in this regard is significant for the potential detriment from domestic corruption for development prospects and outcomes. Oscillation in the operation of such systems can be significant for the impact therefrom on formal institutions, states' abilities to attract investment to promote economic growth, and the long-term pursuit of key objectives (Mahagaonkar, 2008: p. 13; Ranis, 1992: p. 98).

While Gabon has been relatively stable in its domestic operations throughout its history and has likewise been comparatively consistent in its ratings in the *clientelism* and *presidentialism indices*, its distinct advantages over the other states in equatorial Africa are most apparent through the consistency of its ratings in the *regime corruption index*. With a 1960 to 2019 range in this *index* of 0.739 to 0.851, indeed, its *regime corruption* ratings make its results in the other *indices* look somewhat volatile. *Regime corruption* is defined in V-Dem's (2020) Codebook as the extent to which 'politicians use their offices for private and/or political gain' (Coppedge et al., 2020: p. 274), capturing experts' assessments of whether the state is insulated from or moulded by 'myopic private interests' (Mkandawire, 2001: p. 290). Gabon has exhibited significant capacities to manage and productively distribute domestic resources through a strong central authority and comparatively apolitical application of domestic rents, based on V-Dem's (2020) expert assessments. The lack of significant alterations to the operation of its *regime corruption*, evident both within its historical circumstances and V-Dem's (2020) ratings, furthermore, has been central to these processes and the success enjoyed in the interim.

Gabon's 1960 to 2019 range in the *regime corruption index* of 0.739 to 0.851 was far narrower than those among its regional counterparts. Republic of Congo's 1960 to 2019 range in V-Dem's (2020) *regime corruption index* ratings was 0.669 to 0.953; Chad's range was 0.621 to 0.974; and

Central African Republic's was 0.693 to 0.889. Significantly, the most drastic alterations to have occurred in Gabon's ratings in the *regime corruption index* have occurred since Omar Bongo's death and Ali Bongo Ondimba's ascension to the presidency[22]; Gabon received both its all-time high (0.851, 2012) and all-time low (0.739, 2013-2016) *regime corruption index* ratings after these pivotal events in 2009. While similar recent trends have been evident in CAR, importantly, the comparative trajectories of these four states during the reign of Omar Bongo (1967-2009) in the *regime corruption index* indicate key points of differentiation between Gabon and its counterparts. Specifically, Gabon experienced a noteworthy increase in its rating in V-Dem's (2020) *regime corruption index* at the onset of Bongo's reign, from 0.757 in 1965-1967 to 0.835 in 1970-1989, but this has changed very little in the decades since.

Gabon scored 0.835 from 1970 to 1989, 0.847 in 1990, and 0.837 from 1991 to 2011; from 1970 to 2011, thus, Gabon's rating in the *regime corruption index* ranged from 0.835 to 0.847, the least incidence or significance of alteration in this regard in the region. The stability and consistency to domestic operations and the manifestation of *regime corruption* within this context evidenced by these ratings was a key characteristic of the Gabonese state under Omar Bongo and was central to the specific nature to power and revenue distribution in this context (Yates, 1996: pp. 121-123). In contrast to this consistency in informal mechanisms resulting from the active preservation of the Gabonese regime and development of domestic economic interests (Clark, 2008: p. 228), Congo, Chad, and CAR all experienced significant alterations to their ratings in V-Dem's (2020) *regime corruption index* in this period. The insecurity, relative 'lack of resources'[23], and institutional weaknesses characterising these three states' independent histories, in short, entrenched dysfunction and

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[22] Gabonese Activist, Congolese Activist, and NIOSI Researchers. The former was interviewed in Libreville, Gabon on 20 August 2019 and the latter two were both interviewed in Brazzaville, Congo on 04 September 2019 (Interview Numbers 03, 13, and 14). These individuals all noted the inconsistent expansion of corruption in Gabon under Ali Bongo Ondimba and the implications from these patterns for the operation and security of the regime under Omar Bongo's successor.

[23] UNOCA Official, interviewed in Libreville, Gabon on 22 August 2019 (Interview Number 05). This individual argued that a 'lack of resources' had been particularly influential in 'undermin[ing] the authority of the state' in these contexts, in contrast to Gabon.

promoted anti-developmental expansions in domestic corruption that are foreign to the Gabonese experience (ibid; Reno, 1998: p. 15; Yates, 1996: pp. 121-123).

While Gabon was ruled by Omar Bongo between 1967 and 2009, Congo, Chad, and CAR each experienced frequent turnovers of power in this period which served to disrupt domestic operations, impart a 'memory of violence' (Clark, 2008: p. 118), and contribute to the inconsistency of their 'elaborate system[s] of patronage' (Giroux, Lanz, and Sguaitamatti, 2009: p. 9). Likewise, these states came to be characterised by 'hardship, privation, and violence' (Batianga-Kinzi, 2014: p. 60), central states that were largely absent from the day to day lives of their citizens (Van de Walle, 2001; Bierschenk and de Sardan, 1997), 'power taken by guns'[24], and 'mildly corrupt' (Clark, 1997b: p. 63) economies dominated by a 'small patrimonial elite' (O'Toole, 1997: p. 115). These circumstances, furthermore, coincided with significant alterations to these three states' *regime corruption index* ratings amidst a lack of any consistency to domestic operations or dominant interests and priorities. While Gabon's ratings in this *index* remained virtually unchanged through four decades of Omar Bongo's rule, indeed, Congo and Chad both experienced their most significant volatility in V-Dem's (2020) *regime corruption index* in this same period.

Congo and Chad collectively had nine presidents between 1967 and 2009, with each of these states experiencing repeated instances of civil conflict and violent overthrows in this period (Styan, 2013: pp. 239-242; Clark, 1997b: p. 64). Specifically, Congo experienced five heads of state during the reign of Omar Bongo and remained susceptible to civil conflict, yielding the most inconsistent state in the region in the twentieth century in its political operations and leaving 'an indelible mark on the nation's political consciousness' (Clark, 1997b: p. 64). Similar tendencies, importantly, are evident in Congo's ratings in the *regime corruption index* and indicate the precise detriment from this state's inconsistency for its legitimacy, efficiency, and productivity (ibid). Congo gained independence with a *regime corruption index* rating of 0.761, only higher than Chad's, but this would rapidly increase in

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[24] Gendarmerie Colonel, Interviewed in Brazzaville, Congo on 06 September 2019 (Interview Number 17).

the opening decade of independence, surpassing 0.900 by 1968 (0.901) and obtaining the highest

score in the region that same year. Congo's *regime corruption index* rating would remain above 0.900,

and the highest in the region, until 1990. As was likewise evident in *clientelism* and *presidentialism*

ratings, thus, the transformations in Congo following the forceful ascension of Alphonse Massamba-

Débat in 1963[25] prompted significant alterations to the country's *regime corruption* rating.

The 'moderate-socialist' technocrat that replaced Congo's first regime instituted a systemic

concentration and personalisation of domestic power and resources (Eaton, 2006: p. 46) which

enabled the abuse of public office for private or political objectives, according to V-Dem's (2020)

experts. Chad, not dissimilarly, experienced a rapid early expansion of its *regime corruption index*

rating, evidencing the fundamentally altered nature of domestic operations in the foundational

decades of independence (Styan, 2013: pp. 239-242). The domestic circumstances implied by these

trends, furthermore, entrenched the institutional dysfunction with which all of Congo, Chad, and CAR

have come to be associated and served to perpetuate the 'highly personalized' nature of rent

distribution in these contexts (Reno, 1998: p. 15), in contrast to Gabon. Chad had four presidents

during the reign of Omar Bongo and was the most corrupt state in the region from 1991 to 2019

according to V-Dem's (2020) experts, but the important shifts that occurred in this regard surrounded

the country's early instability, its first forceful turnover of power, and the trajectory cemented in that

early period (Styan, 2013: pp. 239-242). François Tombalbaye retained power in Chad from 1960 until

his assassination in April 1975 (Lanne, 1997: pp. 270-271); Chad's score in the *regime corruption index*

likewise remained stable at 0.621 from 1960 to 1974 but would fundamentally shift after the fall of its

inaugural regime.

Chad's *regime corruption index* rating increased from 0.621 in 1960-1974 to 0.744 in 1975,

0.782 in 1976-1979, 0.848 in 1980-81, and over 0.900 for the first time in 1991 (0.954), retaining the

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[25] This links to an interesting, and revealing, anecdote shared with the author by a Director of Population and
Development, interviewed in the Pool region of Congo on 03 September 2019 (Interview Number 12). In
short, President Youlou gave Massamba-Débat a baby elephant to pass to US President John F. Kennedy as a
gift, the funds from which Massamba-Débat swiftly employed to organise his forceful overthrow of Youlou.

highest score in the region since. The assassination of François Tombalbaye in April 1975 and subsequent dissolution into civil conflict between 1979 and 1982 wielded significant influence over the operation and priorities of the Chadian state as it fought for its mere survival (Azavedo, 1998: p. 75; Lanne, 1997: pp. 270-271). These patterns and the country's oscillation between various forcefully ascended autocratic rulers (ibid), furthermore, served to fundamentally alter the country's trajectory in the *regime corruption index* from being consistently the least corrupt state in the region under Tombalbaye to being the most corrupt state in the region under its most recent president Idriss Déby[26], according to V-Dem's (2020) experts. While Chad has been relatively steady in its ratings in the *regime corruption index* since 1991, furthermore, the volatility and inconsistency in Congo and CAR had only just begun.

All three of these states, like Gabon, experienced a formal transition toward multi-party competition at the beginning of the 1990s but, unlike Gabon, these culminated in further insecurity in Congo, Chad, and CAR and served to significantly undermine the consistency of domestic operations in Congo and CAR (Clark, 2008: p. 228). Gabon in 1990 formally transitioned to multi-party competition, effectively putting an end to the single party state that had been central to Omar Bongo's rule to that point (Gardinier, 1997b: p. 147). This formal transition, however, served to reinforce and re-legitimise the Gabonese state, providing for the continued reign of Bongo for the decades to follow and clearly distinguishing Gabon from its counterparts (ibid; Ahmadou, 2009; Clark, 2008: p. 228). In Chad, in contrast, Hisséne Habré had been in power since gaining power in the 1979-1982 civil war but followed the transition to multi-party rule in 1989 with an 'openly authoritarian' state in which justices to the Supreme Court were never appointed and minimal constraints were placed on executive authority (Lanne, 1997: pp. 272-274). This period culminated in Habré's overthrow by Idriss Déby in December 1990 (ibid; Hansen, 2020: pp. 13-14) and Chad's final major shift in the *regime*

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[26] Idriss Déby was killed while leading an assault against rebels on 19 April 2021, succeeded in the immediate term by his son Mahamat Déby in preparation for an 'inclusive national dialogue in November and December 2021' prior to elections to be held in June and September 2022 (Henningsen, 2021; Behrends et al., 2021; Gissel and Henningsen, 2021).

corruption index, from 0.861 in 1990 to 0.954 in 1991-1992, cementing the country's status as the most corrupt in equatorial Africa according to V-Dem's (2020) experts.

Like Chad, the shifts in V-Dem's (2020) assessment of Congo and CAR concurrent with domestic insecurity and formal transitions at the beginning of the 1990s are revealing for the overall inconsistency of operations within these contexts (Giroux, Lanz, and Sguaitamatti, 2009: p. 5; Clark, 2008: pp. 213-214; Clark, 1997b: p. 67; O'Toole, 1997: p. 120). Denis Sassou-Nguesso gained power in 1979 and managed to consolidate his power through the 1980s on the back of high pre-1985 oil revenues (Clark, 1997b: p. 65) and the increased amassment of public debt (Clark, 2008: p. 213). With 16 percent of employment coming from parastatals (Clark, 1997b: p. 67), negligible oil revenues (Clark, 2008: p. 214) and International Monetary Fund (IMF) sponsored structural adjustment programmes since 1986 (Eaton, 2006: p. 47), and a dangerously rising indebtedness (Clark, 2008: p. 213), however, Republic of Congo was virtually bankrupt by 1990. The lack of legitimacy that consumed the Congolese state in this period forced Sassou-Nguesso and the ruling Congolese Labour Party (PCT) Central Committee to follow through on a commitment to form a new constitution and move toward multi-party elections which temporarily put an end to his reign (Clark, 1997b: p. 67).

The resultant short-lived (1992-1997) reign of Pascal Lissouba would be marred by ethnic violence and economic stagnation (Akum, 2018: p. 5) and, likewise, coincided with important shifts in the country's *regime corruption index* rating that are elucidatory of domestic operations and inconsistency in Congo. Republic of Congo's *regime corruption index* rating declined from 0.925 in 1982-1990 to 0.731 in 1991 and 0.669 from 1993 to 1996, indicating a significant contraction in the extent to which 'politicians use[d] their offices for private and/or political gain' in this period (Coppedge et al., 2020: p. 274). In apparent confirmation of the temporary nature to the impact of this transition, Congo's dissolution into civil conflict in 1997 and the subsequent return to power of Denis Sassou-Nguesso (Clark, 2008: p. 108) correlated with further shifts in the country's *regime corruption index* rating. Congo's score in this *index* increased from 0.669 in 1993-1996 to 0.859 in

1997 and 0.857 in 1998-2009, indicating not only the clear volatility of Congo's operations during the 1990s but the relative consistency of these systems since the return of the country's 'authoritarian and paternalistic politico-cultural norms that had held sway in Congo before 1991' (p. 251).

Central African Republic, not dissimilar to Congo, experienced its first significant alteration to its ratings in the *regime corruption index* since the early years of independence in the 1990s, with its score dropping from 0.873 in 1988-1992 to 0.797 in 1993-1999. Angel-Félix Patassé was elected to the Central African presidency in 1993 following the formal institutionalisation of multi-party competition (O'Toole, 1997: p. 120) and represented an important shift in a country that had existed under *de facto* neo-colonial rule since 1979 (Powell, 2017: p. 9). These shifts and formal transformations, however, did little to address domestic circumstances in CAR (Batianga-Kinzi, 2014: p. 60; Van de Walle, 2001; Bierschenk and de Sardan, 1997). '[E]thnic identity' was established 'as the crucial factor in the political culture of Central African Republic' in the years leading up to this transition to multi-party rule, dividing the state and society and impeding any benefit from democracy (Berg, 2008: p. 20). The 'small patrimonial elite' that dominated CAR's state in the twentieth century (O'Toole, 1997: p. 115), consequently, would remain in power despite having long proven insufficient for the mobilisation of domestic resources toward the reinforcement of the regime or pursuit of development (Berg, 2008: p. 20).

The newly elected regime of President Pattassé, '[r]ather than addressing economic and political problems', actively prioritised the security of his reign, reinforcing domestic 'divisions' which only further 'fuelled violence' (Giroux, Lanz, and Sguaitamatti, 2009: p. 5). The impact of the country's formal political shifts on the stability and legitimacy of the regime were resultantly minimal, culminating in President Patassé's toppling by a 2003 rebellion after having survived three mutinies in 1996 and an attempted coup d'état in 2001 (Berg, 2008: p. 21). While Patassé's successor François Bozizé would remain in power until 2013, furthermore, he demonstrated minimal capacity to manufacture legitimacy, maintain domestic security, or generate sufficient revenues to satiate

patrons, clients, or the population (Berg, 2008: pp. 22-27). CAR's rating in the *regime corruption index* was relatively stable throughout Bozizé's reign but the insecurity resulting from his exacerbation of ethno-regional tensions and subsequent fall in 2013 (Isaacs-Martin, 2016: p. 33) correlated with significant shifts in this regard. CAR's *regime corruption index* rating declined from 0.886 in 2013 to 0.784 in 2014 and below 0.700 by 2017 (0.693), the region's most significant rate or extent of change in these ratings in the twenty-first century.

Much like the patterns detailed to this point in Congo, Chad, and CAR throughout their histories, the recent alterations to V-Dem's (2020) experts' assessments of *regime corruption* in CAR point to the significance of its civil conflicts for the quality and consistency of its domestic operations (Gebremichael et al., 2018: p. 6). As was discussed in Chapter 2, furthermore, though significant expansions in regime corruption can be detrimental to stability and the pursuit of development (Mahagaonkar, 2008: p. 13), the overall legitimacy, security, and consistency of the state in its operations wield significant influence over the impact from these conditions and capacity of the state to remain secure or pursue development (Oluwatobi et al., 2015: p. 8). Congo, Chad, and CAR, based on these propositions, have at no point constructed a 'favorable institutional environment' conducive to sustained 'growth and development' (ibid) and have consistently been impacted upon detrimentally by the 'behaviour among national rulers' (Goldsmith, 2001: p. 84). Particularly in Chad and CAR, a 'lack of resources' and perpetual institutional weaknesses have reinforced the cycles of instability and dysfunction entrenched in these contexts[27]. These circumstances can reinforce the detriment from corruption and promote cycles of instability, impoverishment, and underdevelopment (Oluwatobi et al., 2015: p. 8) such as has been evident among these three countries.

Even Gabon's 2009 transfer of power from father to son, furthermore, failed to significantly disrupt domestic circumstances or challenge the sustenance of this long-standing regime and the 'big

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[27] UNOCA Official, interviewed in Libreville, Gabon on 22 August 2019 (Interview Number 05). This individual argued that a 'lack of resources' in these contexts had 'undermin[ed] the authority of the state'.

group' of dominant elites therein[28] (Freedom House, 2012; Ahmadou, 2009). Gabon's *regime corruption index* rating, likewise, remained stable at 0.837 from 1991 through 2011, indicating the extent to which this transition failed to significantly alter the operations of the Gabonese state or economy. As the years have progressed and the regime of Ali Bongo Ondimba has increasingly come under scrutiny for its failure to address endemic corruption or hold elites accountable (Isbell and Bhoojedhur, 2020), however, Gabon has recorded important alterations to its *regime corruption index* rating which are elucidatory of the efforts by this state to strategically employ informal mechanisms and 'political corruption' toward the legitimisation of Ali Bongo Ondimba's rule[29] (Brubaker and Druet, 2020: pp. 17-18). Specifically, Gabon's *regime corruption index* rating fell from 0.851 in 2012 to 0.739 in 2013-2016, increased in 2017 to 0.795, fell in 2018 to 0.774, and increased again in 2019 to 0.830, essentially returning to its 1991-2011 ratings.

Increasingly vocal opposition (Isbell and Bhoojedhur, 2018, 2020), the perceived 'weakness of this highly presidentialized system' as a result of Ali Bongo Ondimba's October 2018 stroke[30] (BTI, 2020b: p. 4), and high profile cases of corruption and embezzlement[31] (US Dept. of State, 2020) contributed to a noteworthy decline and subsequent restoration of the country's rating in the *regime corruption index* as the regime struggled to find the most effective balance between formal and informal priorities (Brubaker and Druet, 2020: pp. 17-18). In the aftermath of Gabon's 2016 election, the regime of Ali Bongo Ondimba sought to employ informal structures to silence or co-opt opposition and bring an end to this rare instance of domestic uncertainty (ibid). These patterns fed into rare fluctuations in Gabon's *regime corruption index* ratings but, importantly, have failed to derail a state

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[28] UNAIDS Official, interviewed in Libreville, Gabon on 14 August 2019 (Interview Number 01). This individual argued that 'there's one big group' that dominates Gabon and that 'even if the head is weak, the surrounding body is strong', implicating the inability of an executive transfer of power to challenge these systems.

[29] Gabonese Activist, interviewed in Libreville, Gabon on 20 August 2019 (Interview Number 03).

[30] Bongo did not make a live public appearance in Gabon following his stroke in December 2018 until the country's independence celebrations in August 2019, while the author was attendant in Libreville.

[31] A recent example includes the November 2019 crackdown which resulted in several arrests including President Ali Bongo Ondimba's former spokesperson, Ike Ngouoni, and former cabinet director, Brice Laccruche Alihanga, first brought to the attention of the author via digital communication from the Gabonese Activist interviewed in Libreville, Gabon on 20 August 2019 (Interview Number 03).

whose success and legitimacy had been cemented over the course of the twentieth century under the centralised rule of Omar Bongo (Ahmadou, 2009; Gardinier, 1997b: p. 147). Even in the face of domestic uncertainty and repeated alterations to its rating in V-Dem's (2020) *regime corruption index*, the state in Gabon has remained remarkably consistent in its overall performance.

In clear contrast to Congo, Chad, and CAR, Gabon's early and long-standing security and the consistency and legitimacy to its domestic operations have provided a stable balance between the operation of formality and informality in this context, centred on the targeted application of regime corruption, strong presidential rule, and the weakest clientelism in the region, according to V-Dem's (2020) assessments. Such trends have been evident through the country's relatively stable rating in V-Dem's (2020) *indices*, and particularly the *regime corruption index*, throughout its independent history, despite some alterations in recent years surrounding the perceived illegitimacy of Omar Bongo's successor (BTI, 2020b: p. 35; Isbell and Bhoojedhur, 2018, 2020). Whereas the other three states in the region all experienced significant instances of instability and consequent inconsistencies in domestic operations and ratings in the *regime corruption index*, Gabon has been virtually immune from such circumstances and has retained levels of corruption according to V-Dem's (2020) experts that have barely changed since Bongo's ascension in 1967. Such processes have survived formal transitions and a recent transfer of power and have been integral to its historical and modern performance.

Even with recent shifts as the regime of Ali Bongo Ondimba has pursued the application of centralised mechanisms for repression and accommodation (Brubaker and Druet, 2020: p. 18), Gabon's 2019 rating of 0.830 was almost identical to its ratings under Omar Bongo (1970-2011 range: 0.835 to 0.847). Gabon has thus been highly consistent in this *index* throughout its history and has at no point experienced a significant alteration to its rating that might indicate the dysfunctional expansion or inconsistency of domestic corruption. These trends in Gabon stand in stark contrast with those among its regional counterparts and have been evident throughout the findings of this chapter.

As has stood out in this chapter and will become clear as the thesis proceeds, Gabon has, for the duration of its independent history, been the most stable state in equatorial Africa, culminating in region-low 'fragility' (Systemic Peace, 2018), impressive early economic growth (World Bank, 2020), and development outcomes that rival almost any state in sub-Saharan Africa (ibid; UNDP, 2020). These unique outcomes have coincided with stand-out domestic circumstances and the most steady and consistent performance in the region in V-Dem's (2020) *indices*.

Gabon's comparatively apolitical distribution of resources, strong executive authority, and consistent operationalisation of corruption, according to V-Dem's (2020) expert assessments, are indicative of important trends in this state that have served to differentiate its experience and manifestation of neo-patrimonialism from those among its regional counterparts. Specifically, although Gabon has been evaluated by past studies as a 'rentier state' (Yates, 1996: pp. 41-79) and is nearly as neo-patrimonial as the most neo-patrimonial states in the subcontinent (V-Dem, 2020; Sigman and Lindberg, 2017: pp. 11-12), its domestic circumstances and the specific manifestation of neo-patrimonialism indicated by V-Dem's (2020) *indices* insulated this state from the instability, institutional weakness, and personalistic distribution of resources characterising its counterparts, contributing to disparate modern outcomes (Clark, 2008: p. 228; Reno, 1998: p. 15; Yates, 1996: pp. 41-51). As is evident in Figure 3.4 below, furthermore, Gabon has been similarly stable in its ratings in V-Dem's (2020) overall *neo-patrimonial rule index*. Despite being nearly as neo-patrimonial as Congo and Chad and more neo-patrimonial than CAR by this metric, the specific manifestation of these systems, the domestic circumstances detailed to this point, and Gabon's overall consistency are revealing for key factors behind the variance in performance and outcomes among these four states.

3e. Neo-Patrimonial Rule in Equatorial Africa

Figure 3.4 Neo-Patrimonial Rule Index Results
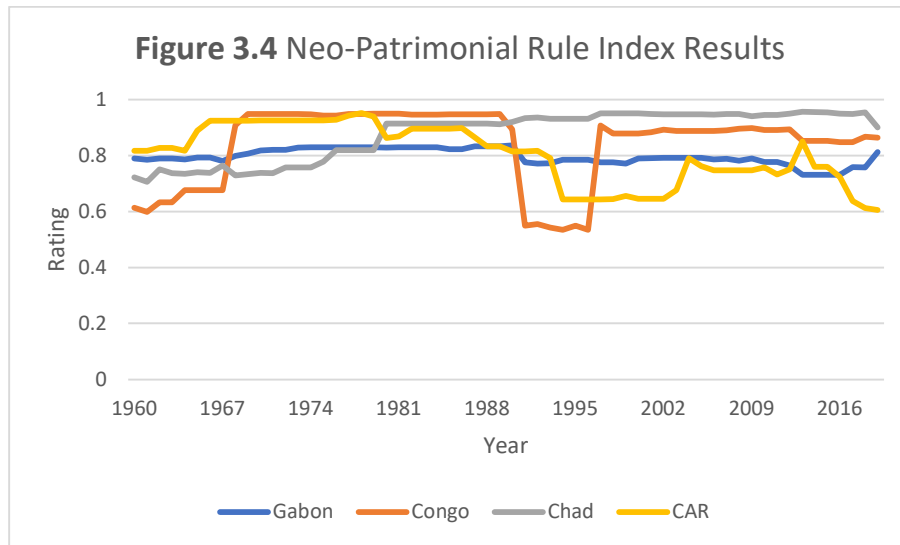
(V-Dem, 2020)

As has been clear throughout this chapter so far, Gabon has been the most stable and consistent state in equatorial Africa in its informal operations, enabling and enabled by stand-out dynamics and circumstances that have been significant for its long-term performance. Such trends stand in stark contrast with those among its regional counterparts and have coincided with the most consistent performance in the region in V-Dem's (2020) *clientelism, presidentialism,* and *regime corruption indices*. According to these *indices*, Gabon boasts the least politicised or personalistic distribution of public resources in the region alongside high but similarly consistent evaluations of its concentration of executive authority and use of political office for personal gain. These ratings are indicative of the overall consistency and effectiveness of domestic operations in Gabon which have culminated in the most productive and consistent application of domestic rents in the region throughout its independent history. This consistency in ratings in V-Dem's (2020) *indices* points to key factors behind Gabon's disparate performance, has been evident throughout the historical circumstances detailed above, and, importantly, is reiterated in these states' overall *neo-patrimonial rule index* ratings.

Neo-patrimonial rule is defined in V-Dem's (2020) Codebook as 'the idea that personalistic forms of authority pervade formal regime institutions…combin[ing] clientelistic political relationships, strong and unconstrained presidents and the use of public resources for political legitimation'

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(Coppedge et al., 2020: p. 273). Just like its component *indices*, the *neo-patrimonial rule index* is scored from 0 to 1, with lower scores indicating 'a normatively better situation…and higher scores a normatively worse situation' (ibid). In most recent (2019) ratings, Gabon scored 0.813 in V-Dem's (2020) *neo-patrimonial rule index*, compared to 0.864 in Congo, 0.900 in Chad, and 0.605 in CAR. Gabon is thus rated by this *index* as being in a 'normatively worse situation' than CAR (ibid) and almost as neo-patrimonial as the most neo-patrimonial state in sub-Saharan Africa, Chad (ibid; Sigman and Lindberg, 2017: pp. 11-12). As was emphasised in Chapter 2 and has likewise been a centrepiece of this chapter, however, the impact of and outcomes from neo-patrimonialism within these contexts have been widely variable and moulded by the specific manifestation of these systems and surrounding domestic circumstances.

High ratings in the *neo-patrimonial rule index* are not necessarily indicative of institutional dysfunction or significant informal impediments to development. The variability in development outcomes among Gabon, Republic of Congo, Chad, and Central African Republic 'cannot be [explained]…by simply asserting the logic of neopatrimonialism' (Mkandawire, 2015: p. 578) but has been moulded by the comparative insecurity of the latter three states in contrast to the early and long-standing stability, legitimacy, and productivity of the Gabonese state (Brubaker and Druet, 2020: pp. 17-18; Clark, 2008: p. 228; Yates, 1996: pp. 50-51). Importantly, as was the case in *clientelism, presidentialism,* and *regime corruption index* ratings, Gabon has been by far the most consistent state in equatorial Africa in its ratings in the *neo-patrimonial rule index*, with a 1960-2019 range of 0.731 to 0.837 and a 2019 score of 0.813 that was barely changed from its score at independence (0.789). The other three states, in contrast, experienced significant shifts in the *neo-patrimonial rule index* surrounding key instances of instability or uncertainty, mirroring and moulded by the noted inconsistency of these states' performance in the three component *indices*.

Consistency is central to the nature and operation of the state's formal and informal systems, with a lack of consistency impeding the state's ability to remain stable, extract resources, or pursue

long-term objectives (Feng, 2001: p. 288; Ranis, 1992: p. 98). While Gabon was relatively unwavering in its performance throughout the *clientelism, presidentialism, regime corruption* and *neo-patrimonial rule indices*, Congo, Chad, and CAR have been far from consistent as endemic insecurity came to challenge the formal capacities, legitimacy, and overall trajectories of these states. Congo's 1960 to 2019 range in the *neo-patrimonial rule index* was 0.535 to 0.960; Chad's was 0.706 to 0.957; and CAR's was 0.605 to 0.952, clearly contrasting with Gabon's narrow range noted above. These three states have been comparatively volatile in their domestic operations as repeated dissolution into civil conflict and forceful transitions of power inhibited legitimacy and formal capacity, promoting the personalised and politicised application of domestic resources, based on V-Dem's (2020) assessments. These trends have 'undermine[d] the authority of the state' in these contexts and contributed to their overall underperformance by comparison to Gabon[32]. Many of the same patterns that stood out in the component *indices* above, therefore, are likewise evident through the shifts in these states' overall *neo-patrimonial rule index* ratings, particularly coinciding with the four decades (1967-2009) of Omar Bongo's reign in Gabon.

The only significant alteration to Gabon's *neo-patrimonial rule index* rating during this period surrounded the country's 1990 transition to multi-party competition, which brought an end to the single party state that had been central to Bongo's reign to that point (Gardinier, 1997b: pp. 153-155) and coincided with a decline in its *neo-patrimonial rule index* rating from 0.837 in 1990 to 0.775 in 1991, the largest single-year change to this rating in Gabon on record. This alteration to the country's *neo-patrimonial rule index* rating is distinct among its otherwise stable history and was driven by similar changes to Gabon's ratings in V-Dem's (2020) *clientelism* and *presidentialism indices*. Gabon's *regime corruption index* rating in this same period, importantly, remained virtually unchanged, scoring 0.835 in 1989, 0.847 in 1990, and 0.837 from 1991 to 2011. While 1990-1991 was the only instance of a significant alteration to Gabon's *neo-patrimonial rule index* rating under Omar Bongo's centralised

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[32] UNOCA Official, interviewed in Libreville, Gabon on 22 August 2019 (Interview Number 05).

rule, Congo, Chad, and CAR in the twentieth century were far more volatile, both in their domestic circumstances and in their ratings in V-Dem's (2020) *neo-patrimonial rule index*.

As was the case in the component *indices,* Congo experienced the most drastic alterations to *neo-patrimonial rule index* ratings in the region in the twentieth century, increasing from 0.676 in 1965-1967 to 0.948 in 1969-1973, decreasing from 0.948 in 1989 to 0.535 in 1994, and increasing from 0.535 in 1996 to 0.908 in 1997. The rate and extent of shifts in Congo's ratings in the *neo-patrimonial rule index* in the first few decades of independence were the most significant in the region and symptomatic of the overall volatility that characterised its domestic circumstances, particularly in the 1990s (Clark, 2008: pp. 250-251). Chad and CAR, not dissimilarly, experienced significant shifts in the opening decades of independence which clearly contrasted with the consistency in Gabon and cemented the insecurity of these states. Chad and CAR in most recent (2019) ratings recorded *neo-patrimonial rule index* scores which were the highest and lowest in the region, respectively, but early instances of insecurity in both contexts[33] and consequent alterations to these states' ratings served to contribute to their respective and disparate trajectories.

Central African Republic's *neo-patrimonial rule index* rating increased significantly following the forceful removal of the inaugural regime of David Dacko in 1965 by Colonel-turned-Emperor Jean Bédel Bokassa (O'Toole, 1997: pp. 113-114), from 0.817 in 1964 to 0.925 in 1966-1969. This added to a score that was already the highest in equatorial Africa at independence, represented the sustained dominance of the 'small patrimonial elite, which held political power from the early 1950s until the early 1990s', and evidenced the dysfunction entrenched by 'inept political administrators' and a 'co-opted urban elite' (p. 115). Although these scores in CAR would steadily decline toward the end of the century surrounding the return of *de facto* neo-colonial rule and subsequent transition to multi-party elections (Powell, 2017: p. 9; O'Toole, 1997: p. 120), the country remained heavily divided,

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[33] These two countries were identified by multiple observers including domestic Activists (Interview Number 03, 13, and 14), a Gendarmerie Colonel (Interview Number 17), and UN and US officials (Interview Numbers 01, 02, 05, 06, and 11) as having been particularly unstable and offering comparatively 'hopeless' situations (quote from US Official interviewed in Libreville, Gabon on 15 August 2019 [Interview Number 02]).

conflict remained likely, and even its democratically elected regime failed to address the many 'economic and political problems' plaguing the Central African state (Giroux, Lanz, and Sguaitamatti, 2009: p. 5).

CAR, the least *neo-patrimonial* state in equatorial Africa according to V-Dem's (2020) experts from 1997 to 2013 and 2016 to 2019, has not benefited from these 'normatively better' (Coppedge et al., 2020: p. 273) circumstances and has largely been impeded by the persistence of civil conflict, the inconsistency of political operations, and a consequent lack of legitimacy or security (Giroux, Lanz, and Sguaitamatti, 2009: p. 5). Chad, not dissimilarly, was stricken by civil conflict and faced 'the demise of the state' in the twentieth century (Azavedo, 1998: p. 75), culminating in frequent executive turnovers (Lanne, 1997: pp. 270-274) and important early shifts in its ratings in V-Dem's (2020) *neo-patrimonial rule index* which solidified its status as the most *neo-patrimonial* state in sub-Saharan Africa (Sigman and Lindberg, 2017: pp. 11-12). Specifically, Chad's rating in this *index* was relatively stable through the fifteen-year reign of François Tombalbaye (1960-1975) but the fall of this inaugural regime in 1975 and dissolution into civil war in 1979-1982 was highly significant for the country's long-term trajectory and security (Styan, 2013: pp. 239-242; Lanne, 1997: pp. 270-274).

Chad's *neo-patrimonial rule index* rating increased from 0.757 in 1974 to 0.820 in 1976-1979 and 0.914 in 1980-1988, evidencing the significance of the country's twentieth century instability for its modern status as the most *neo-patrimonial* state in the subcontinent based on these assessments (ibid; Sigman and Lindberg, 2017: pp. 11-12) and one of the least developed states in the world (UNDP, 2020). Similar patterns (Batianga-Kinzi, 2014: p. 60; Berg, 2008: p. 20) and outcomes (UNDP, 2020) have been evident within the least *neo-patrimonial* state in the region according to V-Dem (2020), Central African Republic. CAR has boasted the region's lowest *neo-patrimonial rule index* rating for all but two years since 1997 but the instability and illegitimacy characterising its history have impeded the consistency and effectiveness of domestic operations (Batianga-Kinzi, 2014: p. 60; Berg, 2008: p. 20). Congo, much like Chad and CAR, has been highly volatile in its ratings in the *neo-patrimonial rule*

index as its endemic insecurity and frequent executive turnovers in the formative decades of independence have limited the extent to which centralised rule under Denis Sassou Nguesso since the end of the 1997 civil war has counteracted institutional dysfunction or enabled the active pursuit of development on a scale comparable to Gabon (Clark, 2008: p. 251; Eaton, 2006: pp. 46-47).

Gabon, in short, has benefited from advantageous circumstances founded upon a long-standing security to rule, the early exploitation of domestic resources, and the application of these toward long-term objectives (Yates, 1996: pp. 51-79). These circumstances enabled the consistent, centralised mobilisation and distribution of rents toward productive ends to an extent no other state in the region has come close to matching (ibid; World Bank, 2020; UNDP, 2020). As was made clear in Chapter 2, the active pursuit of development amidst neo-patrimonialism rests on the coherent 'long-horizon' application of domestic rents (Kelsall and Booth, 2010: pp. 7-8). This can be derailed by 'political instability and everyday uncertainties' (Debos, 2011: p. 426) which can contribute to disparities in the manifestation of 'political freedom, political instability, and policy uncertainty', moulding prospects for economic growth and development (Feng, 2001: p. 288). While Gabon was evaluated by V-Dem's (2020) experts as being more neo-patrimonial than CAR and almost as neo-patrimonial as Congo and Chad, therefore, the stability, productivity, and consistency of the Gabonese state has enabled performance and outcomes that are distinct from its regional counterparts and most other states in sub-Saharan Africa (UNDP, 2020).

Gabon's 2019 rating in V-Dem's (2020) *neo-patrimonial rule index* was almost identical to its rating in 1960. The other three states, in contrast, have been far more volatile in this and the component *indices*, yielding 2019 ratings which were a far cry from their 1960 starting point. These differences have been moulded by the overall volatility to domestic circumstances in Congo, Chad, and CAR by comparison to Gabon and have been evident throughout these states' histories and ratings in V-Dem's (2020) *indices*. These trajectories, furthermore, have indicated important factors behind the disparate outcomes among these states. As will be explored in further depth in Chapters 4 and 5,

specifically, Gabon's stability has not only resulted in unique domestic circumstances and consistent performance in V-Dem's (2020) *indices* but has moulded its formal capacities and culminated in impressive development outcomes (World Bank, 2020; BTI, 2020a; V-Dem, 2020; UNDP, 2020; Polity V, 2018). Gabon's unique circumstances have, based on the findings in this chapter, enabled the most productive allocation of resources in the region, a strong central authority, and consistent informal operations, which have been central to its specific manifestation of neo-patrimonialism and divergent outcomes. These processes, as will be made clear as the thesis proceeds, have been integral to Gabon's continued stability, economic performance, and long-term pursuit of neo-patrimonial development (ibid; World Bank, 2020; UNDP, 2020).

3f. Conclusion

This thesis is centred on explaining the widely divergent outcomes among the neo-patrimonial states in equatorial Africa. As has stood out in this chapter, there has been a clear variance in the domestic circumstances and informal operations in Gabon, Republic of Congo, Chad, and Central African Republic. While all four of these states have been evaluated as being neo-patrimonial, the distinct weakness of clientelism in Gabon indicated by V-Dem's (2020) assessments alongside the overall stability and consistency of its domestic operations have helped reveal important factors moulding its divergent outcomes. This chapter has been centred on evaluating through application of secondary sources, interview data, and V-Dem's (2020) expert assessments the historical dynamics in these contexts and ways in which Gabon's circumstances and informal operations have been different from those in Congo, Chad, and CAR. As was made clear in Chapter 2, domestic circumstances, insecurity, and the specific manifestation of neo-patrimonialism can impede development, particularly in the absence of strong formal institutions. The endemic conflict, insecurity, and consequent illegitimacy in Congo, Chad, and CAR, therefore, have been indicative of and integral to the divergence in this region.

Gabon has been characterised by a relative security and consistency to domestic operations that has been vital for its performance and outcomes. These circumstances have stood out

throughout its history and in V-Dem's (2020) *neo-patrimonial rule index* and its components, with Gabon exhibiting by far the most consistent performance in the region in each of these expert-assessed *indices*. The specific weakness of its clientelism according to V-Dem's (2020) *clientelism index*, furthermore, points to distinct advantages in Gabon in preventing the politicised or personalistic distribution of resources that has characterised its counterparts. As was emphasised in Chapter 2, the operation of clientelism is integral to the outcomes from neo-patrimonial systems and, in the absence of necessary capacities or an incentivised ruling elite, can impede economic productivity and development. The specific manifestation of neo-patrimonialism in Gabon, in short, has rested on the comparatively productive application of domestic resources, enabled by its strong central authority and generally consistent informal operations, based on the findings in this chapter.

These advantageous circumstances and processes in Gabon were established in the formative decades of independence and have culminated in the most consistent performance in the region in V-Dem's (2020) *clientelism, presidentialism, regime corruption,* and *neo-patrimonial rule indices*. Gabon was evaluated by V-Dem's (2020) experts as being almost as presidential, corrupt, and neo-patrimonial as Congo and Chad, and more-so than CAR. The relative consistency of its ratings within V-Dem's (2020) *indices*, however, indicates key points of distinction moulding Gabon's divergent outcomes. Gabon's inaugural regime, like those in Congo, Chad, and CAR, was overthrown shortly after gaining power but, unlike these other states, was restored to power via French intervention and reinforced to never again face a significant challenge to its rule. The installation of intricate patron-client relations was integral to this restoration of power and Gabon's early performance, long-standing security, and overall preservation of ruling elites' positions, particularly under the four-decade rule of Omar Bongo. Such processes have been evident throughout this chapter.

The early installation of a case-specific form of clientelism which would change very little in the decades to follow was integral to the performance of the Gabonese state, its relative consistency, and its rapid economic growth, based on the findings in this chapter. Despite the weakness of

clientelism in Gabon according to V-Dem's (2020) experts, the early and consistent operationalisation of endogenous informal systems in this context has been crucial to its divergent performance, perpetual security, and modern outcomes. Clientelism can be vital to the impact from neo-patrimonial systems based on the propositions outlined in Chapter 2 and, within the Gabonese context, the relative weakness and endogeneity of this specific aspect of these systems have been central to the productive long-term application of domestic resources. These processes have likewise rested on the strong but similarly consistent presidentialism and regime corruption in this context, according to V-Dem's (2020) *indices*, evidencing conditions which have promoted a coherent, centralised long-term approach to revenue management and development that has been central to Gabon's overall performance.

As will be evidenced in Chapters 4 and 5 to follow, the unique circumstances facing the Gabonese state have promoted the expansion of formal state capacities and pursuit of development that generally outperforms its equatorial African counterparts and most other states in the subcontinent (World Bank, 2020; UNDP, 2020). Such disparate outcomes have been moulded by the specific circumstances and state operations in these contexts and the unique stability in Gabon that has stood out throughout this chapter. The findings in this chapter make clear that, despite ostensible similarities, there are important differences between these states' domestic circumstances and informal operations that have been crucial to Gabon's relative success. Gabon is almost as presidential and corrupt as both Congo and Chad based on V-Dem's (2020) assessments, but the consistency of its performance in these regards in addition to stable domestic circumstances and comparatively weak clientelism reveal patterns that have been central to its long-term performance. Gabon has, put simply, been the most stable, consistent, and productive state in the region, moulding circumstances and outcomes that are wholly distinct from those in Congo, Chad, and CAR.

These divergent circumstances in Gabon have been conducive to the pursuit of development to an extent none of Congo, Chad, or CAR can match (World Bank, 2020; UNDP, 2020) and,

importantly, likewise coincided with a specific manifestation of neo-patrimonialism that is distinct from its counterparts, according to V-Dem's (2020) assessments. These informal systems in Gabon have reinforced domestic productivity and contributed to long-standing security and legitimacy, in clear contrast with the other three equatorial African states. Republic of Congo, Chad, and Central African Republic have all been historically characterised by high levels of insecurity which contributed to frequent and often violent turnovers of power throughout the twentieth century. These experiences have stood out throughout this chapter and contrasted greatly with the early and long-standing security enjoyed by the state in Gabon. Such dynamics have been central to the clear differentiation between these states' developmental standing and prospects.

The outcomes from these trends and trajectories will become clear as the thesis proceeds but the findings from this initial analysis of these states' historical circumstances and informal operations have provided an important foundation for identifying the specific processes moulding the disparate outcomes among these states. Gabon has been more stable and consistent than have any of the other states in equatorial Africa, culminating in rapid economic growth and modern development outcomes that far surpass those in Congo, Chad, and CAR and rival almost any state in the subcontinent (World Bank, 2020; V-Dem, 2020; UNDP, 2020). The highly presidential and corrupt state in Gabon has been integral to its performance and security and has been characterised by the comparatively productive application of domestic resources, according to this chapter's findings. Gabon is thus distinct from its regional counterparts through its secure and consistent domestic circumstances, specific manifestation of neo-patrimonialism, and the application of informal mechanisms toward productive long-term objectives.

These processes have stood out throughout this chapter and point to important factors moulding the historical and modern divergence between these states. As the contentions laid out in Chapter 2 made clear, furthermore, the outcomes from neo-patrimonialism are moulded by, in addition to domestic circumstances and the specific manifestation of informal systems, the formal

capacities for extraction, coercion, and administration vested with the state. Chapter 4 to follow is thus centred on assessing the formal capacities operationalised by these states to elucidate the specific balance between formality and informality within these contexts and reveal formal avenues through which Gabon's unique circumstances have promoted such distinct performance and outcomes despite being assessed as being almost as neo-patrimonial as the most neo-patrimonial state in sub-Saharan Africa. Chapter 5 will reveal the outcomes from these systems and circumstances. The formal capacities elucidated in Chapter 4, however, are integral to this thesis' broader aim to add to this chapter's insights into informal systems to explain how the circumstances and state operations in Gabon have been distinct from its regional counterparts to promote its historical and modern divergence from Congo, Chad, and CAR.

Chapter 4

Formal State Capacity in Equatorial Africa

4a. Introduction

This thesis is focused on explaining through historical processes the divergent paths that the countries of equatorial Africa have taken, and the comparative success enjoyed by Gabon. As stood out in Chapter 3, the domestic circumstances and manifestations of neo-patrimonialism exhibited by Gabon, Republic of Congo, Chad, and Central African Republic have been highly variable. Specifically, while Gabon has been relatively stable and consequently consistent in its informal operations, Congo, Chad, and CAR have been far less-so, instead characterised by a frequency of civil conflict and executive turnover that impeded domestic productivity and contributed to expansions in the detriment offered by their endemic neo-patrimonialism. Gabon was evaluated by V-Dem's (2020) experts as being nearly as neo-patrimonial as Congo and Chad and more neo-patrimonial than CAR, but its stable circumstances, comparatively productive allocation of domestic resources, and long-term coherence were integral to the impact from these systems based on Chapter 3's findings. Building from this foundation and seeking to address how these disparate circumstances have moulded the variable modern outcomes among these ostensibly similar states, this chapter turns its attention to the formal capacities for extraction, coercion, and administration they have exhibited.

As was discussed in Chapter 2, the impact of and outcomes from neo-patrimonialism are moulded by the specific manifestation of these systems, the domestic circumstances impacting state and elite priorities, and the ability of the state to counteract these sources of informality and strengthen formal institutions (Mkandawire, 2015: pp. 565-594; Erdmann and Engel, 2007: p. 105; Englebert, 2000a: pp. 5-9). The outcomes from these systems, in other words, are determined by the case-specific balance between formal and informal operations (ibid). Where clientelism,

presidentialism, and regime corruption operate unimpeded, they are likely to breed institutional dysfunction and limit prospects for development (ibid; Sigman and Lindberg, 2017: pp. 5-7). Where the state is able to manufacture significant and endogenous capacities for extraction, coercion, and administration, however, it is expected to be more successful (ibid; Hanson and Sigman, 2019: pp. 5-8). Neo-patrimonial developmentalism thus rests not only on the domestic circumstances and manifestations of neo-patrimonialism discussed in Chapter 3 but, likewise, on the extent to which these informal systems have been counteracted by strong and legitimate formal institutions (ibid).

As has been emphasised throughout this thesis, neo-patrimonialism and the political outcomes associated with these systems are highly variable and dependent upon the ability of the state to productively apply domestic resources, institutionalise a coherent 'long-horizon approach to rent management', and perform core functions relevant to the security and legitimacy of the state (Oluwatobi et al., 2015: p. 8; Ghebremusse, 2015: p. 492; Mkandawire, 2015: pp. 573-578; Kelsall, 2011: p. 82; Omeje, 2008b: pp. 10-14; Englebert, 2000a: pp. 5-9). Where a state is lacking in its capacities to extract resources, coerce support for or acquiescence to its rule, and administrate effectively, it is less likely to be secure or pursue development and more likely to succumb to neo-patrimonial dysfunction (ibid; Hanson and Sigman, 2019: pp. 7-8; Hendrix, 2010: pp. 273-277). Where formal capacities are in relative parity with endemic clientelism, presidentialism, and regime corruption or come to weaken these systems, on the other hand, the state is more likely to be effective in its pursuit of development (Mkandawire, 2015: pp. 565-594; Kelsall, 2011: p. 82; Cammack and Kelsall, 2010: pp. 2-6; Erdmann and Engel, 2007: p. 105; Englebert, 2000a: p. 90). Such propositions are central to the approach employed in this chapter of the thesis.

The formal capacities vested in a state are of central import when assessing the avenues through which variable circumstances and manifestations of neo-patrimonialism have impacted state actions and generated divergent outcomes (ibid). The rest of the analysis in this chapter, in this vein, is integral to this thesis' efforts to explore and explain how the disparate circumstances detailed in

Chapter 3 have promoted such wide variance in modern outcomes in equatorial Africa. Specifically, to apply the theoretical framework set out in Chapter 2 toward investigating the relationship between the conditions detailed in Chapter 3 and the divergent outcomes between Gabon, Congo, Chad, and CAR, the rest of this chapter will proceed as follows. Section 4b will assess the extractive capacities of these states and the extent to which Gabon has been more productive and consistent in mobilising and managing domestic resources than have its counterparts. Section 4c will focus on states' coercive capacities, which offer important insight into Gabon's stand out stability, its unique circumstances detailed in Chapter 3, and its divergent outcomes. Section 4d will then turn to the administrative capacities exhibited by these states, offering an important lens into the rational-legal bureaucratic structures wielded and overall quality and coherence exhibited by their formal institutions. Section 4e will synthesise the insights gained and conclude.

The analysis in this chapter rests on the application of qualitative and quantitative metrics, interview data, and insights gained from Chapters 2 and 3 to assess the formal capacities of Gabon, Congo, Chad, and CAR. The specific metrics employed are detailed in Table 4.1 below and, together, reveal the extractive, coercive, and administrative capacities operationalised by these states. This analysis serves a central role in this thesis' efforts at tracing the processes moulding equatorial African states' historical divergence, building on Chapter 3's findings to elucidate the precise formal-informal balance in these contexts and reveal key mechanisms promoting such wide intra-regional variance in outcomes. As Hendrix (2010) argued, '[s]tate capacity is a quality conspicuous both in its absence and presence' that is 'central' to the security, productivity, and legitimacy of the state (p. 273). A state lacking formal capacities for extraction, coercion, and administration, in other words, is unlikely to be stable or consistent and more likely to succumb to informal dysfunction, impeding the pursuit of key long-term objectives (pp. 273-277). These capacities are interdependent, mutually reinforcing, and vital for development (ibid).

TABLE 4.1 PROXIES FOR FORMAL CAPACITY			
Extractive Capacity	*GDP per capita* (World Bank, 2020)	*Tax revenues (% of GDP)* (World Bank, 2020)	*Exports of Goods and Services (% of GDP)* (World Bank, 2020)
Coercive Capacity	*State Fragility Index* (Systemic Peace, 2018)	*Armed Forces Personnel (% of Labour Force)* (World Bank, 2020)	*Monopoly on the Use of Violence* (BTI, 2020a)
Administrative Capacity	*Statistical Capacity* (World Bank, 2020)	*Rigorous and Impartial Public Administration* (V-Dem, 2020)	

As will be explored in further depth in Chapter 5, Gabon boasts among the highest *Human Development Index* ratings (UNDP, 2020) and *GNIs per capita* (World Bank, 2020) in sub-Saharan Africa, far surpassing the 'medium' or 'low' levels of development exhibited by Republic of Congo, Chad, and Central African Republic (UNDP, 2020). Chad and CAR, indeed, are among the least 'developed' countries in the world (ibid), revealing significant intra-regional disparities which are at the core of this thesis' focus. The long histories with civil conflict and instability in Congo, Chad, and CAR detailed in Chapter 3, and the institutional dysfunction promoted by these conditions, have largely precluded the sort of progress that has been evident in Gabon (V-Dem, 2020; World Bank, 2020; UNDP, 2020; BTI, 2020a; Systemic Peace, 2018; Polity V, 2018). Whereas these three states have all been characterised by a relative volatility to domestic operations, Gabon has been far more stable and consistent, culminating in minimal expansions to its informal operations based on the findings in Chapter 3 and producing outcomes that rival almost any state in the subcontinent (ibid).

Where a highly neo-patrimonial state has exhibited impressive performance, these outcomes are largely moulded by the formal capacities vested in the state and extent to which these prove

conducive to a 'development-oriented political leadership' incentivised to employ domestic rents toward productive long-term objectives (Ghebremusse, 2015: p. 492; Kelsall, 2011: p. 82). The first type of formal capacity to be discussed here, extractive capacity, is central to these processes and the extent to which a state is able to strengthen formal institutions or pursue development (Dincecco and Katz, 2012: p. 24). A state unable to productively mobilise and distribute domestic resources is unlikely to remain secure or benefit from economic growth and is more likely to succumb to the potential detriment from endemic neo-patrimonialism (ibid; Omeje, 2008b: p. 14). If a state can mobilise and manage domestic resources effectively and efficiently, on the other hand, it is more likely to reinvest in the domestic economy and improve citizens' day-to-day lives (Evans, 2011: pp. 9-10; Kelsall and Booth, 2010: pp. 3-7; Englebert, 2000a: pp. 5-6). '[S]tates that can extract more', in other words, 'are more capable than states that extract less' (Hendrix, 2010: p. 276).

4b. Extractive Capacities and Domestic Productivity

This chapter is aimed at assessing the formal capacities of equatorial African states to explicate the mechanisms through which their variable circumstances and manifestations of neo-patrimonialism detailed in Chapter 3 have promoted widely divergent modern outcomes. As was emphasised in Chapter 2, the ability of a given state to extract, mobilise, and productively apply domestic resources is central to its prospects for expanding formal capacities or pursuing development. A state unable to extract substantial resources is less likely to be able to deliver necessary services, enforce domestic rules and norms, maintain stability, or pursue development. A state unable to productively mobilise and distribute rents within its economy is, based on the propositions on which this thesis' analysis is founded, unlikely to benefit from economic growth and more likely to succumb to the dysfunction bred by informal mechanisms related to neo-patrimonialism. As one interviewee put it, '[w]hen you don't respect how to manage a country, it goes to shit'[34]. Where a state is effective and legitimate in

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[34] Director of Population and Development, interviewed in the Pool region of Congo on 03 September 2019 (Interview Number 12).

its management of domestic resources, on the other hand, it is more likely to surmount informal dysfunction and pursue development.

Within equatorial Africa, Gabon's rapid early growth and modern outcomes (World Bank, 2020) are indicative of formal extractive capacities that have enabled and been enabled by the country's stand-out stability and consistent operations detailed in Chapter 3 (V-Dem, 2020). These processes have, based on these findings, been driven by the long-standing ability of the Gabonese state to mobilise domestic resources, attract foreign investment, and expedite economic growth (Yates, 1996: pp. 41-51). In other words, distinct and long-standing disparities between Gabon, Congo, Chad, and CAR in the productivity and consistency of extractive capacities have been integral to the former's comparative success. The first metric employed toward capturing these dynamics, presented in Figure 4.1 below, is *Gross Domestic Product (GDP)[35] per capita (current $USD)*, derived from the World Bank (2020). As was discussed in Chapter 2, importantly, high extractive capacity is not necessarily indicative of the productive use of garnered resources, rather evidencing the resources available to the state and thus its *potential* to distribute resources in a way that might promote broader economic and social development. Put simply, improvements in *gross domestic product* or economic growth alone may not be 'sufficient' for development but such progress is nevertheless 'necessary' for the pursuit of development (Evans, 2011: pp. 6-10; Fong, 2009: pp. 473-477; Fosu, 2002b: p. 9).

GDP Per Capita in Equatorial Africa

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[35] 2020 GDPs (current $USD): Gabon $15.59 billion; Congo $10.89 billion; Chad $10.09 billion; CAR $2.30 billion (World Bank, 2020).

Figure 4.1 GDP Per Capita
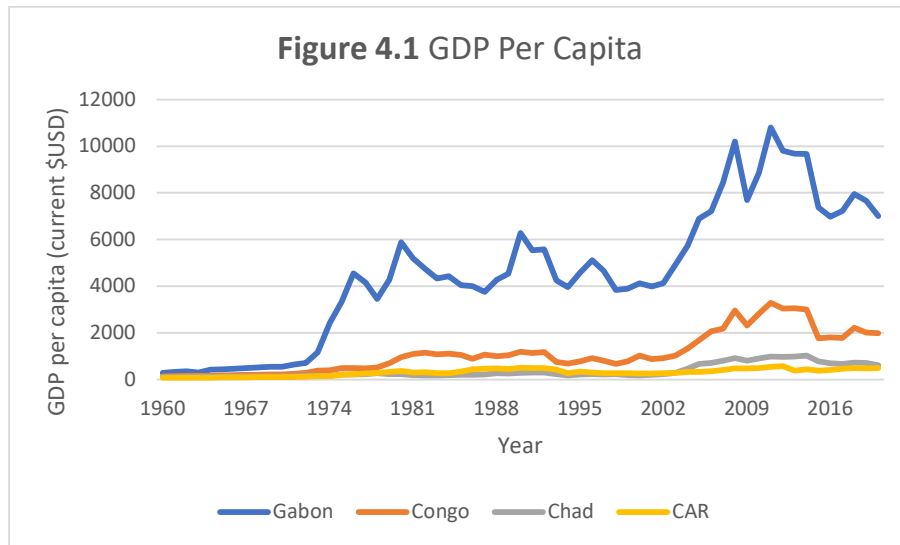
GDP per capita has been drawn on widely by scholars like Fearon and Laitin (2003), Bäck and Hadenius (2008), and Hendrix (2010) in assessing states' extractive and overall formal capacity. Specifically, this metric for the extractive capacity of a state is 'highly correlated' with 'military, administrative, and bureaucratic capacities' (Hendrix, 2010: p. 274). A high *GDP per capita*, then, is not only indicative of significant capacities for extracting and mobilising domestic resources, but also for coercing support or administrating effectively (ibid; Hanson and Sigman, 2019: pp. 7-8). This first metric for extractive capacity is thus central to an assessment of the formal capacity of the state and its likelihood of success in pursuing key objectives related to 'economic growth, trade, welfare, inequality, health, life satisfaction, social capital, education, labor force, population change, and several others' (Ram and Ural, 2014: p. 642). Gabon has boasted the highest *GDP per capita* in equatorial Africa throughout its history, gaining independence in 1960 with a *GDP per capita* of $282.42 (current $USD) compared to $129.37 in Congo, $104.47 in Chad, and $74.69 in CAR in the same year. These starting points provided a key foundation for modern disparities but would be significantly exacerbated in the decades to follow.

In 2020 (most recent data), Gabon's *GDP per capita (current $USD)* was $7005.88, compared to $1972.55 in Congo, $614.47 in Chad, and $476.85 in CAR. Gabon's *GDP per capita*, in other words,

was more than triple Congo's and ten- to sixteen-times higher than Chad and CAR's, in the World

Bank's (2020) most recent data. Gabon boasted the fourth-highest *GDP per capita* in sub-Saharan

Africa in 2020 (most recent data), according to the World Bank (2020), only lower than Seychelles

($11325.09), Mauritius ($8622.68), and Equatorial Guinea ($7143.24). Gabon's performance is even

more impressive when compared to subcontinental averages; the average *GDP per capita (current

$USD)* in sub-Saharan Africa in 2020 was $1483.77, barely more than one-fifth of Gabon's in most

recent data. Gabon's record-high *GDP per capita (current $USD)* in 2011, $10809.69, furthermore,

was more than five-times higher than the highest average *GDP per capita (current $USD)* on record in

the subcontinent ($1861.46, 2014). Despite Gabon's performance in this regard being viewed by

critics as a 'big lie' due to the historical importance of oil and corruption[36], therefore, its *GDP per capita*

is not only impressive compared to its counterparts in equatorial Africa but generally outperforms

most other countries in sub-Saharan Africa.

Chad and CAR have at no point surpassed sub-Saharan African averages in this regard while

Congo has consistently been slightly above average but has at no point approached Gabon's *GDP per

capita*, according to the World Bank (2020). Immediately evident from this initial metric for states'

extractive capacities, thus, are the substantial advantages granted to the Gabonese state throughout

its history which have resulted in among the most impressive economic performance in the

subcontinent (ibid). The implications from these findings, furthermore, offer important insight into

the respective capacities of these four states to productively mobilise resources or perform key

functions related to development (Ram and Ural, 2014: p. 642). As was discussed in Chapter 2, the

formal capacities indicated by such significant mobilisation of domestic resources from the basis of

the state's overall capacities for extraction, coercion, and administration are particularly crucial for

the delivery of necessary services and maintenance of domestic security (Hendrix, 2010: p. 274; Bäck

and Hadenius, 2008: pp. 8-13; Fearon and Laitin, 2003: p. 86). Expansions in this regard, then, are

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[36] Gabonese Activist, interviewed in Libreville, Gabon on 20 August 2019 (Interview Number 03).

indicative of the state's ability to avoid institutional dysfunction or pursue development (Omeje, 2008b: p. 14) and thereby provide key insight into the domestic circumstances which have allowed Gabon to far outperform its counterparts. Put simply, the abundance of domestic resources in Gabon has been central to its stability and success[37].

As was the case in Gabon's results in the *neo-patrimonial rule index* in Chapter 3 (V-Dem, 2020), importantly, the key period of expansion and consolidation of the Gabonese state's standing and success occurred in the formative years of Omar Bongo's rule (1967-2009). Gabon's *GDP per capita (current $USD)* increased from $703.78 in 1972 to $1160.32 in 1973, $2432.84 in 1974, $3331.99 in 1975, and $4550.07 in 1976, before stabilising. Gabon's *GDP per capita (current $USD)* thus more than sextupled between 1972 and 1976 according to the World Bank's (2020) data, cementing the depth of intra-regional disparity that remains evident today. Gabon's 1976 *GDP per capita* ($4550.07), furthermore, was higher than any of the other three states has attained at any point. Congo came closest in the region to matching Gabon in this period, increasing from $291.98 in 1972 to $476.85 in 1976. Congo's *GDP per capita* in 1976, therefore, was barely more than one-tenth of Gabon's that same year, despite remaining the second highest in the region and more than double the *GDPs per capita (current $USD)* in Chad ($207.53) and CAR ($225.91).

As was discussed in Chapters 2 and 3 and will become evident as this chapter proceeds, such wide disparities in the formal capacities exhibited by these states are not rare and are indicative of the importance of and impact from the unique domestic circumstances in Gabon. Specifically, as was evidenced in Chapter 3, the comparative weakness of the country's clientelism, according to V-Dem's (2020) *clientelism index*, and the implications for the productivity of domestic resource management and distribution, has been vital for its long-standing economic advantages, formal capacities, and superior development outcomes (Yates, 1996: pp. 24-25). Likewise integral to these processes and to the active mobilisation of domestic resources in this context according to the World Bank's (2020)

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[37] UNOCA Official, interviewed in Libreville, Gabon on 22 August 2019 (Interview Number 05).

GDP per capita (current $USD) figures has been the overall consistency of the Gabonese state which has been unique within the region and proven conducive to the active preservation and formalisation of the Gabonese state. Such outcomes from disparate domestic circumstances, importantly, are similarly evident through states' specific capacities for actively extracting revenues through formal mechanisms for taxation (Hendrix, 2010: p. 29; Lieberman, 2002: p. 92).

Tax Revenues in Equatorial Africa

Figure 4.2 Tax Revenues (% of GDP)
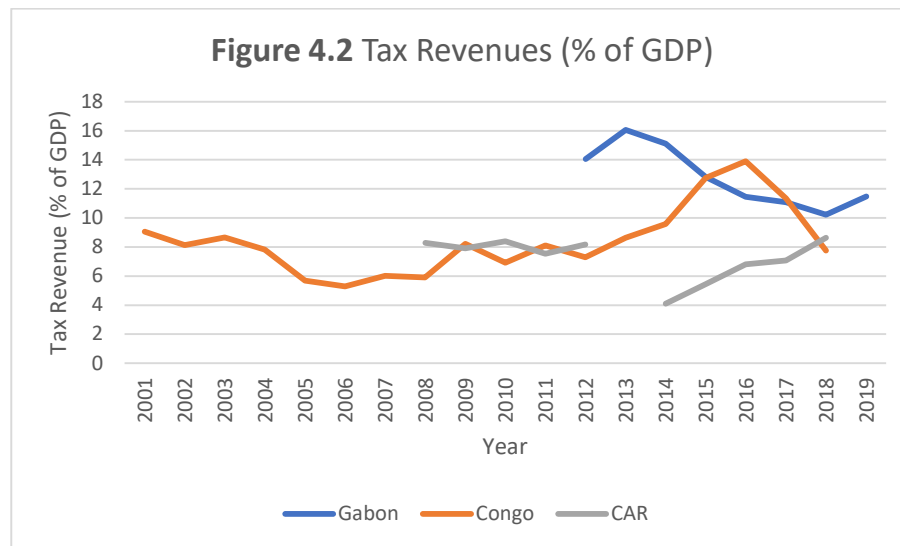
(World Bank, 2020)

As Aisen and Veiga (2011) argued, '[s]ince political instability is associated with greater uncertainty regarding future economic policy, it is likely to adversely affect investment and, consequently, physical capital accumulation' (p. 17). Such was evident in the wide disparities operating between the *GDPs per capita (current $USD)* of Gabon, Congo, Chad, and CAR, with Gabon differentiating itself early in their history and maintaining significant advantages in capital accumulation and economic development in the decades since (World Bank, 2020). Paralleling patterns in Chapter 3's findings, these disparities have arisen out of the unique circumstances in Gabon and the importance of its long-standing stability for the coherence of formal operations, relative consistency of informal operations, and the rapid extraction of domestic resources, especially

oil (Yates, 1996: pp. 24-25). As was addressed in Chapter 2, furthermore, the revenues extracted by the state through legitimate mechanisms for taxation are integral to the broader mobilisation and management of key public resources (Hendrix, 2010: p. 279; Lieberman, 2010: p. 38; Lieberman, 2002: p. 92). The *tax revenue (% of GDP)* a given state can mobilise is revealing of overall capacities for extraction and, thus, its ability to pursue development in the long term (ibid).

The *tax revenues* generated by a given state are 'viewed as important factors affecting long run growth' (Odero, 2017: p. 95). Within a neo-patrimonial state lacking strong formal institutions, furthermore, the personalisation inherent to such systems can impede the state's overall ability for collecting taxes or other key resources and thereby inhibit the pursuit of development (Toulabor, 1995: p. 108). These systems can narrow the avenues for revenue mobilisation and distribution, diminish the legitimacy of the state, and disrupt the operation of relevant formal institutions (ibid). Where a neo-patrimonial state is lacking in formal capacities for taxation, it is more likely to emphasise the narrow distribution of public resources and starve the domestic economy of key resources and services (ibid; Omeje, 2008b: pp. 10-14). Capacities for extracting *tax revenues* are indicative of the 'regulatory or coercive' pressures available to the state and extent to which citizens 'recognise the state's demand for taxation as appropriate or legitimate' (Lieberman, 2010: p. 38), an area in which the states of equatorial Africa are particularly lacking[38].

The economic growth potential indicated by Gabon's superior *GDP per capita*, importantly, could potentially obscure distinct limitations in formal capacities for extraction, particularly given this state's emphasis on petroleum exports (Yates, 1996: p. 41). As rentier scholars like Omeje (2008b) have argued, states dependent on oil exports can be less capable of legitimately extracting tax revenues, with economic growth within such contexts potentially obscuring the detriment from these circumstances (pp. 10-14). A state that is able to mobilise significant *tax revenues*, on the other hand,

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[38] UNOCA Official, interviewed in Libreville, Gabon on 22 August 2019. This individual argued that a lack of legitimacy and the permeation of 'distrust' throughout the region were key factors moulding the circumstances among these four states (Interview Number 05).

is more likely to be formally capable and productive, irrespective of comparative *GDP* growth (ibid; Hendrix, 2010: p. 275). It is thus significant that Gabon has mobilised *tax revenues* which equate to a greater share of its GDP than any other country in the region for all but two years in the data available from the World Bank (2020). The metric employed here is derived from the World Bank's (2020) World Development Indicators, accessed via its online Data Bank, and has figures available for Gabon, Republic of Congo, and Central African Republic beginning in 2012, 2001, and 2004, respectively. Data for Chad, importantly, has at no point been available in this metric, revealing potential limitations in its formal capacity through the implied weaknesses in its capacity to collect and manage necessary statistical data (Lee and Zhang, 2017: pp. 118-120).

Despite Chad's absence, this country and CAR represent two clear cases in which domestic insecurity and civil conflict has led to deleterious outcomes for the state's formal capacity for *tax revenue* extraction[39] (Arriola, 2009: p. 1342; Giroux, Lanz, and Sguaitamatti, 2009: p. 9). In most recent data, thus, Gabon's superiority over the rest of the region remains quite evident, if to a somewhat diminished extent compared to their overall *GDP per capita* performance. Specifically, Gabon in 2019 (most recent data) recorded *tax revenues* at 11.48% of GDP, up from 10.22% in 2018. Congo and CAR, meanwhile, recorded 2018 (most recent data) *tax revenues* at 7.77% and 8.64% of GDP, respectively. Congo briefly surpassed Gabon in this regard in 2016-2017 (Congo range: 12.75% to 13.89%; Gabon range: 11.08% to 11.47%) but the period of 2015-2017 was a clear outlier for Congo and was followed by a significant decline in this metric (from 11.35% in 2017 to 7.77% in 2018) as this country proved incapable of managing or sustaining elevated levels of *tax revenue*. Specifically, Congo in this period faced a resurgence of domestic insecurity and executive illegitimacy following its 2016 presidential elections and, by August 2017, 'external debt had risen to over 110% of GDP' as the country was thrust

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[39] Gendarmerie Colonel, interviewed in Brazzaville, Congo on 06 September 2019 (Interview Number 17). This individual argued that the comparative underperformance of Congo, Chad, and CAR was a 'consequence of conflict', resulting in 'bad management' of domestic institutions and resources.

into renewed economic crisis (Akum 2018: p. 2), aligning with the propositions and rentier perspectives outlined in Chapter 2 (Omeje, 2008b: pp. 10-14).

Whereas Republic of Congo's most impressive performance in the World Bank's (2020) data on its *tax revenue (% of GDP)* was quickly followed by economic strain and 'severe risk of debt distress' amidst rampant mismanagement (Akum 2018: p. 2), therefore, Gabon's *tax revenues* have been comparatively stable, evidencing a distinct consistency to the extractive capacities of this state. Gabon has thus been far more consistent and effective in its extraction of *tax revenues* than have its regional counterparts, with this figure having remained in double figures for the duration of the data available (2012-2019 range: 10.22% to 16.06%) compared to just three years of double figure *tax revenues (% of GDP)* on record collectively between Congo and CAR. Importantly, despite the advantages evident in Gabon in terms of its overall economic performance and consistency, its *tax revenues (% of GDP)* have been consistently below sub-Saharan averages, with the subcontinental average in 2017 (most recent data) of 18.52% higher than any level Gabon, or any equatorial African country, has attained. As has been observed in oil- or mineral-rich rentier states like Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sierra Leone, importantly, such contexts can become dependent on these resources, impeding mechanisms for taxation and provoking economic and socio-political volatility (Omeje, 2008b: pp. 31-35).

As Hendrix (2010) noted, '[o]il-producing countries tend to have weaker state apparatuses than their income levels would predict, because rulers have less need to invest in the bureaucratic capacity to collect taxes' (p. 275). Such tendencies have been prominently discussed in the rentier literatures detailed in Chapter 2 (e.g., Omeje, 2008a, b; Yates, 1996; Mahdavy, 1970) and, importantly, were founded in Gabon on the specific form of 'post-imperial imperialism' through which Gabonese elites and external patrons in France were able to promote the rapid exploitation of the country's natural resources and growth of its economy in the opening decades of independence (Yates, 1996: pp. 41-51). This 'dominance-dependence' relationship (p. 41), as was discussed in further depth in

Chapter 3, served to reinforce the security and legitimacy of the Gabonese state and, according to the World Bank's (2020) data, promote capacities for extracting taxes which, while exceeding its regional counterparts, generally lag behind the rest of the sub-continent. Compared to Congo, however, Gabon's dependence on its petroleum exports, according to World Bank (2020) data, seems negligible. Specifically, Gabon in 2019 (most recent data) mobilised *oil rents* equating to 18.80% of GDP and *total natural resources rents* at 20.85% of GDP, compared to Congo's *oil* and *total natural resources rents* in the same year at 43.45% of GDP and 47.87% of GDP, respectively.

As was emphasised by a seasoned Director of Population and Development in the Pool region of Congo, 'the problem isn't oil, but with government management'[40]. As stood out in Chapter 2, furthermore, a state unable to mobilise revenues productively through taxation or economic development is likely to remain dependent upon oil and similar rents, impeding the domestic economy or pursuit of development (Omeje, 2008b: pp. 10-14; Mahdavy, 1970: p. 431). Despite comparable *tax revenues* as a share of their respective GDPs, then, the Congolese state in recent years has exhibited characteristics symptomatic of the detriment offered by its disproportionate reliance on *oil rents*, allowing 'the state to become detached from its citizenry to a far greater extent' (Clark, 2008: p. 33). As was discussed in Chapter 2, such 'economically inefficient actions' promoted by endemic informality or insecurity as have been evident in Congo are likely to be linked to illegitimate elites with 'a shorter-term expected political time horizon', inhibiting the productivity and efficiency of the state (Fosu, 2003: pp. 70-71). Specifically, under such conditions 'exports are likely to bear the major brunt of the adverse effects' (ibid). *Exports of goods and services (% of GDP)*, presented in Figure 4.3 below, thus serve as the third and final measure of extractive capacity in this chapter, providing an important lens into these states' extractive capacities and Gabon's comparative productivity and success.

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[40] Director of Population and Development, interviewed in the Pool region of Congo on 03 September 2019 (Interview Number 12). This individual emphasised the potential for alternative outcomes but the failure of the state under Denis Sassou-Nguesso to employ resources productively to manufacture the necessary capacity to consistently generate revenues, distribute resources, or deliver services.

Exports of Goods and Services

Figure 4.3 Exports of Goods & Services (% of GDP)
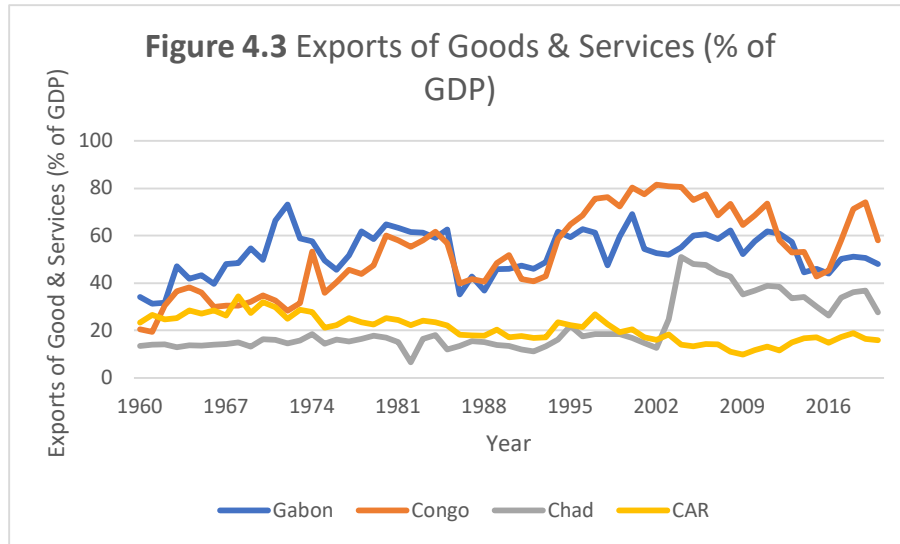
A state that is unable to overcome the 'production inefficiency' typical of informal or insecure environments is likely to struggle in its extraction of key resources or pursuit of long-term objectives (Fosu, 2003: pp. 70-71). Periods of civil conflict, furthermore, are likely to impact negatively upon the specific export profile of the country, moulding its ability to produce domestic *goods and services* for export and prospects for economic growth (ibid; Collier and Hoeffler, 2004: p. 574). An economy capable of producing significant *goods and services* for export, on the other hand, is more likely to be efficient, effective, and equitable in mobilising, managing, and applying domestic resources (ibid; Besley, Ilzetzki, and Persson, 2013: pp. 218-219). It is thus significant that Gabon generated the highest *exports of goods and services (% of GDP)* in the region for the first two and a half decades of independence, leading the region in this regard from 1960 through 1983 and regaining this position in 1985. The metric employed here, like those above, was derived from the World Bank (2020) and provides important insight into the early establishment of key disparities in extractive capacities and economic potential between Gabon and its regional counterparts.

As was established in Chapter 3, while the rest of the region was wrestling with frequent turnovers, domestic insecurity, and civil conflict in the opening decades of independence, Gabon was largely stable under the single-party state of Omar Bongo (Clark, 2008: p. 228; Gardinier, 1997b: pp. 147-148). This early and long-standing security to rule in Gabon enabled the state to extract resources, produce *goods and services*, and establish economic activity in this period at levels that dwarfed those in Congo, Chad, and CAR (ibid; Yates, 1996: pp. 41-51). Beginning in the latter decades of the twentieth century, however, Republic of Congo has come to boast the highest *exports* figures in the region, according to the World Bank's (2020) data. In most recent (2020) data, Republic of Congo's *exports of goods and services (% of GDP)* amounted to 58.01% of GDP, compared to 47.93% in Gabon, 27.60% in Chad, and 15.83% in CAR. Congo has, furthermore, produced the highest *exports of goods and services (% of GDP)* in the region for all but three years since 1995. This apparent superiority, however, has been predicated on the periodic indebtedness of the Congolese state (Clark, 2008: p. 213) and total trade (exports plus imports) which has frequently amounted to greater than 100% of GDP in this period (World Bank, 2020). As a key domestic observer noted, 'Congo doesn't produce what Congolese need'[41].

Though Gabon's most significant period of growth and export performance was similarly characterised by a high overall dependence on trade, punctuated by exports and imports amounting to a combined total of 95% of GDP in 1972 (Yates, 1996: pp. 41-43), the manifest impact from these trade profiles has been far from identical. While a low *exports* state like CAR has predictably come to be viewed as a 'paper lion'[42] with limited formal capacities and 'weak governance' (Gebremichael et al., 2018: p. 3), even a state that has witnessed some success like Congo has been limited in its manifest capacity to pursue development to an extent that might rival Gabon. As a leader of a

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[41] Assistant Director of Mining, interviewed in the Pool region of Congo on 29 August 2019 (Interview Number 10). This individual noted that most food in Congo was imported, the domestic economy is not aimed at domestic consumption, and that leaders either 'don't know' how to improve circumstances or 'know but don't care'.
[42] US Official, interviewed in Libreville, Gabon on 15 August 2019 (Interview Number 02).

women's communal group in the Pool region of Congo remarked to the author: 'Sassou wants to use the money, then die. He is not worried about what will happen otherwise'[43]. The Congolese state under its current long-standing president, in other words, has come to be viewed as centred on the extraction of revenues without pursuing the allocation and distribution of these toward the delivery of key services and performance of core functions. Congo's government, much like those in Chad and CAR, has frequently been accused of not using its resources 'on the ground'[44], indicating distinct limitations in the formal capacities of this state to pursue long-term priorities or deliver economic reform (Knight, 2014: p. 1338).

Gabon, in contrast with its equatorial African counterparts, has come to be viewed by some observers as having 'shared the wealth more than some', which served to legitimise the regime, ensure stability, and promote the productive employment of resources to an extent unrivalled in the region[45]. These advantages in stability, legitimacy, and productivity were evident in Chapter 3 and have likewise stood out through the assessment of these four states' extractive capacities in this chapter. Although modern trade profiles are not excessive, early trade and economic growth provided the Gabonese state with a foundation for continued extraction and application of garnered resources toward productive long-term objectives that has clearly stood out through its *GDP per capita, tax revenues,* and *exports of goods and services* (World Bank, 2020). A stable, effective set of institutions, importantly, is more likely to ensure the equitable and efficient use of domestic resources than those subjected to the narrowing of avenues for revenue mobilisation inherent to weak or neo-patrimonial states (Besley, Ilzetzki, and Persson, 2013: pp. 218-219). As stood out in the findings detailed in

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[43] Women's Commune Members, interviewed in the Pool region of Congo on 05 September 2019 (Interview Number 16). These individuals argued that many of the challenges faced by the Congolese peoples and those in other countries in the region are linked to the specific behaviours of domestic leaders, the personalisation of politics and resource distribution, and the ramifications therefrom for meeting the needs of their populaces.
[44] Assistant Director of Mining, interviewed in the Pool region of Congo on 29 August 2019 (Interview Number 10).
[45] US Official, interviewed in Libreville, Gabon on 15 August 2019 (Interview Number 02). This individual argued the Gabonese state, particularly under Omar Bongo (1967-2009) has 'shared the wealth more than some' and thereby employed its vast resources to the benefit of its populace to legitimise and provide security to the regime.

Chapter 3, furthermore, Gabon's performance and comparative productivity has rested on the long-standing stability of this state and, therefore, the comparative coercive capacities it has exhibited.

Gabon has demonstrated strong capacities for extraction through significant early trade, consistent mobilisation of *tax revenues*, and a *GDP per capita* that is among the highest in sub-Saharan Africa (World Bank, 2020). As was emphasised in Chapter 2, furthermore, states' formal capacities for extraction, coercion, and administration are interdependent, with a state lacking security, legitimacy, or institutional coherence unlikely to benefit from economic growth (Lieberman, 2010: p. 38; Englebert, 2000a: p. 90). An unstable state is likely to rely disproportionately on its coercive capacities, inhibiting those for extraction and administration (Hendrix, 2010: p. 277; Gupta, de Mello, and Sharan, 2001). The legitimacy and security promoted by the state's formal institutions, in short, are central to its ability to counteract neo-patrimonial dysfunction and pursue development (Cammack and Kelsall, 2010: pp. 3-5; Lieberman, 2010: p. 38; Englebert, 2000a: p. 90). Evaluation of the coercive capacities operationalised by equatorial African countries is thus vital for an investigation of the dynamics, mechanisms, and circumstances moulding their formal capacities, disparate circumstances, and divergent modern outcomes.

### 4c. Coercive Capacities and Gabon's Lack of 'Fragility'

This chapter is centred on explicating the formal capacities wielded by the states of equatorial Africa and, in so doing, revealing key processes through which Gabon's disparate circumstances have promoted widely divergent outcomes. As was emphasised in Chapter 2, while the extraction of key resources and application of these toward long-term objectives is central to the development process, such capacities in the absence of domestic security or a legitimate authority to rule can serve to perpetuate domestic inequalities, entrench neo-patrimonial operations, and promote destructive civil conflict. The stability, legitimacy, and coercive capabilities of a given state, therefore, are central to its formal capacity and prospects for long-term development. 'Stability, political vision, and political

will', to use the words of one interviewee, 'are very important to development'[46]. States' coercive

capacities are thus central to the overall strength and effectiveness of their institutions and their

ability to actively pursue development, particularly where legitimacy is limited. These capacities can

promote security and improve states' formal capacities for extraction and administration, but

excessive reliance on coercive capacities in the absence of effective institutions can indicate insecurity

and a lack of legitimacy for which the state is attempting to account.

Where a state is more stable and effective in its maintenance of domestic security,

manufacture of legitimacy, and coercion of support, it is more likely to be successful in the

construction of formal institutions, extraction of resources, and enforcement of domestic rules and

norms (Hanson and Sigman, 2019: pp. 7-8; Englebert, 2000a: p. 90). As was argued in Chapter 3,

therefore, Gabon's advantages in security, stability, and legitimacy by comparison to its regional

counterparts are indicative of disparities in the coercive capacities, *fragility*, and overall consistency

of these states (Systemic Peace, 2018). The first metric to be employed toward these ends, presented

in Figure 4.4 below, is the Systemic Peace Project's (2018) *State Fragility Index (SFI)* and provides

important initial insight into the extent to which these states have provided security, addressed

domestic divisions, or reinforced formal capacities toward these ends (Dincecco, Fenske, and Onorato,

2015: pp. 2-13). Gabon's long-standing stability was evident throughout Chapter 3, but comparative

SFI ratings are revealing for the extent to which these differences have moulded formal capacities for

coercion, the risk of future conflict, and, consequently, these four states' potential for the coherent

long-term pursuit of development (ibid; Systemic Peace, 2018; Hendrix, 2010: pp. 276-277).

Comparative 'Fragility'

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[46] UNOCA Official, interviewed in Libreville, Gabon on 22 August 2019 (Interview Number 05).

Figure 4.4 State Fragility Index
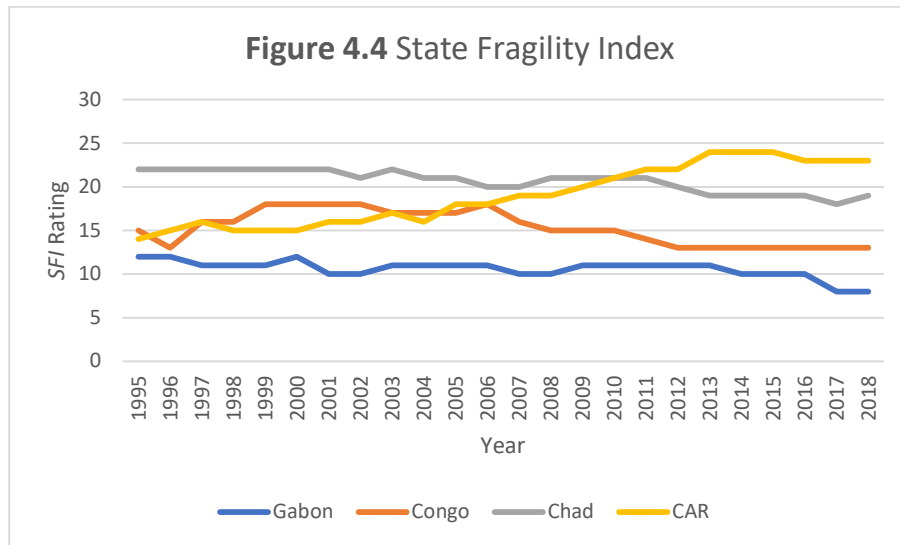
(Systemic Peace, 2018)

Gabon is, according to the Systemic Peace Project's (2018) *State Fragility Index (SFI)*, by far the least 'fragile' state in equatorial Africa, followed respectively by Congo, Chad, and CAR. The *SFI* employs a scale of 0 ('no fragility') to 25 ('extreme fragility') based on evaluation of key variables[47] and is available from 1995 to 2018 for all four of these states (Systemic Peace, 2018). Gabon's most recent (2018) rating in this *index* was 8 out of 25, compared to 13 in Congo, 19 in Chad, and 23 in CAR. CAR's 2018 rating was the second highest in the world, only behind Democratic Republic of the Congo (24). Chad's 1995-2018 rating, furthermore, was the highest in the region, averaging a score of 21 compared to 19 in CAR, 15 in Congo, and 11 in Gabon. Gabon thus stands apart from the rest of equatorial Africa through its comparative lack of *fragility* according to this metric, which has been integral to its overall performance and divergent outcomes. Specifically, as was discussed in Chapter 2, the ability of the state to avoid *fragility* or instability is central to its prospects for advancing formal institutions, surmounting informal dysfunction, or pursuing development (Dincecco, Fenske, and Onorato, 2015: p. 2; Hendrix, 2010: p. 277; Cohen, 1988: p. 10).

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[47] Systemic Peace's (2018) *SFI* assesses states' *security effectiveness, security legitimacy, political effectiveness, political legitimacy, economic effectiveness, economic legitimacy, social effectiveness,* and *social legitimacy*, alongside consideration of *regional effects, net oil production or consumption, regime type,* and *armed conflict*.

A state lacking in legitimacy or the formal capacity to manufacture security is more likely to fall victim to neo-patrimonial dysfunction and be impeded in its overall capacity to perform core functions (Cammack and Kelsall, 2010: p. 4; Englebert, 2000a: p. 90). Where a state is stricken by perpetual *fragility* or insecurity, in other words, these circumstances are likely to be less than conducive to the expansion of formal capacities or pursuit of development (ibid; Dincecco, Fenske, and Onorato, 2015: pp. 2-13). Where the state can remain secure and legitimately expand mechanisms for coercion toward these ends, on the other hand, it is more likely to be capable and successful (ibid). Gabon's relative lack of *fragility* within a generally unstable region, in other words, is indicative of a greater security and legitimacy to reign in this context than exists in Congo, Chad, or CAR and, therefore, formal capacities for coercion which are more conducive to the pursuit of alternative, more productive, objectives. Gabon has, for the duration of the data available, remained the least 'fragile' state in equatorial Africa according to the Systemic Peace Project (2018), a record that mirrors the history and findings evidenced in Chapter 3.

The comparative lack of *fragility* in Gabon reflects the overall coercive capacities in this context and its counterparts' significantly increased likelihood for future conflict (ibid). These patterns stood out in the histories detailed in Chapter 3, but alone the insight provided into the specific nature of these capacities and reasons behind Gabon's region-low *fragility* according to the *SFI* are limited. The final two metrics to be employed in this section, toward substantiating the implications from the Systemic Peace Project's (2018) evaluations, will capture the *armed forces personnel (% of total labour force)* and *monopoly on the use of violence* within these countries, according to the World Bank (2020) and BTI (2020a) respectively. These will provide further insight into the coercive capabilities of these states and, importantly, capture key aspects of these capacities specifically relevant to the relative persistence, or absence, of conflict (Michaelopoulous and Papaioannou, 2015a: p. 33; Acemoglu, Chaves, Osafo-Kwaako, and Robinson, 2013: pp. 1-7; Hendrix, 2010: p. 277). Congo, Chad, and CAR have all been characterised by high levels of insecurity and *fragility* alongside 'weak' formal institutions (Systemic Peace, 2018; Reno, 1998: p. 15). Gabon, on the other hand, has largely avoided

such circumstances and constructed a nearly complete *monopoly on the use of violence* within its territory (BTI, 2020a) which has been founded, in part, on its populous *armed forces personnel (% of total labour force)* (World Bank, 2020).

Armed Forces Personnel

Figure 4.5 Armed Forces Personnel (% of Total Labour Force)
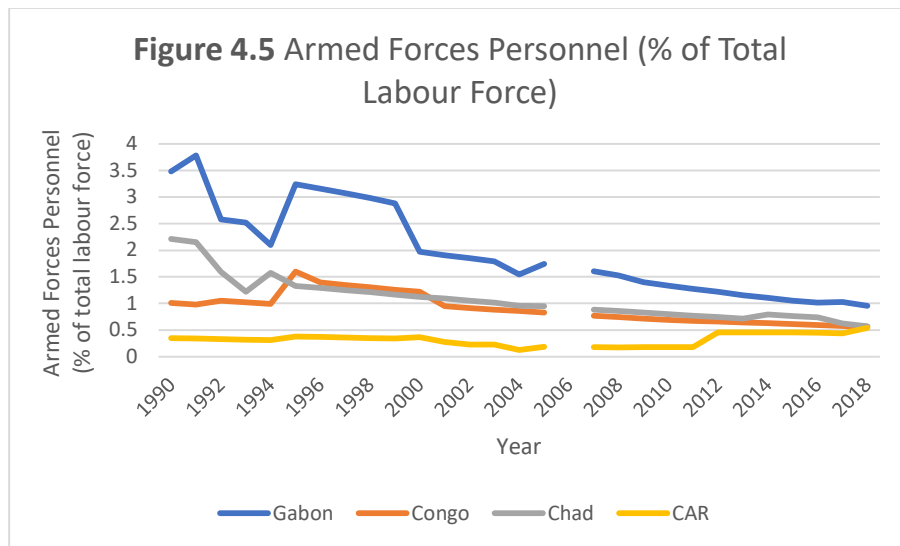
(World Bank, 2020)

Gabon has, for the duration of the region's independent history, been far more stable and secure than Congo, Chad, and CAR. This security to rule was largely enabled by French military assistance, an intricate network for repression and co-optation installed via French patrons[48] (Yates, 1996: pp. 41-51), and informal mechanisms for 'psychological violence'[49]. These, alongside the significant economic strides made in the 1970s, cemented and legitimised the reign of Omar Bongo and enabled the coherent pursuit of key long-term objectives (ibid). These patterns were discussed in further depth in Chapter 3 but, importantly, have been significant for the formal capacities of the

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[48] Gabonese Activist, interviewed in Libreville, Gabon on 20 August 2019 (Interview Number 03). This individual emphasised the important role of France in the perpetuation of the Gabonese regime and the 'political corruption' within the country which aided in the co-optation and secure control over the Gabonese economy and security forces.

[49] Congolese Academic, interviewed in Libreville, Gabon on 21 August 2019 (Interview Number 04). This individual pointed to the important role of a lack of trust, emphasis on witchcraft, and other informal mechanisms ('*violence de imaginier*') for dividing and repressing the population, which they viewed as distinct from the 'war machine' in Congo.

state to remain secure, extract significant resources, and construct strong rational-legal administrative structures (ibid). Given the early and long-standing security enjoyed by this state which was not only unique within this region but among most of France's former African colonies (Chipman, 1989: pp. 169-171), then, it should come as little surprise that Gabon in most recent (2018) data boasted the largest *armed forces* as a share of its labour force in the region and has retained this status since at least 1990 according to the World Bank (2020).

Gabon's *armed forces personnel* in 2018 (most recent data) amounted to 0.95% of its labour force, compared to 0.56% in Congo, 0.57% in Chad, and 0.54% in CAR. The data employed here, presented in Figure 4.5 above, is derived from the World Bank (2020) and available for all four states from 1990 to 2018, offering important insight into recent patterns as well as those surrounding these countries' highly volatile 1990s (Hansen, 2020: pp. 13-14; Giroux, Lanz, and Sguaitamatti, 2009: pp. 4-5; Clark, 2008: p. 251; Gardinier, 1997b: pp. 153-155). Gabon has employed the greatest share of its labour force in its *armed forces* in the region consistently since 1990, peaking at 3.78% in 1991. The all-time highs in this metric among Congo, Chad, and CAR, in contrast, were 1.60% (1995), 2.21% (1990), and 0.54% (2018), respectively, with none of these three states approaching Gabon's level at any point in the data available. Gabon's average *armed forces personnel (% of total labour force)* figure between 1990 and 2018 was 1.97%, roughly double those of Chad (1.08%) and Congo (0.91%) and more than six times CAR's average in this same period (0.32%). As is evident from this metric, then, Gabon has, as a share of its total labour force, demonstrated the most significant and consistent material capacities for coercion in the region and, thus, a superior foundation for long-term security, 'fiscal capacity', and development (Dincecco, Fenske, and Onarato, 2015: pp. 2-13).

As Acemoglu, Chaves, Osafo-Kwaako, and Robinson (2013) argued, 'a weak state is one which does not possess a monopoly on the use of violence, does not have a modern bureaucracy, and is unable to raise taxes' (p. 7). A state unable to manufacture security or improve its monopoly on the use of force within its territory, furthermore, is likely to be constrained in its formal capacities for

coercion, extraction, and administration, impeding the coherent long-term pursuit of development (ibid; Dincecco, Fenske, and Onarato, 2015: pp. 2-13; Hendrix, 2010: p. 277). It is thus significant that Congo, Chad, and CAR have all been more 'fragile' than Gabon (Systemic Peace, 2018), were outperformed by Gabon in metrics for extractive capacity (World Bank, 2020), and likewise trail this state in this key metric for coercive capacity. Such evident disparities between Gabon and its regional counterparts indicate important overall differences in the formal capacities of these states, strongly aligning with Reno's (1998) description of Congo, Chad, and CAR as 'institutionally weak' (p. 15).

While Chad far outpaces the rest of the region in *total armed forces personnel* figures, with a 2017 (most recent data) *total* of 35000 compared to 7000 in Gabon, 8000 in CAR, and 12000 in Congo, these figures are at least in part mitigated by the comparative total populations in these countries[50]. As was clear in Chapter 3, furthermore, such high *total* figures have largely failed to contribute to the manufacture of a monopoly over the use of force on behalf of the Chadian state, despite the overall militarisation of its state and society (Hansen, 2017: p. 57). Likewise, Chad has, since 1995, been on average the most *fragile* state in equatorial Africa, despite CAR's recent struggles in this regard (Systemic Peace, 2018). Such significant expansions in the Chadian state's material capacities for coercion amidst sustained *fragility* (ibid) evidence the overall weakness of this state's formal institutions and the extent to which these mechanisms have been employed to account for a lack of state legitimacy or security (Hansen, 2017: p. 57; Hendrix, 2010: p. 277; Gupta, de Mello, and Sharan, 2001). Gabon, in contrast, has constructed formal capacities for coercion according to this metric which are significant as a share of its total labour force and boasts an *armed forces* ratio that surpasses the rest of equatorial Africa and most other states in sub-Saharan Africa (World Bank, 2020).

Compared to the most militarised states in sub-Saharan Africa, however, Gabon's *armed forces personnel (% of total labour force)* figures look modest. Specifically, Eritrea boasted the highest

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[50] 2017 populations: Gabon – 2,064,812; CAR – 4,596,023; Congo – 5,110,701; Chad – 15,016,761 (World Bank, 2020).

recent figures in *armed forces personnel (% of total labour force)* in the subcontinent according to the World Bank (2020), with a 2017 figure of 12.85% compared to Gabon's figure that year of 1.03%. Such modest yet evidently effective *armed forces* in Gabon serve as important indication of the extent to which this state has (not) needed to employ its material coercive capacities to account for a security or legitimacy that is otherwise absent. Where a state is overly dependent upon these capacities, they are unlikely to provide security to the state and can contribute to further conflict (Gould and Winters, 2013: p. 317). Where other formal capacities are lacking, 'regimes require greater coercive capacity' to counteract popular discontent and an insecure domestic environment (Cohen, 1988: p. 10). Such theoretical propositions stood out in Chapter 2 but, importantly, have most prominently manifested through Gabon's regional counterparts, particularly Chad (Hansen, 2017: pp. 56-57). In Gabon, on the other hand, these capacities have been employed alongside strong formal institutions and have contributed to a nearly complete *monopoly on the use of violence* within its territory, according to the Bertelsmann Transformation Index's (BTI, 2020a) assessments.

Monopoly on the Use of Violence

A state unable to establish a monopoly over the use of force within its territory is likely to be lacking in necessary formal rational-legal capacities and legitimacy, relegating it to cycles of insecurity and minimal developmental potentiality (Acemoglu, Chaves, Osafo-Kwaako, and Robinson, 2013: p. 7). While significant *armed forces personnel* can be beneficial to these processes, these can likewise be indicative of an underlying insecurity to which the state is responding (ibid; Hendrix, 2010: p. 277). An expansion in the state's coercive capacities in the absence of legitimacy or formal rational-legal capacities, furthermore, can stoke insecurity and contribute to cycles of civil conflict (Gould and Winters, 2013: p. 317). While states' *armed forces personnel* are elucidatory of their material capacities for coercion, then, the comparative militarisation of the Chadian state, for instance, has failed to diminish domestic insecurity or advance the state's formal capacities (ibid; Hansen, 2017: p. 57), particularly compared to Gabon. Such implications stand out in the BTI's (2020a) assessment of

states' *monopoly on the use of violence* and elucidate a key factor in the 'enigmatic' experience of this region[51].

The patterns of instability and institutional dysfunction in Chad, Congo, and CAR have contributed to the self-perpetuating nature of civil conflict and poverty and are significant for an investigation into the disparities among these countries through which Gabon has managed to outperform these other countries. While CAR has virtually 'no hope for the future'[52] and has thus been the most unstable country in the region in recent years (Herbet, Dukhan, and Debos, 2013: p. 2), Congo has been similar to Chad in its efforts toward autocratic centralisation, violent repression, and ethnic division, creating a 'memory of violence' which has constrained its ability to manufacture a complete monopoly over the use of force (Clark, 2008: p. 118). Gabon, on the other hand, has established a *monopoly on the use of violence*, according to the BTI's (2020a) experts, that rivals any state in the world, offering important insight into the formal capacity and legitimacy of this state. Specifically, Gabon in 2020 (most recent data) received a near-perfect rating in this assessment of its *monopoly on the use of violence*, scoring 9 out of 10 and far surpassing the other three states in the region in this area according to the BTI's (2020a) experts.

The Bertelsmann Transformation Index provides ratings of countries' *monopoly on the use of violence* on a scale of 1 to 10, with a 10 indicating a perfect monopoly over the use of force and 1 the opposite (BTI, 2020a). Ratings in this *index* are available from 2012 to 2020 for Chad and CAR, 2018 to 2020 for Congo[53], and 2020 for Gabon, but the limited data range does not obscure the insights to be gained from this metric for these states' respective and comparative *monopoly on the use of*

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[51] Congolese Academic, interviewed in Libreville, Gabon on 21 August 2019 (Interview Number 04). This individual argued that 'Central Africa is enigmatic because we have wealth and we have poverty and violence', a poignant representation of the key disparities operating within this region.

[52] UNOCA Chief of Staff, interviewed in Libreville, Gabon on 22 August 2019 (Interview Number 06). This individual was vocal in their emphasis on the impact of CAR's domestic conflicts and endemic instability on the operation of its state and its formal capacities for performing even basic functions, which offered 'no hope for the future'.

[53] The author served as the BTI's Country Expert for Republic of Congo in 2020 and 2022 (forthcoming). All 2020 BTI scores for Congo, then, represent evaluations of the country by the author, reviewed and moderated by other experts on the country.

violence. As was noted, the BTI (2020a) in its most recent report bestowed upon Gabon a *monopoly on the use of violence* rating of 9 out of 10, indicating a nearly complete monopoly over the use of force on behalf of its state. Congo, Chad, and CAR, meanwhile, received ratings of 6, 7, and 2, respectively, in 2020, indicating moderate-to-low *monopolies on the use of violence* among these comparatively 'fragile' (Systemic Peace, 2018) states. Gabon was, importantly, one of the few Francophone African countries to have received significant French technical and material assistance in its post-independence history (Gardinier, 1997b: pp. 146-148; Yates, 1996: pp. 50-51; Chipman, 1989: p. 169). This history created an early security which was integral to the formal capacity of the Gabonese state (ibid; World Bank, 2020; Clark, 2008: p. 228) and has, according to the BTI's (2020a) assessments, culminated in a near-complete monopoly over the use of force within its territory.

In contrast to Gabon, Chad, the country with the highest *total armed forces personnel* in the region (World Bank, 2020), has remained relatively mediocre in the BTI's (2020a) *monopoly on the use of violence* ratings, despite increasing from 6 to 7 between 2012 and 2014. Republic of Congo, the second-least 'fragile' (Systemic Peace, 2018) country in the region, meanwhile, has maintained a moderate score (6) lower than Chad's for the duration of the data available (2018-2020). CAR, finally, is among the most 'fragile' states in the world (Systemic Peace, 2018) and has consequently been highly inconsistent in its domestic operations and *monopoly on the use of violence* ratings, ranging from 3 in 2012 to 1 in 2014 before finding a median of 2 from 2016 to 2020. Gabon's comparative stability thus stands in stark contrast with its regional counterparts. This was, importantly, likewise evident in the consistency in its scoring in the *neo-patrimonial rule index* and its components in Chapter 3 as well as its strong extractive capacities, region-low *fragility*, and region-high *armed forces personnel (% of labour force)* (ibid; World Bank, 2020). The BTI's (2020a) assessments of these states' *monopoly on the use of violence* within their territories, however, offer vital insight into the extent to which these circumstances have manifested in the expansion of formal capacities, preservation of legitimacy, and coherent pursuit of development to an extent unrivalled by its regional counterparts.

Gabon has, based on the findings in this chapter thus far, demonstrated a nearly complete monopoly over the use of force within its territory and the most consistent capacities for mobilising resources in the region, yielding distinct advantages in its formal capacities for extraction and coercion by comparison to its counterparts in Congo, Chad, and CAR. The unique security to rule and benefits derived from these circumstances in Gabon were established in the 1960s and 1970s and served to distinguish this small state from most other Francophone African states in the formative decades of independence (Gardinier, 1997b: pp. 146-148; Yates, 1996: pp. 106-111; Chipman, 1989: pp. 170-171). Given the distinct endogeneity to states' formal capacities outlined in Chapter 2, furthermore, these long-standing advantages in Gabon's capacity for extraction and coercion likewise indicate administrative capacities in this context which outperform the rest of the region (Hanson and Sigman, 2019: pp. 5-9; Hendrix, 2010: p. 274; Fearon and Laitin, 2003). In the absence of formal administrative capacities, endemic neo-patrimonialism can weaken capacities for extraction or coercion and inhibit development (Englebert, 2000a: p. 104). Where the state has been stable and exhibited significant capacities for extracting domestic resources like in Gabon, on the other hand, it is more likely to be formally capable of surmounting institutional dysfunction to advance formal rational-legal administrative structures and pursue development (p. 23).

4d. Administrative Capacities and Neo-Patrimonial Dysfunction

This chapter serves a central purpose in the overall analysis within this thesis in exploring and explaining the key formal mechanisms and processes through which Gabon's disparate circumstances have generated widely divergent outcomes within equatorial Africa. Based on the findings in this chapter thus far, the Gabonese state has been vested with formal capacities for extraction and coercion which far outperform its regional counterparts and have been integral to the comparative productivity and security exhibited by this state. As was made clear in Chapter 3, furthermore, such conditions in Gabon have been central to its overall performance and the specific manifestation of clientelism, presidentialism, and regime corruption in this context. Neo-patrimonial

developmentalism, as outlined in this thesis' theoretical contentions in Chapter 2, relies on the formal

capacities of the state and its resultant capability for avoiding institutional dysfunction. Such progress

relies on the administrative capacities exhibited by the state and its ability to monitor its populace,

enforce rules and norms, and deliver key services, which can have significant ramifications for the

coercive and extractive demands on and capacities of the state.

A state's administrative capacities are central to its overall capability for avoiding informal

dysfunction or pursuing development. Where a state is unable to construct the necessary rational-

legal bureaucratic structures, it is likely to rely upon mechanisms for repression and coercion (Hendrix,

2010: pp. 274) and politics can become a means for gaining access to resources[54] (Acemoglu, 2005: p.

432). These weaknesses can inhibit the enforcement of rules and norms, limit the state's extractive

and coercive capacities, and undermine legitimacy (Cohen, 1988: pp. 17-18). As was discussed in

Chapter 2, furthermore, states' extractive, coercive, and administrative capacities are distinctly

endogenous, with impressive (disappointing) performance in extracting resources and coercing

security likely to be indicative of strong (weak) institutions and formal capacities for administration

(Hanson and Sigman, 2019: pp. 7-9; Collier and Hoeffler, 2004). Gabon's nearly complete *monopoly*

on the use of violence (BTI, 2020a) and *GDP per capita* among the highest in the subcontinent (World

Bank, 2020), in other words, indicate substantial formal capacities vested within this state specifically

relevant to the rational-legal capabilities of its administrative institutions (Hanson and Sigman, 2019:

pp. 7-9; Hendrix, 2010: p. 274; Fearon and Laitin, 2003).

As Englebert (2000a) argued, 'capacity alone explains at least 30 percent of variation in growth

across the world. Together with a measure of the adversities of geography, it seems to fully capture

the roots of Africa's predicament' (p. 37). Where a state is lacking in the necessary rational-legal

formal capacities, it is more likely to fall victim to informal 'economic policy distortions', limiting

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[54] Assistant Director of Mining, interviewed in the Pool region of Congo on 29 August 2019 (Interview Number 10). This individual argued politics in Congo were first and foremost a means for gaining access to resources.

'private investment', promoting the 'inefficient allocation of resources', and hindering 'productivity growth' (Ndulu and Van de Walle, 1996: p. 6). Such processes have stood out in Congo, Chad, and CAR throughout this chapter, culminating in weak formal capacities and little 'hope for the future'[55]. The institutional weaknesses evident in countries like Congo, Chad, and CAR, importantly, have been linked to their distorting domestic circumstances, the 'uncertainties arising from macroeconomic instability' (ibid), and distinct limitations in their 'administrative capacity' (Englebert, 2000a: pp. 37-45). States' administrative capabilities, in short, are integral to their formal capacities for pursuing development or overcoming neo-patrimonial dysfunction (ibid). As the first metric to be employed toward these ends, presented in Figure 4.6 below, indicates, furthermore, not even Gabon has been entirely immune from the potentially distorting impact of endemic neo-patrimonialism.

Statistical Capacity

Figure 4.6 Statistical Capacity
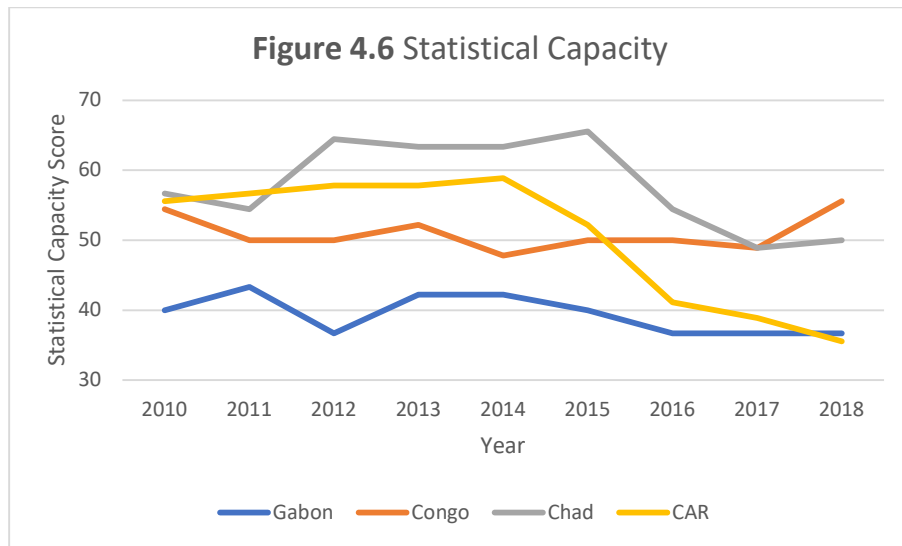
(World Bank, 2020)

The *statistical capacity* of a given state is a key indicator of its ability to collect and disseminate information, survey its populace, or monitor potential rebels, providing important insight into the

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[55] UNOCA Official and Chief of Staff, interviewed in Libreville, Gabon on 22 August 2019 (Interview Numbers 05 and 06). These individuals argued instability and a 'lack of resources' (Interview Number 05) in CAR offered 'no hope for the future' (Interview Number 06).

state's rational-legal administrative capacity (Lee and Zhang, 2017: pp. 118-119). Consideration of the

statistical capacity of equatorial African states aligns with studies undertaken by scholars including

Lee and Zhang (2017) and Hanson and Sigman (2019), with the latter specifically employing the same

measure of *statistical capacity*, derived from the World Bank, as is applied here (p. 9). The World

Bank's (2020) *statistical capacity* measure employs 25 criteria toward evaluating states within a

framework of 'methodology; data sources; and periodicity and timeliness', with scores ranging from

0 to 100. A score of 100 on this scale indicates complete and faultless *statistical capacity* on behalf of

the state; a score of 0 indicates the opposite (ibid). Data is available from 2010 to 2018 and thereby

provides important insight into modern operations within these states, with an expansion

(contraction) in *statistical capacity* potentially indicating similar patterns in a state's overall

administrative capacity (ibid; Lee and Zhang, 2017: pp. 118-119).

It is thus significant that Gabon boasted the lowest *statistical capacity* in the region

throughout the data available prior to 2018, according to the World Bank (2020), and only recently

surpassed CAR as the latter's formal institutions came to be threatened by its endemic civil conflicts

(Gebremichael et al., 2018: pp. 2-6). Gabon in 2018 (most recent data) recorded a *statistical capacity*

rating of 36.67 out of 100, compared to 55.56 in Congo, 50.00 in Chad, and 35.56 in CAR, in the same

year. Gabon's highest *statistical capacity* rating on record was 43.33 (2011), compared to peaks in

Congo, Chad, and CAR of 55.56 (2010, 2018), 65.56 (2015), and 58.89 (2014), respectively. With the

Gabonese state and its comparative success described by some critics as a 'façade'[56], the country's

depressed *statistical capacity* despite impressive extractive and coercive capacities reveals a key

aspect of this state's formal capacity that has been constrained by its highly presidential and corrupt

form of governance (V-Dem, 2020). As was addressed in Chapter 3, furthermore, Gabon's electoral

systems have come to be viewed as largely illegitimate (Isbell and Bhoojedhur, 2018, 2020) and the

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[56] Gabonese Activist, interviewed in Libreville, Gabon on 20 August 2019 (Interview Number 03). This individual described the Gabonese state as a 'façade', though they argued that we were 'in the context of the end of the regime' and that 'anyone but Bongo' would be an improvement for Gabon.

state has increasingly employed informal mechanisms including the manipulation of key data and electoral processes to counteract rising popular discontent over a lack of elite accountability (ibid; Brubaker and Druet, 2020: pp. 17-18).

Sustained limitations in the Gabonese state's *statistical capacity* according to the World Bank (2020), therefore, represent a specific area in which the interests of regime preservation and repression have been prioritised by this otherwise semi-developmental state. Gabon's performance in this metric has consistently trailed sub-Saharan averages (World Bank, 2020), indicating that neo-patrimonialism in this context has managed to some extent to reduce the state 'to a merely instrumental role, a set of resources that rulers use to foster their power' (Englebert, 2000a: p. 5). Neo-patrimonial developmentalism rests on the state's ability to insulate itself from 'myopic private interests' (Mkandawire, 2001: p. 290), the construction of formal capacities, and a 'development-oriented political leadership…to implement sound policies' (Ghebremusse, 2015: p. 492). Where the state's formal institutions are weak or subjected to personalistic interests, endemic clientelism, presidentialism, and regime corruption can impede the operation of formal administrative capacities and the extent to which officials coherently and effectively serve long-term societal interests (Coppedge et al., 2020: p. 164).

Such implications have been clear throughout the findings in this chapter for Congo, Chad, and CAR and, importantly, have likewise been evident through the depressed *statistical capacity* operationalised by the Gabonese state. Such depressed capacities are, however, unique within the Gabonese context and are representative of a state that has achieved a specific balance between formality and informality conducive to legitimisation amidst its specific domestic circumstances. Put simply, neo-patrimonial developmentalism does not imply the complete absence of neo-patrimonial dysfunction (Mkandawire, 2015: pp. 565-578; Erdmann and Engel, 2007: p. 105). Significant capacities for extraction and coercion as have been evident in Gabon, furthermore, are likely to be indicative of significant overall rational-legal capacities and, specifically, administrative structures that are 'rigorous

and impartial in the performance of their duties' (Coppedge et al., 2020: p. 164). Based on V-Dem's

(2020) *rigorous and impartial public administration* evaluations presented in Figure 4.7 below, indeed,

Gabon's weaknesses in *statistical capacity* are an outlier within its overall rational-legal administrative

operations.

Rigorous and Impartial Public Administration

Figure 4.7 Rigorous and Impartial Public Administration
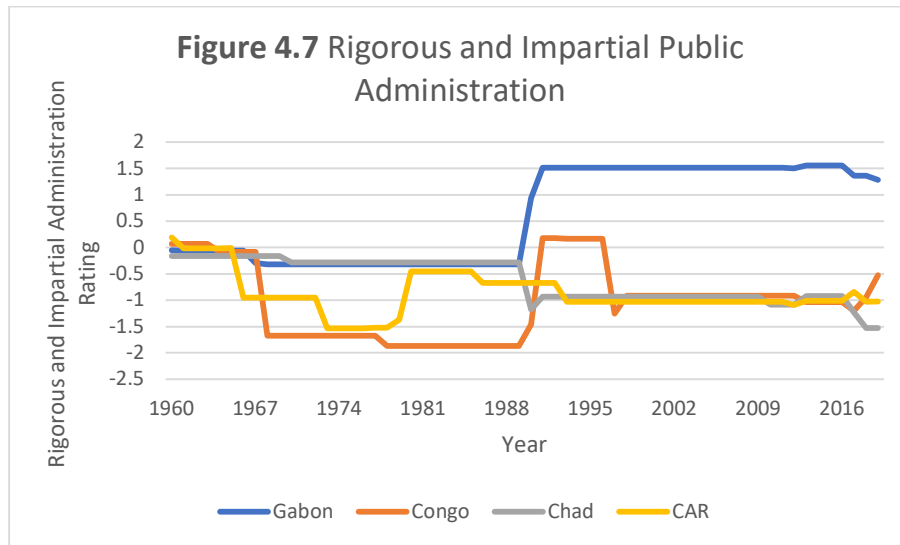
(V-Dem, 2020)

As was made clear in Chapter 2, the effectiveness and efficiency of public institutions is central

to the overall formal capacity of a state and the potential impact from neo-patrimonialism (Hendrix,

2010: pp. 274-275; Englebert, 2000a: p. 45). While *statistical capacity* can be indicative of overall

administrative capacity (Hanson and Sigman, 2019: p. 9; Lee and Zhang, 2017: pp. 118-120), states'

formal capacities in this regard are likewise evident through the impact of, and on, bureaucrats and

political elites (Mkandawire, 2001: p. 290). Specifically, where 'public officials [are] rigorous and

impartial in the performance of their duties' (Coppedge et al., 2020: p. 164) administrative structures

can more effectively implement policies, survey the populace, and enforce key rules and norms

(Hendrix, 2010: p. 276). Testing these propositions within the context of equatorial Africa, the final

metric employed in this chapter, presented in Figure 4.6 above, is a rating of *rigorous and impartial public administration* drawn from the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem, 2020) dataset.

The expert assessments for V-Dem's (2020) measure of *rigorous and impartial public administration* are centred on 'the extent to which public officials generally abide by the law and treat like cases alike, or conversely, the extent to which public administration is characterized by arbitrariness and biases (*i.e.*, nepotism, cronyism, or discrimination)' (Coppedge et al., 2020: p. 164). This measure thus captures key dynamics impacting upon the effectiveness and consistency of public administration within a given context, providing vital insight into the broader administrative capacities wielded. Scores are available for all four states from 1960 to 2019 and rated on an interval scale of -5 to 5, with a 5 indicating a fully *rigorous and impartial public administration* and a -5 the opposite (ibid; Coppedge et al., 2020: p. 164). V-Dem (2020) in their expert assessments and ratings prioritise cross-country comparability (Pemstein et al., 2020: pp. 8-10), making this final metric highly applicable to comparative analysis of these formal capacities among the states of equatorial Africa.

V-Dem's *public administration* assessments were likewise employed by Hanson and Sigman (2019) as a key indicator of administrative capacity within their comprehensive analysis of states' formal capacities for extraction, coercion, and administration and thus provide important insight into these capacities and their endogenous and mutually dependent nature (pp. 8-9). Despite gaining independence with the second lowest rating in this measure, Gabon has boasted the highest *rigorous and impartial public administration* rating in the region since 1990, with a 2019 rating of 1.286 compared to -0.527 in Congo, -1.527 in Chad, and -1.023 in CAR. While these systems 'across the board' in Congo, Chad, and CAR are driven by self-interest and personalism[57], Gabon thus wields,

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[57] Assistant Director of Mining, interviewed in the Pool region of Congo on 29 August 2019 (Interview Number 10). This individual viewed institutions in Congo, Chad, and CAR as fundamentally weak and driven by personalistic relationships and nepotism. Only with a 'strong regime' did they think a country like CAR could be successfully stabilised.

according to V-Dem's (2020) experts, the most *rigorous and impartial public administration* in the region and has sustained this superiority in these assessments for the past three decades.

Gabon's rating was below 0 until 1990, spiking from -0.318 in 1989 to 0.935 in 1990 and 1.514 in 1991 and remaining above 1.5 through 2016. Even with a slight decline in this regard in recent years (from 1.558 in 2016 to 1.286 in 2019) as corruption has notably increased and Ali Bongo Ondimba's grasp on power has weakened[58], this significant spike in Gabon's rating at the beginning of the 1990s represents by far the most significant improvement in the rigorousness and impartiality of public administrations in the region, dwarfing any level obtained by Congo, Chad, or CAR. These improvements have, furthermore, been maintained in the decades since, with political transition and public distrust (Isbell and Bhoojedhur, 2018, 2020) unable to derail the operation of Gabon's formal administrative capacities by this metric. As was discussed in further depth in Chapter 3, Gabon in 1990 was faced with domestic uncertainty, the illegitimacy of the single party state, a major crash in oil revenues, and 'chronic unrest…among the urban population' (Gardinier, 1997b: pp. 149-154; Yates, 1996: pp. 125-126). The regime of Omar Bongo, consequently, transitioned away from the single party state that had been integral to its success to that point to install multi-party democracy and a formal openness that had been absent prior (ibid).

While this period wielded minimal influence over the operation of neo-patrimonialism in the country according to the findings in Chapter 3, importantly, the public administration of Gabon was evidently substantially and permanently transformed at the beginning of the 1990s (V-Dem, 2020). Though Congo likewise recorded significant improvements in this metric in the same period (increasing from -1.87 in 1989 to 0.18 in 1991), the insecurity surrounding this transition and 'dreadful' performance in improving upon domestic economic circumstances (Clark, 2008: p. 105) inhibited and ultimately doomed the democratically elected regime of Pascal Lissouba (Akum, 2018: p. 5). Rather

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[58] Gabonese Activist, interviewed in Libreville, Gabon on 20 August 2019 (Interview Number 03). This individual was vocal about the weakening of the Bongo regime, and specifically the weakening of Ali Bongo Ondimba's physical and political condition, which has allowed members of his inner circle to increase their power and influence over Gabon's corrupt networks and oil industry.

than expanding formal capacities and mirroring progress in Gabon, then, the state in Congo quickly restored the informal 'authoritarian and paternalistic politico-cultural norms that had held sway in Congo before 1991'[59] (Clark, 2008: p. 251), with *rigorous and impartial administration* ratings in the country following suit and collapsing in 1997 to -1.258 (from 0.168 in 1996). The Gabonese state has thus demonstrated the most *rigorous and impartial public administration* in equatorial Africa for the past three decades, according to V-Dem's (2020) experts. None of the other three states, meanwhile, has demonstrated a propensity to improve in this measure for their administrative capacity at any point since Congo's 1990s volatility.

Gabon, in short, substantially improved its *public administration* rating at the beginning of the 1990s and has maintained the levels established in this period since, clearly differentiating itself from the rest of the region according to V-Dem's (2020) experts. While Congo demonstrated some progress surrounding its political transition in the 1990s, furthermore, this experience was an outlier in the overall performance of Congo, Chad, and CAR, and none of these states has at any point since come close to matching Gabon's ratings. Such patterns have likewise been evident throughout the findings in this chapter, with Gabon clearly standing out for its nearly complete *monopoly on the use of violence* (BTI, 2020a), significant and consistent extractive capacities (World Bank, 2020), and the rigorousness and impartiality of its *public administration*, despite impeded *statistical capacity* (World Bank, 2020). While not entirely immune from the dysfunction arising from neo-patrimonialism, therefore, the specific manifestation of these systems in Gabon and its unique domestic circumstances have granted this state formal capacities that generally surpass its comparatively volatile regional counterparts and thus represent key avenues through which Gabon has come to outperform Republic of Congo, Chad, and Central African Republic.

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[59] Assistant Director of Mining, interviewed in the Pool region of Congo on 29 August 2019 (Interview Number 10). This individual echoed Clark's (2008) sentiment and argued that 'politics are the only way to get money' and institutions were dominated by 'self-interest', with positions distributed among friends, family, and other narrow networks.

The formal capacities vested within the Gabonese state evident within this chapter point to important factors in the stability and consistency to domestic operations indicated in Chapter 3 and have resulted in development outcomes that none of Congo, Chad, or CAR can match (UNDP, 2020). Gabon is among the five most 'developed' countries in sub-Saharan Africa (ibid), boasts the fourth-highest *GDP per capita* in the subcontinent (World Bank, 2020), wields a nearly complete *monopoly on the use of violence* within its territory (BTI, 2020a), and has promoted the most *rigorous and impartial public administration* in equatorial Africa (V-Dem, 2020). These outcomes have been moulded by the early and long-standing security to rule enjoyed by the Gabonese state, the consistency of its informal operations, and its region-low clientelism (V-Dem, 2020), enabling the expansion of formal capacities for extraction, coercion, and administration, according to the findings in this thesis. Gabon is the most consistent and formally capable state in equatorial Africa and has, based on this thesis' findings so far, managed to avoid or counteract much of the potential dysfunction from its endemic neo-patrimonialism to promote a productivity, security, and institutional coherence that none of its regional counterparts can match. As will be made clear in Chapter 5, furthermore, these processes have promoted outcomes that are the most developmental in the region and among the most impressive in sub-Saharan Africa (World Bank, 2020; UNDP, 2020).

4e. Conclusion

This chapter has been centred on exploring the formal mechanisms and processes through which the wide variance in outcomes among equatorial African states has occurred. Specifically, this thesis is aimed at investigating through the application of the theoretical contentions established in Chapter 2 the processes moulding these wide disparities and the importance of Gabon's specific circumstances and informal operations detailed in Chapter 3 for its overall divergence from Congo, Chad, and CAR. Central to these processes are the formal capacities of these states and the extent to which these have been employed to promote domestic productivity, security, and institutional coherence. This chapter, toward these ends, has assessed the formal extractive, coercive, and administrative capacities of

Gabon, Republic of Congo, Chad, and Central African Republic and the implications for these states'
respective and comparative performance. Neo-patrimonial developmentalism requires a functional
parity between formal and informal structures and, therefore, an expansion of the state's formal
capacities for extraction, coercion, and administration to counteract the dysfunction bred by endemic
clientelism, presidentialism, and regime corruption.

Gabon is among the most 'developed' states in Africa (UNDP, 2020) despite being assessed as
being almost as neo-patrimonial as the most neo-patrimonial state in the subcontinent (V-Dem, 2020).
These outcomes have been moulded by the long-standing security to rule in Gabon, the specific
manifestation of neo-patrimonialism, and the formal capacities constructed in the decades since
independence. Gabon has exhibited the most significant capacities for extraction, coercion, and
administration in the region, based on the findings in this chapter, providing an important foundation
for improving institutional quality and pursuing development. Specifically, Gabon has exhibited the
most significant capacities for mobilising resources, sustaining economic growth, and legitimately
taxing its population in equatorial Africa in concert with a nearly perfect monopoly over the use of
force, a larger *armed forces* as a share of its labour force than its counterparts, and the most *rigorous
and impartial* administrative structures in the region (World Bank, 2020; BTI, 2020a; V-Dem, 2020).
These formal capacities have been central to Gabon's overall performance and the divergent
outcomes being investigated in this thesis.

Based on the findings from this chapter alongside the insights from Chapters 2 and 3, then,
significant capacities for extraction, coercion, and administration vested within the Gabonese state
have served a key role in its divergent outcomes and the long-standing nature of intra-regional
disparities among these four states despite similar initial conditions. High formal capacities in Gabon
have added to its comparatively weak clientelism (V-Dem, 2020) and long-standing stability to enable
the Gabonese state to surmount much of the potential dysfunction from its neo-patrimonialism and
actively pursue development to an extent that rivals almost any country in the subcontinent (World

Bank, 2020; UNDP, 2020). This superior performance on behalf of Gabon has thus been largely conditioned by its formal capacities and the specific balance between formality and informality indicated by these findings, particularly by comparison to its regional counterparts.

Neo-patrimonial developmentalism, as was outlined in Chapter 2, rests on the legitimacy and security of the state and its formal capacity to perform core functions related to extraction, coercion, and administration. The underperformance and volatility evident in all of Congo, Chad, and CAR have thus been moulded by the nature and frequency of civil conflict in these contexts, the impact from high levels of clientelism on the distribution of rents, and the implications from these processes for the quality and effectiveness of formal institutions, based on this thesis' findings. The disparate circumstances between these three states and Gabon have enabled impressive formal capacities and development outcomes in the latter context, pointing to the centrality of long-standing security, legitimacy, and the case-specific manifestation of neo-patrimonialism to the productive allocation of domestic resources (World Bank, 2020; V-Dem, 2020; UNDP, 2020; Systemic Peace, 2018). As has been noted extensively, therefore, the outcomes from neo-patrimonialism are inherently variable and dependent on the specific domestic circumstances and formal capacities moulding state operations. In equatorial Africa, disparate circumstances and variable forms of neo-patrimonialism have moulded and been moulded by the formal capacities evidenced in this chapter.

The present chapter and Chapter 3 have demonstrated the balance between informality and formality within Gabon, Republic of Congo, Chad, and Central African Republic and, specifically, the extent to which disparate domestic circumstances have come to mould their neo-patrimonial operations and formal capacities. As was discussed in Chapter 2, furthermore, where a state is unstable or institutionally weak, it is expected to be less formally capable, allowing for the entrenchment of its endemic neo-patrimonialism and inhibiting the active pursuit of development. Weak formal capacities for extraction, coercion, and administration in Congo, Chad, and CAR according to key metrics (World Bank, 2020; BTI, 2020a; V-Dem, 2020; Systemic Peace, 2018),

therefore, are largely symptomatic of their insecure domestic environments, the case-specific forms of neo-patrimonialism in these contexts, and the extent to which instability and informality have inhibited formal institutions, based on the findings in this thesis.

This chapter has thus provided an important foundation for this thesis' objective of explaining how variable circumstances and state operations have yielded such wide divergence in outcomes among these four states. Chapter 5 will offer an important addition to these efforts and, specifically, will assess the political, economic, and social outcomes among these states to investigate the extent and depth of these disparities and avenues through which Gabon's outcomes have been so distinct. While the formal capacities of the state represent key mechanisms within these processes, assessment of the specific outcomes from these systems offers a vital lens into key differences between these states and how they have been moulded by disparate circumstances and variable formal and informal operations. As has been a core feature of the analysis in this thesis, Gabon is by far the most developed state in equatorial Africa based on key metrics and is among the most developed states in sub-Saharan Africa (World Bank, 2020; UNDP, 2020). As Chapter 5 will explicate, furthermore, Gabon has outperformed its counterparts in key areas and attained political, economic, and social development, according to key metrics, that is impressive by comparison and in isolation (ibid; V-Dem, 2020; Polity V, 2018).

In contrast to its counterparts, Gabon has benefited from a relative lack of *fragility* (Systemic Peace, 2018) and comparatively weak clientelism (V-Dem, 2020) to construct legitimate formal institutions capable of obstructing the dysfunction from its endemic neo-patrimonialism. Such implications from these states' disparate circumstances have been evident throughout this thesis to this point and are punctuated by the specific development outcomes, and disparities, among these states. While Gabon ranks among the most developed states in sub-Saharan Africa and has improved upon this position in recent years, Chad and CAR are among the least developed states in the world and Congo is a mediocre state on the decline (World Bank, 2020; UNDP, 2020). These outcomes have

been moulded by the disparate circumstances in these four states, the case-specific forms of neo-patrimonialism employed, and the implications from these processes for their formal capacities and long-term pursuit of development. As Chapter 5 makes clear, in other words, the functional parity between formality and informality evidenced to this point in Gabon has served to promote the pursuit of long-term development that few states in sub-Saharan Africa, let alone its regional counterparts, can match, providing important final insights into how and to what extent their variable circumstances and operations have promoted the intra-regional disparities at the core of this thesis' focus.

Chapter 5

Development and Disparities in Equatorial Africa

5a. Introduction

This thesis is centred on discovering through investigation of institutional processes specific explanations for Gabon's long-standing divergence from its regional counterparts. As was made clear in Chapter 3, Gabon has been by far the most stable and consistent state in this region, characterised by a relative lack of civil conflict that promoted comparatively productive use of domestic resources, the centralisation of power under the executive authority of Omar Bongo, and a coherence and legitimacy to state operations that was lacking in Congo, Chad, or CAR. Chapter 4, furthermore, revealed that these circumstances have likewise promoted the most significant capacities for extraction, coercion, and administration in equatorial Africa, enabling economic growth, security, and rational-legal effectiveness that none of its regional counterparts were able to rival. The findings in these preceding chapters, in other words, provided key insight into the dynamics and circumstances among these states that have served to promote the wide divergence in outcomes that is at the core of this thesis' concerns.

This chapter, in offering an important lens into the disparate circumstances facing these states, will specifically assess these states based on their political, economic, and social development outcomes. This will elucidate how, in what ways, and to what extent the circumstances and state operations detailed in Chapters 3 and 4 have promoted the wide intra-regional divergence being investigated in this thesis. As was made clear in Chapter 2, where a state is lacking in formal capacities, stricken by insecurity, or unable to sufficiently incentivise domestic elites, development can be inhibited by the operation of domestic neo-patrimonialism and a subsequent distortion of formal rational-legal processes (Mkandawire, 2015: pp. 565-594; Cammack and Kelsall, 2010: pp. 4-6). Within

the contexts of Congo, Chad, and CAR, in contrast to Gabon, domestic circumstances and weak formal capacities have moulded and been moulded by the informal systems employed and the general insecurity of these states, inhibiting their ability to coherently pursue long-term objectives based on the findings in this thesis so far.

Neo-patrimonial developmentalism, based on the propositions established in Chapter 2, rests on the legitimacy, capacity, and stability of the state and the implications from these conditions for the productivity of domestic rent allocation (Cammack and Kelsall, 2010: pp. 4-6). Where domestic leaders are lacking in the necessary incentives to pursue long-term objectives, development can be inhibited by the operation of neo-patrimonialism and the subsequent dysfunction inimical to formal rational-legal capacities (ibid; Erdmann and Engel, 2007: p. 105), as has been the case in Congo, Chad, and CAR. Such outcomes are not universal nor are they automatic, however. Chapters 3 and 4 demonstrated the detriment for Congo, Chad, and CAR from their unstable circumstances, weak formal capacities, and volatile operations. Gabon, in contrast, demonstrated a unique and long-standing stability that was central to the operation of this state, has produced comparatively strong formal institutions, and as will be elaborated in this chapter, generated outcomes that few states in the subcontinent can match (World Bank, 2020; UNDP, 2020).

This chapter specifically seeks to test the propositions and contentions established in Chapter 2 to investigate how and to what extent the disparate circumstances and state operations in Gabon have promoted the widely divergent outcomes that are central to this thesis' overall analysis. Where a state is stable and productive, it is more likely to construct the necessary structures to incentivise a 'development-oriented political leadership' and manufacture the '*capacity* to implement economic policies sagaciously and effectively' (Ghebremusse, 2015: p. 477; emphasis in original). Such a capacity for development within a neo-patrimonial context 'is determined by such factors as institutions, technology, politics, and administration' (ibid). Gabon's region-high *GDP per capita* (World Bank, 2020), *monopoly on the use of violence* within its territory (BTI, 2020a), and *rigorous and impartial*

public administration rating (V-Dem, 2020) are thus indicative of formal capacities for development in this context which have served to counteract the potential dysfunction from endemic neo-patrimonialism and enabled the application of formal institutions toward the pursuit of key long-term objectives.

The formal capacities and specific manifestation of informal neo-patrimonialism exhibited by the Gabonese state in Chapters 3 and 4 have indicated a distinct productivity to the mobilisation, allocation, and distribution of domestic resources that has been integral to the impact from neo-patrimonialism and pursuit of development. The specific circumstances and state operations exhibited by Congo, Chad, and CAR, on the other hand, have manifested in weak formal capacities and as will be seen in this chapter, distinct underperformance in pursuit of key objectives related to development (World Bank, 2020; V-Dem, 2020; BTI, 2020a; UNDP, 2020; Systemic Peace, 2018). The present chapter, specifically, will focus on the political, economic, and social development of Gabon, Congo, Chad, and CAR, employing the metrics detailed in Table 5.1 below to assess the precise implications from these states' capacities and circumstances for their long-term operations and outcomes. Gabon's stability, productivity, and institutional consistency have stood out from the preceding chapters but, importantly, the implications of these differences cannot be fully understood in the absence of an evaluation of this state's development outcomes by comparison to its counterparts.

TABLE 5.1 CORE PROXIES FOR DEVELOPMENT		
Political Development	*Institutionalised Democracy* (Polity V, 2018)	*Civil Liberties Index* (V-Dem, 2020)
Economic Development	*GNI per capita* (World Bank, 2020)	*Population Living in Slums* (World Bank, 2020)

Social Development	Adult Literacy (World Bank, 2020)	Infant Mortality (World Bank, 2020)	Human Development (UNDP, 2020)

Gabon has exhibited, based on the findings to this point in the thesis, a stable domestic environment, consistent state operations, and strong formal capacities which have been integral to its long-standing advantages over its regional counterparts. The openness of and civil liberties provided by these systems, the productivity of the economy, and the extent to which the benefits from such processes are coordinated around the delivery of citizens' basic needs offer vital lenses into the extent to which these circumstances and operations have coalesced to cement Gabon's status as one of the most developed states in sub-Saharan Africa. States require productivity, security, and institutional quality to avoid or surmount the dysfunction bred by neo-patrimonialism (Kelsall, 2018a: p. 29; Cammack and Kelsall, 2010: pp. 2-6). In pursuing development, a state relies upon strong and endogenous political systems, economic growth, and the active delivery of key services (Evans, 2004: p. 37; Fosu, 2002b: p. 9). To assess how and to what extent the disparate circumstances and state operations detailed in Chapters 3 and 4 have promoted the intra-regional divergence at the core of this thesis' analysis, then, metrics capturing the political, economic, and social development outcomes in these states are of central concern.

This chapter, toward these ends, will assess these four states' political, economic, and social development outcomes based on key metrics (World Bank, 2020; UNDP, 2020; V-Dem, 2020; Systemic Peace, 2018; Polity V, 2018). Political development, firstly, is integral to the preservation of human or civil rights and the legitimacy and capacity of the state in avoiding informal dysfunction or pursuing development. While multi-party democratic systems can potentially encourage short-term strategies for rent management among political rulers, openness, accountability, and legitimacy can serve a converse role in promoting the incentivisation of elites toward the coherent pursuit of key objectives and the productive long-term use of resources (Kelsall and Booth, 2010: p. 27; Cammack and Kelsall,

2010: pp. 2-6). Economic development, second, is likewise integral to these processes and centred on the productivity of the domestic economy and alleviation of poverty, revealing core factors in moulding disparate overall performance.   Social development, thirdly, is 'the ultimate goal of economic activity' and provides key insight into the extent to which Gabon has departed from its regional counterparts to successfully deliver basic needs and 'human development' (UNDP, 2020; Fosu, 2002b: pp. 9-10). The final section will synthesise the findings and conclude.

Gabon has been the most stable and consistent state in this highly neo-patrimonial region in the heart of Africa, culminating in the least personalistic distribution of resources and the fewest instances of domestic insecurity in the region, based on the findings in this thesis. These conditions have enabled steady progress toward neo-patrimonial developmentalism through the expansion of formal capacities, centralised management of rents, and legitimate pursuit of long-term objectives. These processes in Gabon and its comparatively impressive performance will become clear as this chapter proceeds, particularly in contrast to the anti-developmental trajectories of the states in Republic of Congo, Chad, and Central African Republic. While this thesis was largely inspired by the extreme disparities between these four states' outcomes, this chapter will reveal the specific avenues through which this divergence has occurred, key areas in which Gabon has outperformed its regional counterparts, and the implications from these patterns for the long-term performance of these neo-patrimonial states. Such patterns have been linked in this thesis to the institutional processes, and differences therein, among these four states and, as stood out in Chapters 3 and 4, have been largely moulded by their disparate political conditions.

5b. Political Development and Civil Liberties

'Change through democratic means alone is not possible – elections are just for show.'

- Congolese Activist[60]

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[60] Congolese Activist, interviewed in Brazzaville, Congo on 04 September 2019 (Interview Number 13).

'Every election is violent.'

- UNOCA Chief of Staff[61]

This chapter is centred on analysis of the development outcomes among the states in equatorial Africa. Specifically, this is aimed at assessing how and to what extent political, economic, and social development in Gabon have differed from those in Congo, Chad, and CAR, and how these outcomes link to the conditions and operations detailed in Chapters 3 and 4. Toward these ends, this first section turns its attention to the political development of these states. As was made clear in Chapter 2, the legitimacy, coherence, openness, and civil liberties provided by political systems are central to the overall political development of a given state. As is clear in the above interview quotes, furthermore, political dynamics in this region are highly influential on domestic conditions and generally characterised by violence and illegitimacy. Assessment of political development in these contexts, then, will elucidate key dynamics among these states and the extent to which the circumstances and operations detailed in Chapters 3 and 4 have promoted or impeded the incentivisation of ruling elites within these contexts. Put simply, neo-patrimonial developmentalism rests on the state's ability to remain stable, manage resources, and distribute these equitably and productively, processes which require a legitimate and incentivised political leadership.

Scholars including Tilly (1978), Hegre et al. (2001), DeRouen and Sobek (2004), and Hendrix (2010) have treated states' political systems as central to their formal capacities for development and ability to remain stable. Samuel P. Huntington (1965) defined political development as 'the institutionalization of political organizations and procedures', centred on issues of '*rationalization'*, *'national integration',* and *'democratization'* or 'competitiveness' (pp. 386-388; emphasis in original). As Huntington (1965) noted, furthermore, the key 'characteristic of political development' is the state's ability to promote '*mobilization*, or *participation*' (p. 388; emphasis in original). In the absence of the necessary endogeneity to the surrounding society, however, these institutions can inhibit

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development and potentially stoke insecurity (Kelsall and Booth, 2010: p. 27). As was discussed in Chapter 2, political development within neo-patrimonial contexts requires an inclusive state and systems that promote accountability and 'disciplined' resource management (Cammack and Kelsall, 2010: pp. 2-6). Each of these four states has at some point transitioned toward multi-party competition, but the volatility inherent to Gabon's counterparts has conditioned clear disparities in the consistency, legitimacy, and incentivisation moulded by the political systems in these contexts, based on this thesis' findings. In assessing the political systems institutionalised by these states over the course of their histories, then, the first metric to be employed, Polity V's (2018) *institutionalised democracy* metric, is particularly elucidatory of the clear disconnect between formal transitions and the political development of neo-patrimonial equatorial African states.

Institutionalised Democracy in Equatorial Africa

Figure 5.1 Institutionalised Democracy
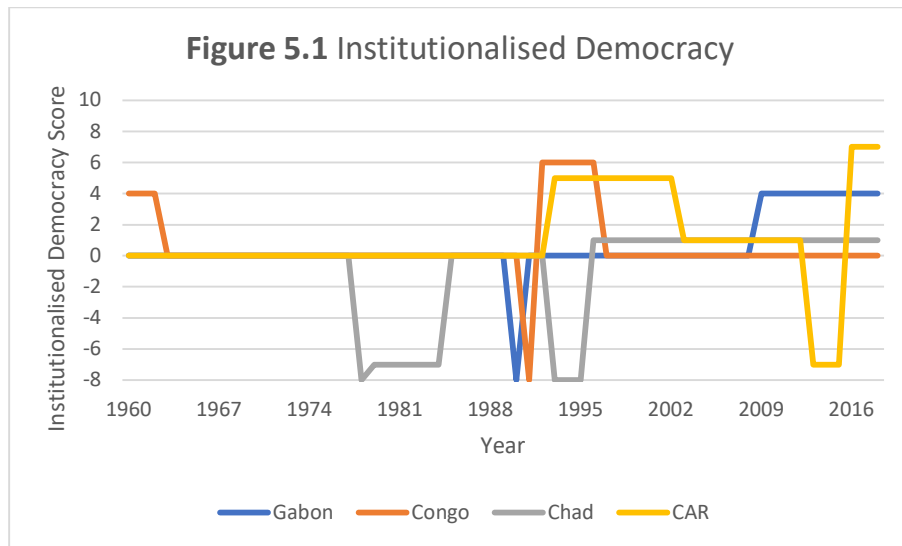
(Polity V, 2018)

While multi-party democracy is potentially deleterious to the nature and efficiency of rent distribution within a neo-patrimonial state through the promotion of short-term approaches on behalf of leaders (Kelsall and Booth, 2010: p. 27), the competitiveness, legitimacy, and accountability manufactured by these systems is integral to security and development in these contexts (Cammack

and Kelsall, 2010: pp. 2-6). The regime types and nature to rule in Gabon, Congo, Chad, and CAR, in other words, are central to their formal capacities and pursuit of neo-patrimonial development. As Englebert (2000b) argued, 'formal institutions' will be more effective and 'efficient' if 'they are congruent with informal institutions and norms, …endogenous to their own societies, and…historically embedded in domestic social relations. In short, state legitimacy breeds state capacity' (pp. 10-11). A 'propensity for systemic political crises' can weaken 'the actual power of leaders' and limit their abilities to coherently organise the productive long-term management of domestic resources (p. 12). The legitimacy, consistency, and security of political systems thus wield significant influence over the state's pursuit of development, irrespective of regime type (ibid). In this vein, the first metric to be drawn on, presented in Figure 5.1 above, provides insight into the systems institutionalised by these states, key alterations or interruptions thereto, and whether these four states have been consistent and open in their formal political operations over the course of their histories.

This first metric for political development from the Polity V dataset is specifically aimed at evaluating the *institutionalised* regime type of states through assessment of the *competitiveness of executive recruitment, openness of executive recruitment, constraints on chief executive,* and *competitiveness of political participation* between 1960 and 2018 (Polity V, 2018). The Polity index's metrics, importantly, have been employed by scholars including Hegre et al. (2001), DeRouen and Sobek (2004), Hendrix (2010), and Hanson and Sigman (2019) toward assessing states' formal institutions and political development. Ratings in the *institutionalised democracy* measure are recorded on a scale from 0 to 10, with 0 representing a 'hereditary monarchy' and 10 a 'consolidated democracy' (Marshall and Gurr, 2020: p. 19). Periods of 'transition' or 'interregnum', furthermore, are scored in the above figure as -8 and -7, adjusted for presentation purposes from scores in the original index of -88 and -77, respectively (ibid). A period of 'interregnum' is defined as 'a complete collapse of political authority' while a 'transition' is a period in which 'new institutions are planned, legally constituted, and put into effect' (ibid); all non-interruption periods are scored from 0 to 10.

Although democracy in this region 'is not real democracy' according to some domestic observers[62], this initial metric will reveal key dynamics within these states' political systems and the extent to which the formal transitions detailed in previous chapters have impacted upon political operations.

Immediately evident from this metric, and strongly aligned with the findings in Chapters 3 and 4, is the clear consistency of Gabon in its political operations throughout its history. Such patterns stand in stark contrast to the evident volatility characterising circumstances and formal capacities in Congo, Chad, and CAR and thus offer further insight into the key periods and circumstances moulding the disparities between these three states and their comparatively successful counterpart. Specifically, Gabon was rated 0 (i.e., 'hereditary monarchy') in Polity V's (2018) *institutionalised democracy* metric for all but one year (1990, -8) between 1960 and 2008, a stability to these ratings that has not been evident elsewhere. In this same period, in contrast, Chad experienced 10 years of 'transition' (-8) or 'interregnum' (-7), the most in the region, scoring 0 or 1 otherwise. Congo, like Gabon, experienced just a single year of 'transition' (-8) in this period (1991), but importantly scored 4 from 1960 to 1962, 6 from 1992 to 1996, and 0 in every other year except 1991 (-8). CAR was similar to Congo, scoring 5 from 1993 to 2002 and 0 for every other year between 1960 and 2008.

Gabon, therefore, has been the most consistent state in the region in its political operations and *institutionalised* regime type since gaining independence, according to Polity V's (2018) assessments. Gabon, specifically, is the only one of these states to have remained relatively consistent in its political operations for the first few decades of independence, a trajectory that was moulded by its early security to rule (Gardinier, 1997b: pp. 147-148; Yates, 1996: pp. 42-43). Such patterns and consistency in Gabon were likewise evident throughout the findings in Chapters 3 and 4 and thus indicate key factors moulding this state's long-standing outperformance of its regional counterparts. In most recent (2018) assessments, furthermore, Gabon has attained a hybrid rating of 4 out of 10, a

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[62] NIOSI Researchers, interviewed in Brazzaville, Congo on 04 September 2019 (Interview Number 14). These individuals argued that democracy in this region lacks legitimacy and is thus 'not real democracy'.

level which has been maintained since 2009. Congo, Chad, and CAR received ratings of 0, 1, and 7, respectively, in 2018, indicating authoritarian states or 'hereditary monarchies' in Congo and Chad and comparatively open institutions in CAR (Marshall and Gurr, 2020: p. 19).

While Congo and Chad have retained their current ratings since 1997 and 1996 respectively, CAR has only been rated at 7 since 2016, having spent 2003-2012 at 1 and 2013-2015 with a rating of -7. This latter period, importantly, indicated the collapse of central political authority (ibid) amidst the resurgence of CAR's civil conflicts (Gebremichael et al., 2018: p. 6; Isaacs-Martin, 2016: p. 33). Gabon, in contrast, has experienced just one year of 'transition' or 'interregnum' (1990, -8) in Polity V's (2018) assessments and has otherwise only experienced a single shift in its *institutionalised democracy* rating, from 0 to 4 in 2009. Each of the other three states has intermittently and temporarily transformed its political operations or been disrupted by periods of 'transition' or 'interregnum', according to Polity V's (2018) assessments, contributing to the overall volatility and 'fragility' of these states by comparison to Gabon (Systemic Peace, 2018). As 'those in power fight to keep power' throughout the region, to borrow the words of one interviewee, any progress toward improved openness, accountability, or democratisation is typically undermined[63]. The recent (2009) shift in Gabon's *institutionalised democracy* rating, furthermore, was centred on the dynastic ascension of Ali Bongo Ondimba and sustenance of this highly presidential regime via semi-open multi-party competition (Polity V, 2018; Ahmadou, 2009).

While not evaluated as being as formally open as Central African Republic's systems, the evident hybridisation of the Gabonese state and its consistency in its operations has been central to the stability and effectiveness of formal and informal systems evident in Chapters 3 and 4 (ibid). Despite claims that these systems are a 'façade'[64], importantly, these new hybrid systems in Gabon have been maintained for longer than Republic of Congo's 1990s democratic experiment and as long

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[63] Tech Teachers, interviewed in Brazzaville, Congo on 07 September 2019 (Interview Number 20).
[64] Gabonese Activist, interviewed in Libreville, Gabon on 20 August 2019 (Interview Number 03). This individual argued that the Gabonese state and supposed openness thereof was a 'façade'.

as CAR's in the same period. Gabon's state, therefore, is evaluated by Polity V's (2018) experts as being the second-most democratic current regime in equatorial Africa and tied for the longest survival of a non-authoritarian regime in the region's history. Only CAR's recent re-establishment of multi-party competition amidst sustained domestic uncertainty (Gebremichael et al., 2018: pp. 6-7), furthermore, was rated as more formally democratic than Gabon in the region in most recent (2018) assessments. Such political hybridisation, consistency, and divergent circumstances in Gabon were founded upon the most stable set of political systems in the region prior to 2009, with no periods of 'transition' prior to or since 1990 and no instances of state collapse at any point, in clear contrast to its regional counterparts and the frequency of transition and 'fragility' characterising their experiences (Polity V, 2018; Systemic Peace, 2018).

Given this metric's focus on the openness and competitiveness of political competition alongside the constraints placed upon executive actors (Marshall and Gurr, 2020: p. 19), these findings serve as clear indication of the extent to which formal institutions have been subordinated to or insulated from the dysfunction that can be bred by neo-patrimonialism. The disparities evident in such areas, as was discussed in Chapter 2, provide important insight into the nature and legitimacy of authority within these states and whether they have promoted the expansion of civil liberties and productive 'long-horizon' application of public resources conducive thereto (Kelsall, 2011: p. 82; Kelsall and Booth, 2010: p. 27; Cammack and Kelsall, 2010: pp. 2-6). As Debos (2011) argued, 'political instability and everyday uncertainties shorten time horizons' (p. 426). The 'fragility', informality, and frequency of executive turnover in Congo, Chad, and CAR[65], then, have prevented the construction of formal capacities or incentivisation of elites toward long-term objectives, inhibiting the legitimacy, security, and development of these three states (ibid; Systemic Peace, 2018).

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[65] Gendarmerie Colonel, interviewed in Brazzaville, Congo on 06 September 2019 (Interview Number 17). This individual argued that the frequency of executive turnover and 'power taken by guns' in Congo, Chad, and CAR were key differentiating factors important to Gabon's comparative success.

Gabon has been by far the most consistent state in the region and has, since 2009, established and maintained the longest standing non-authoritarian regime in equatorial Africa, according to Polity V's (2018) assessments. These findings strongly parallel those in Chapters 3 and 4 and implicate the key role played by an early security to rule in this context for the active and legitimate application of domestic resources and pursuit of development (Yates, 1996: pp. 41-51). The 'political freedom, political instability, and policy uncertainty' operating within a given context can impact the pursuit of development and extent to which domestic actors will promote strong 'government capacity', productive reinvestment, or the delivery of key services significantly (Feng, 2001: p. 288). In the absence of stability, 'political freedom', legitimate political systems, and the protection of *civil liberties*, 'social unrest' can permeate society and promote institutional weakness or further conflict (ibid; Alcántar-Toledo and Venieris, 2014: p. 316). In addition to the specific political systems institutionalised, then, the *civil liberties* provided by these systems are integral to assessment of Gabon's 'quite strong' civil society[66] and the political development, formal capacities, and overall prospects for socioeconomic advancement among these four countries.

Civil Liberties in Equatorial Africa

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[66] Gabonese Activist, interviewed in Libreville, Gabon on 20 August 2019 (Interview Number 03). This individual argued that, though some had been co-opted and 'democratic civil society' was underfunded, civil society in Gabon, overall, is 'quite strong'.

Figure 5.2 Civil Liberties Index Results
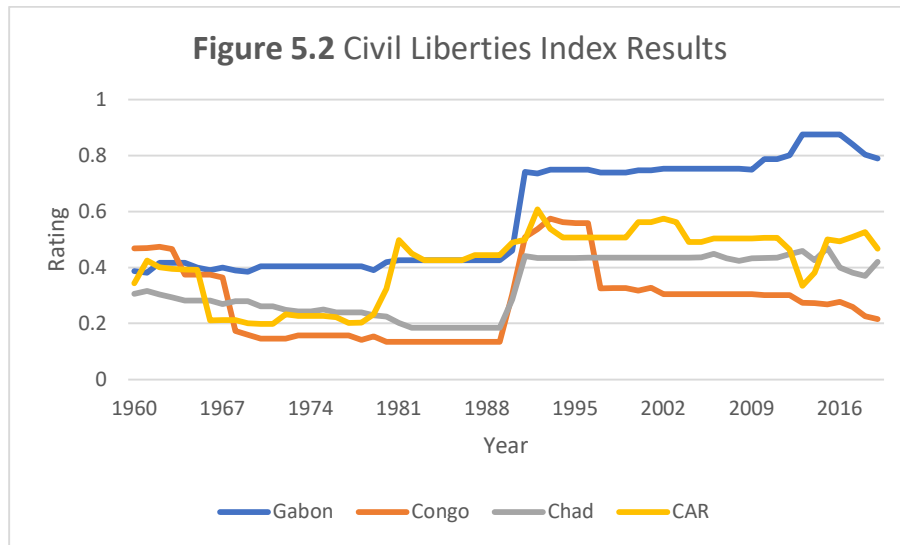
(V-Dem, 2020)

As Englebert (2000a) summarised, a legitimate state is one which boasts strong formal institutions, wields a legitimacy to authority gained through civic trust, and is 'less repressive…of citizens' civil liberties' (p. 154). Democratisation or formal openness alone, furthermore, may not be sufficient for the pursuit of development (Evans, 2004: p. 37), particularly in the absence of stability (Cammack and Kelsall, 2010: p. 7), and may inhibit the long-term 'time horizons' (Debos, 2011: p. 426) and centralised management of rents integral to such processes (Kelsall and Booth, 2010: p. 27). The 'inclusiveness', legitimacy, and accountability manufactured by formal political institutions, irrespective of regime type, are thus central to the productive and coherent pursuit of neo-patrimonial development (Cammack and Kelsall, 2010: pp. 6-7). As Fedderke and Klitgaard (1998) argued, '[t]he level of political and civil rights, the stability of such rights dispensations, and the efficiency with which political and civil institutions function' are intimately linked and central to a state's political systems or pursuit of development (p. 460).   The civil liberties available, the consistency of rights provision, and the implications from these conditions for the nature of the state, in other words, are integral to political development and the construction of formal institutions conducive to such progress (ibid; Cammack and Kelsall, 2010: pp. 6-7; Englebert, 2000a: p. 154).

Toward investigating these processes and outcomes among the states of equatorial Africa, Figure 5.2 above presents experts' assessments of the *civil liberties* operating within Gabon, Congo, Chad, and CAR, derived from the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem, 2020) dataset. *Civil liberties* in this dataset are 'understood as liberal freedom, where freedom is a property of individuals' and are 'constituted by the absence of physical violence committed by government agents and the absence of constraints of private liberties and political liberties by the government' (Coppedge et al., 2020: p. 275). Figures are available for all four states from 1960 to 2019 and are rated on an interval scale from 0 to 1, with 0 indicating minimal *civil liberties* and 1 indicating a completely free society (ibid). As is immediately evident from Figure 5.2 above, importantly, Gabon has maintained a clear superiority over the rest of equatorial Africa in V-Dem's (2020) *civil liberties index* since 1991 and has been by far the most consistent state in the region in this regard throughout its independent history. None of the other three states, indeed, has come close to matching Gabon's *civil liberties* ratings in recent decades, at no point even approaching its lowest rating between 1991 and 2019 (0.736, 1992).

Gabon in V-Dem's (2020) most recent (2019) assessments received a *civil liberties index* rating of 0.789 out of 1, compared to 0.215 in Congo, 0.421 in Chad, and 0.467 in CAR. Between 1991 and 2019, Gabon's rating has ranged from 0.736 to 0.876, which is roughly as stable as Chad's in this period but far more consistent than either CAR or Congo. Not only has Gabon manufactured the most significant *civil liberties* in the region in recent years according to this metric, therefore, but it has likewise been the most consistent of these states in this regard throughout the available data. Gabon's *civil liberties index* ratings ranged from 0.382 to 0.426 between 1960 and 1989, far more stable than its counterparts. Chad's ratings in this *index* between 1960 and 1989 ranged from 0.185 to 0.316; CAR's ratings ranged from 0.199 to 0.498; and Congo's ranged from 0.134 to 0.474, in this same period. Each of these three states, in short, exhibited significant inconsistencies in the delivery and protection of domestic *civil liberties*, according to V-Dem's (2020) experts. As was noted above, furthermore, since Gabon's 1991 spike to cement its status as the most liberal state in the region,

having likewise led the region in 1964-1980 and 1983-1986, it has remained largely consistent in the delivery of *civil liberties* according to this metric, leading the region by a wide margin throughout.

Gabon has maintained the most significant *civil liberties* in the region for all but nine years since 1960 and has been highly consistent in the defence thereof according to V-Dem's (2020) experts, despite an observed 'growth of repression' under Ali Bongo Ondimba[67]. The stability of domestic circumstances, operation of formal institutions, and consistent provision of civil liberties are central to the pursuit of neo-patrimonial development and extent to which domestic elites are incentivised to pursue long-term objectives (Cammack and Kelsall, 2010: p. 7; Fedderke and Klitgaard, 1998: p. 460). As has been a common refrain within this thesis, furthermore, the unique domestic circumstances, specific manifestation of neo-patrimonialism, and formal capacities for extraction, coercion, and administration vested within the Gabonese state provided this country with a unique foundation that has been integral to the long-standing nature of its regime and the comparative success enjoyed in the interim. Gabon was shown in Chapters 2 and 3 to be the most stable, consistent, and effective state in its operations within this region. Similar dynamics have stood out in this chapter and are central to the political systems and civil liberties manufactured in Gabon.

Among the components for V-Dem's (2020) *civil liberties index*, the key area of distinction between Gabon and the rest of the region in overall *civil liberties* ratings surrounds the countries' comparative patterns in the 'physical violence committed by government agents' (Coppedge et al., 2020: p. 275). Gabon leads equatorial Africa in all three component *indices,* but the differences in the manifestation of *physical violence,* based on these assessments, are significant. While regional ratings in the *political civil liberties* and *private civil liberties indices* were in relative parity, the variance evident in states' *physical violence index* ratings makes clear key aspects of Gabon's political development that have been central to its broader stability and success. Gabon's 2019 rating in the

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[67] UNOCA Official, interviewed in Libreville, Gabon on 22 August 2019 (Interview Number 05). This individual noted a 'growth of repression' under Ali Bongo Ondimba and argued that 'true democracy' is unlikely within this context.

physical violence index was 0.846 compared to 0.083 in Congo, 0.181 in Chad, and 0.271 in CAR, in the same year. These disparities have been exacerbated over the course of these countries' histories and, importantly, implicate the endemic nature of civil conflict and violence in all of Congo, Chad, and CAR[68]. Such patterns, furthermore, have served to inhibit these three countries' pursuit of legitimacy or the long-term application of domestic resources toward development, in contrast to Gabon, and have been linked by domestic observers to factors including differences in resources, opportunities for youth, population growth, and education[69].

While Gabon has been consistent in scoring comparatively high across all three components of the *civil liberties index*, especially recently, Congo, Chad, and CAR have all been historically and recently characterised by minimal 'freedom from political killings and torture by the government' Coppedge et al., 2020: p. 275). These conditions have contributed to the perpetuation of civil conflict and poverty in these contexts and have yielded disappointing outcomes in terms of the productive use of domestic rents, pursuit of development, or protection of *civil liberties* (V-Dem, 2020). Gabon, meanwhile, is the most 'developed' (UNDP, 2020), least 'fragile' (Systemic Peace, 2018), and least clientelistic (V-Dem, 2020) state in equatorial Africa based on this thesis' findings, circumstances that have been moulded by its endemic stability (Yates, 1996: pp. 41-51) and resulted in hybridised political systems (Polity V, 2018) alongside the preservation of domestic *civil liberties* (V-Dem, 2020). These circumstances, importantly, have likewise promoted economic and social outcomes that are central to the specific manifestation of neo-patrimonial developmentalism within this context. The first economic metric to be considered, presented in Figure 5.3 below, makes quite clear the disparities operating between these four states and specifically economic performance in Gabon which rivals almost any country in the subcontinent.

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[68] US Official, interviewed in Libreville, Gabon on 15 August 2019 (Interview Number 02). These individuals argued that CAR was characterised by a particularly 'hopeless' situation and the comparative stability in Gabon was linked to Bongo having 'shared the wealth more than some'.
[69] UNOCA Official, interviewed in Libreville, Gabon on 22 August 2019 (Interview Number 05). This individual identified these factors as having been integral to the disparities between Gabon and the rest of the region.

5c. Economic Development, Growth, and Poverty

'*Central Africa is enigmatic because we have wealth, and we have poverty and violence.*'

- Congolese Academic[70]

'*We are rich, and we are poor.*'

- UNOCA Chief of Staff[71]

This chapter is centred on exploring the outcomes among the states of equatorial Africa and, in so doing, testing the explanations offered in previous chapters for the region's variable performance. Gabon has stood out in preceding chapters as the state most capable of mobilising resources and employing them productively in the region, promoting one of the highest *GDPs per capita* in the subcontinent (World Bank, 2020). Based on the contentions established in Chapter 2, economic growth is central to overall development processes and a country's prospects for constructing formal capacities, remaining secure, or meeting citizens' basic needs. Economic development, put simply, is central to the pursuit and attainment of human development. Progress in this area can serve to promote stability, more efficient rent management, and long-term focuses on growth and income distribution. Increased incomes can inhibit formal operations in the absence of security or legitimacy, but sustained progress toward economic growth or expanding domestic incomes amidst legitimate and strong formal institutions can be significant for the pursuit of development. As domestic observers like those quoted above have made clear, importantly, there is a wide disparity in this region between economic potential, performance, and manifest outcomes.

To capture these dynamics, this section is focused on the economic performance of these four equatorial African states and the implications for the living conditions and poverty among their populaces. As was emphasised in Chapters 2 and 4, economic growth can be central to the pursuit of

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[70] Congolese Academic, interviewed in Libreville, Gabon on 21 August 2019 (Interview Number 04).
[71] UNOCA Chief of Staff, interviewed in Libreville, Gabon on 22 August 2019 (Interview Number 06).

development and delivery of necessary resources, but improvements in social well-being or human development require the active and productive investment of resources toward these ends (Fox, 2014: p. 193; Evans, 2011: pp. 4-5). In the absence of an incentivised political leadership, capable formal institutions, or a 'long-horizon approach to rent management', economic productivity is unlikely to translate into poverty alleviation or capabilities enhancement (ibid; Kelsall, 2011: p. 82). Where instability is persistent and poverty alleviation is slow, these conditions can be self-perpetuating and impede the ability of the state to surmount perpetual insecurity and underdevelopment (Elbadawi and Ndung'u, 2005: p. 20). Where formal institutions are strong and the state is secure, however, economic growth is a 'necessary' condition for development (Fosu, 2002b: p. 9). Like *GDP per capita* in Chapter 4, therefore, states' *GNIs per capita*, in Figure 5.3 below, point to the advantageous circumstances facing the Gabonese state in its pursuit of development.

Economic growth alone does not provide significant insight into the extent to which extracted resources are used productively but appreciating the domestic resource base is integral to elucidating a state's potential for employing these productively toward key long-term objectives. When added to consideration of the provision of key public services, such as can be captured through consideration of comparative *slums* populations, such measures provide key insight into the state's priorities and potential for pursuing key long-term objectives (Olson, 1993: p. 570). Economic growth alone can obscure potential productivity limitations (Barrett and Upton, 2013: pp. 329-331). The metrics to follow in the rest of this section, however, are specifically aimed at capturing the economic development of Gabon, Congo, Chad, and CAR through consideration of the material resources available to these states and the extent to which these have been employed toward productive long-term ends directly related to the health, wealth, and well-being of their citizenries (Mberu et al., 2017: p. 324).

The extractive capacity evident within the first metric to follow, *GNI per capita (Current $USD)*, is not necessarily indicative of significant productive capacity (Carmody and Owusu, 2016: p. 70;

Dincecco and Katz, 2012: p. 20). Consideration of *slums* populations and *poverty* alleviation is thus

integral to capturing the extent to which these resources extracted have been employed productively

(Mberu et al., 2017: p. 324; Fox, 2014: p. 191; Barrett and Upton, 2013: pp. 329-331). High (low)

economic growth alongside low (high) *slums* and *poverty* rates provides important insight into the

specific economic development of Gabon, Congo, Chad, and CAR and the significant disparities

between the former and its regional counterparts. Domestic instability or other 'political disruptions'

can inhibit productivity and capital stocks, limiting extractive and productive capacities alike

(Przeworski et al., 2000: pp. 188-189), particularly within neo-patrimonial contexts (Cammack and

Kelsall, 2010: p. 4). Such implications are immediately evident in Congo, Chad, and CAR through

Gabon's comparatively high overall economic development, and specifically a *GNI per capita (current*

$USD) that dwarfs those among its regional counterparts and is among the highest in sub-Saharan

Africa (World Bank, 2020).

Economic Growth in Equatorial Africa

Figure 5.3 GNI Per Capita (Current $USD)
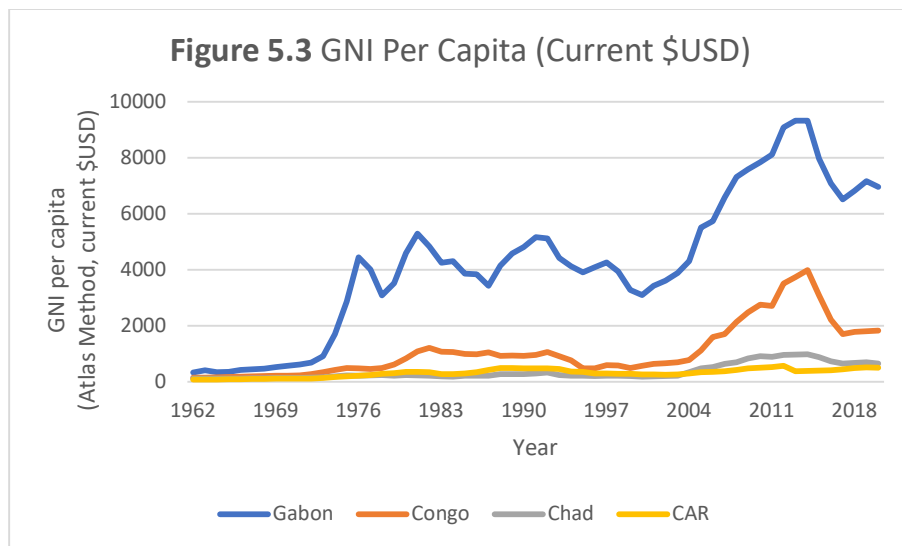
(World Bank, 2020)

GNI per capita has been employed by scholars including Fong (2009), Roser (2014), and

Ngague and Manfred (2015) as well as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)'s (2020)

Human Development Index as a key indicator for the economic performance and development of a given state. The metric employed here, *GNI per capita (Atlas Method, current $USD)*, is derived from the World Bank's (2020) World Development Indicators and available from 1962 to 2020 for all four countries. This measures overall progress toward economic growth and development (Ngague and Manfred, 2015: pp. 656-657), providing important insight into the significance of Gabon's divergent performance by comparison to its regional counterparts. As was the case in *GDP per capita (current $USD)* findings in Chapter 4, indeed, Gabon's performance in this measure for the growth and development of its economy has been among the most impressive in the subcontinent (2020 sub-Saharan Africa average: $1478.57). Specifically, Gabon recorded a 2020 *GNI per capita (Atlas Method, current $USD)* of $6970, which was the third highest in sub-Saharan Africa. Only Seychelles ($12720) and Mauritius ($10230) boasted higher *GNIs per capita* than Gabon in 2020 according to the World Bank's (2020) figures.

Congo, Chad, and CAR, in contrast, recorded 2020 *GNIs per capita (Atlas Method, current $USD)* of $1830, $660, and $510, roughly 26.3%, 9.5%, and 7.3% of Gabon's figures, respectively. This initial metric for the economic development of these states thus makes quite clear the long-standing disparities operating within equatorial Africa and the advantageous performance in Gabon by comparison to almost any state in the subcontinent. As was likewise evident in Chapters 3 and 4, furthermore, Gabon's modern success has been founded upon a superior economic foundation and the rapid growth experienced in the aftermath of the '1973-1974 [oil] price shock' (Yates, 1996: p. 48). Gabon's *GNI per capita (Atlas Method, current $USD)* was $330 in 1962 (earliest data), compared to $150 in Congo, $110 in Chad, and $80 in CAR that same year. These disparities steadily grew over the course of the 1960s, but the shifts in the 1970s served to significantly differentiate Gabon from its former colonial allies (ibid). Gabon's *GNI per capita (Atlas Method, current $USD)* in 1972 was $690 and increased to $910 in 1973, $1700 in 1974, $2870 in 1975, and $4450 in 1976. Between 1962 and 1976, therefore, Gabon's *GNI per capita* went from double Congo's figures, triple Chad's, and more than four-times CAR's to being almost ten-times Congo's ($480) and more than twenty-times both

Chad ($220) and CAR's ($210), culminating in a comparative 'lack of resources' in these latter contexts that has 'undermine[d] the authority of the state'[72].

As is to be expected, Gabon's *GNI per capita growth (annual %)* rate in this formative period was far higher than that attained by any of the other states, according to the World Bank (2020). Gabon recorded *GNI per capita growth (annual %)* rates in 1974, 1975, and 1976 of 33.25%, 19.60%, and 34.78%, respectively, compared to a collective all-time peak in Congo, Chad, and CAR of 18.11% (Congo, 1982). Despite economic growth and diversification being viewed by critics as a 'big lie'[73] and experiencing a similar amount of negative growth years to its regional counterparts in the years since, therefore, the rapid and significant growth in Gabon's *GNI per capita* in this formative period served to provide a stronger economic foundation for development than was available to the other three states (Yates, 1996: pp. 42-48). Gabon has not been able to match these levels of *GNI per capita* growth since the 1970s but, importantly, has not experienced the deep and sustained depressions and overall stagnation evident in the other states' outcomes[74]. These results have promoted greater stability and productivity than has been exhibited by its counterparts and have thus been central to the superior overall development performance in Gabon.

The sustained expansion of *GNI per capita* is indicative of the broader quality and coherence of formal institutions and the extent to which these have proven conducive to further growth and development (Kelsall, 2018a: p. 29; Vaughan and Gebremichael, 2011: p. 8). A common critique of Gabon, importantly, is that efforts toward economic growth and diversification are a 'big lie' and the regime has actively employed mechanisms for 'organising poverty'[75]. The states in Congo, Chad, and

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[72] UNOCA Official, interviewed in Libreville, Gabon on 22 August 2019 (Interview Number 05). This individual argued that the comparative weakness of state institutions in Chad and CAR were important factors involved in their comparative instability.

[73] Gabonese Activist, interviewed in Libreville, Gabon on 20 August 2019 (Interview Number 03).

[74] In the most recent year for which data is available on all four of these states (2017), *GNI per capita growth (annual %)* in Gabon was -0.79% compared to -15.38% in Congo, -5.44% in Chad, and 6.23% in a post-conflict CAR.

[75] Gabonese Activist, interviewed in Libreville, Gabon on 20 August 2019 (Interview Number 03). This individual argued that 'political corruption' dominated Gabonese operations and viewed formal institutions as a 'façade', with stated efforts toward economic diversification or poverty alleviation a 'big lie'.

CAR, likewise, have been accused of 'making the people poor'[76]. As was made clear in Chapter 2, then, a gross metric for economic growth such as *GNI per capita* may not capture the 'high levels of unemployment, poor housing and poverty' (Carmody and Owusu, 2016: p. 70) facing this state and its counterparts. Growth alone may mask 'low productivity' or poor 'infrastructural development' impacting upon the citizenry and impeding the sustained alleviation of poverty (Barrett and Upton, 2013: pp. 329-331). Such distortions can be particularly destructive within neo-patrimonial contexts (Omeje, 2008b: p. 10; Englebert, 2000a: p. 5). Capturing the 'slums conditions' and impoverishment in these four states, therefore, will indicate the extent to which they have, or have not, promoted 'the level and type of economic growth that would hasten the reduction of poverty' (Mberu et al., 2017: p. 324; Fox, 2014: p. 191).

Slums and Impoverishment in Equatorial Africa

Figure 5.4 Population Living in Slums (% of Urban Populaion)
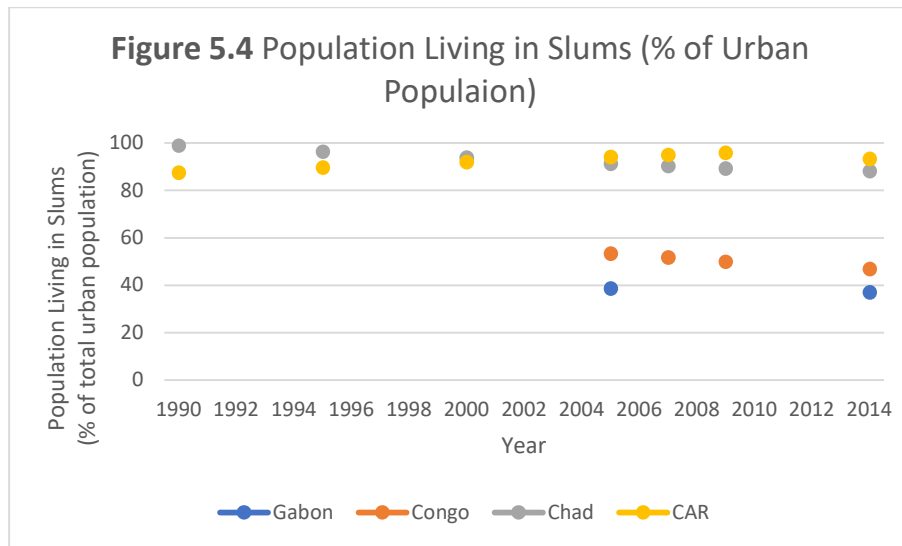
(World Bank, 2020)

Scholars like Sean Fox (2014) have increasingly sought to study the 'particularly acute' threat of urban slums in sub-Saharan Africa and the 'historical and political dynamics that have resulted in

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[76] Congolese Academic, interviewed in Libreville, Gabon on 21 August 2019 (Interview Number 04). This individual argued that the 'Sassou family is making the people poor' and that similar dynamics had permeated the region.

differential urban development trajectories' (p. 191). A majority of urban citizens in the subcontinent

'lives in slum conditions; the highest level of "slum incidence" of any major world region' (ibid).

Analysing the share of urban populations living in slums among the states of equatorial Africa, then,

will reveal patterns in key conditions including the depth of poverty and the quality of living conditions

in these contexts (p. 192). This metric for the development of these states elucidates key

'manifestation[s] of underinvestment in housing and infrastructure stock' as well as weak institutions

for the enforcement of rules and norms or provision of basic services (p. 193). The expansion of slums

populations, furthermore, 'has been linked to the inability of cities to promote the level and type of

economic growth that would hasten the reduction of poverty', moulded by issues including internal

and external migration, decreased productivity, poor governance, and domestic inequalities (Mberu

et al., 2017: p. 324). This metric thus provides an important and multidimensional lens into the

deficiencies operating within states' economies and the ramifications from these conditions for

development outcomes (ibid).

The 'rapid urbanization in the SSA region' has been linked to key challenges in the

developmental trajectories of African states including 'scarce livelihood opportunities for the poor,

exposure to pernicious health conditions, and low access to social services', contributing to the overall

persistence of slum conditions (Mberu et al., 2017: p. 324). It is thus significant that Gabon boasts

both the highest *urban population* as a share of its total population and the lowest slums population

as a share of its *urban population* in the region. Specifically, Gabon's *urban population* in 2019 (most

recent data) amounted to 89.74% of its total population, compared to 67.37% in Congo, 41.77% in

CAR, and 23.28% in Chad in the same year (World Bank, 2020). Much like in other aspects of its

economic development and extractive capacities, this vast urbanisation disparity between Gabon and

the rest of the region was constructed upon the rapid acceleration of this rate in the opening decades

of independence, increasing from 17.40% in 1960 to 45.30% in 1976, the first year in which it recorded

the highest *urban population* rate in the region (ibid). Despite having been accused of 'organising

poverty' by critics[77], importantly, some observers have argued the Gabonese state has 'shared the wealth more than some'[78], which is evidenced by the relative absence of a significant *slums* population, based on the figures from the World Bank (2020) presented in Figure 5.4 above.

Gabon in 2014 (most recent data) recorded a *population living in slums (% of urban population)* rate of 37%, compared to 46.9% in Congo, 88.2% in Chad, and 93.3% in CAR in the same year. These ratings and standings have been maintained for most of the twenty-first century, with Gabon's *population living in slums* rate declining from 38.7% in 2005 to 37% in 2014 and Congo's declining from 53.4% to 46.9% in the same period but both Chad and CAR remaining steady at relative high points. These two latter states, indeed, had a collective range between 2000 and 2014 of 88.2% to 95.9%. Gabon thus boasts both the most urbanised population and least incidence of slums in equatorial Africa, offering important insight into this state's expansion of opportunities, alleviation of poverty, and delivery of key basic services to urban areas (Fox, 2014: p. 192). Despite limited data, furthermore, comparative *poverty headcount ratios at $3.20 a day (2011 PPP) (% of population)*[79] from the World Bank (2020) support the implications from these figures for the benefits derived by the populaces of Gabon, Republic of Congo, Chad, and Central African Republic.

Gabon in 2017 (most recent data) recorded a *poverty headcount ratio at $3.20 a day (2011 PPP)* of 11.2%, compared to 61.3% and 66.5% in Congo and Chad respectively in 2011 (most recent data) and 83.1% in CAR in 2008 (most recent data). In the years for which most recent data is available, therefore, CAR's *poverty headcount ratio* has consistently been above average for the subcontinent (2008 sub-Saharan Africa ratio: 73.1%); Congo and Chad have both remained slightly better than average (2011 sub-Saharan Africa ratio: 70.8%); and Gabon has retained among the lowest *ratios* in

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[77] Gabonese Activist, interviewed in Libreville, Gabon on 20 August 2019 (Interview Number 03). This individual accused the regime in Gabon of 'organising poverty' and claimed Ali Bongo Ondimba 'hasn't bult a single classroom' since assuming office in 2009.

[78] US Official, interviewed in Libreville, Gabon on 15 August 2019 (Interview Number 02). This individual argued that the Gabonese state had 'shared the wealth more than some', pointing to such tendencies under the Bongo regime as having been central to this state's long-standing security and comparative success.

[79] This threshold and metric were employed due to limitations in data availability and, specifically, the availability of this data from the World Bank (2020) by comparison to alternative measures for poverty.

the subcontinent (2017 sub-Saharan Africa ratio: 67.3%). Compared to the two countries to boast higher *GNIs per capita (Atlas Method, current $USD)* than Gabon, Mauritius and Seychelles, importantly, the *poverty headcount ratio* in Gabon looks mediocre at best: in most recent data, Mauritius (2017) recorded a *ratio* of 2.2% while Seychelles (2018) recorded a *ratio* at 1.1%, both well below Gabon's (2017) of 11.2%. Nevertheless, compared to most sub-Saharan states including the others in equatorial Africa, Gabon boasts an impressively low level of poverty that offers important insight into the overall development of this state.

These disparities in poverty alleviation have likewise been apparent throughout the twenty-first century. Gabon in 2005 recorded a *poverty headcount ratio* of 25.8%, compared to 75.2% in Congo in the same year and 2003 (nearest available data) figures in Chad and CAR at 85.6% and 85.1%, respectively (World Bank, 2020). Gabon, therefore, is by far the least impoverished state in equatorial Africa and has retained this status, improving thereupon in recent decades. Such implications were likewise evident through the country's *GNI per capita* and *population living in slums* rates, indicating distinct advantages in the economic development of this state in concert with its overall stability, formal capacity, and political development, according to the findings in this thesis. The alleviation of poverty amidst slow recent growth and relative wealth in Gabon, importantly, were identified by the World Bank (2015) as key dynamics moulding its recent performance despite deficiencies in other areas including *statistical capacity* (pp. 9-14). These positive development outcomes have served to insulate the ruling elite in Gabon and provide a legitimacy to authority that has been integral to its performance and outcomes, in stark contrast with its 'institutionally weak' and deeply impoverished counterparts (World Bank, 2020; Reno, 1998: p. 15; Yates, 1996: pp. 41-51).

Central to these outcomes in Gabon and its unique prospects for pursuing development have been the 'tranquil' (Reed, 1987: p. 283) domestic environment and the consequent incentivisation for rulers to pursue long-term objectives central to the expansion of formal capacities and advancement of citizens' social development, based on this thesis' findings. Congo, Chad, and CAR, on the other

hand, have faced a 'vicious circle' of civil conflict which has been 'escalating' and offers 'no hope' for the immediate future[80]. In exploring these implications and specifically the impact the balance between stability, neo-patrimonialism, formal capacities, and politico-economic development has wielded over the manifest impact on citizens' lives and capabilities (Evans, 2004, 2011; Sen, 1999), then, the final section of this chapter will explore the social development outcomes in these states, according to key metrics derived from the World Bank (2020) and UNDP (2020). Economic growth is 'necessary' for the human development of a given society but is 'not sufficient' in the absence of the coherent application of garnered resources toward delivery of key services and provision of citizens' basic needs (Fosu, 2002b: p. 9).

Gabon is the least 'fragile' (Systemic Peace, 2018) and most consistent state in equatorial Africa, culminating in the most significant extractive capacities in the region, a nearly complete *monopoly on the use of violence* (BTI, 2020a), a comparatively *rigorous and impartial public administration* (V-Dem, 2020), and political and economic development outcomes that are unrivalled within equatorial Africa (World Bank, 2020; V-Dem, 2020; Polity V, 2018), according to the findings in this thesis. Gabon has, furthermore, employed its low poverty and high *GNI per capita* to pursue long-term objectives that are central to the social development of its population, as stood out most clearly from its comparative *civil liberties* and *population living in slums* (V-Dem, 2020; World Bank, 2020). Gross economic outcomes or poverty rates, importantly, are limited in the insight offered toward assessment of overall development in the absence of consideration for social outcomes related to health, education, and basic needs (Evans, 2011: pp. 4-5; Sen, 1999; Mbaku, 1988: pp. 100-101). Building on the considerations to this point, then, the section to follow will investigate the extent to which these states have succeeded or failed in delivering citizens' basic needs and pursuing 'human development' (UNDP, 2020; World Bank, 2020).

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[80] UNOCA Chief of Staff, interviewed in Libreville, Gabon on 22 August 2019 (Interview Number 06). This individual argued that this region is one of the few areas in the world in which poverty was increasing and that 'not everyone can eat anymore'. As they put it, 'making peace is not about stopping violence, but protecting humanity'.

'When you see what is happening in Francophone countries, it is sad.'

- NIOSI Researchers[81]

'Things were much better when I was young.'

- Congolese Former World Health Organisation (WHO) Official[82]

This thesis is centred on explaining through analysis of institutional processes the variance in outcomes in equatorial Africa. This chapter serves a vital role within this analysis, exploring the specific political, economic, and social outcomes among the neo-patrimonial states in this region. To this point, the chapter has demonstrated the extent to which political and economic outcomes in Gabon have diverged to promote a relatively legitimate and productive state, culminating in comparatively high *civil liberties* ratings, low *poverty* and *slums* ratios, and among the highest per capita incomes in sub-Saharan Africa (V-Dem, 2020; World Bank, 2020). To assess the extent to which these processes and outcomes have improved the day-to-day lives of Gabon's citizens, this section focuses on the specific social outcomes among these four states, seeking to capture the dynamics moulding the pessimistic perspectives highlighted above. As was made clear by the propositions and contentions established in Chapter 2, neo-patrimonial development requires strong formal capacities and incentivised ruling elites, which depend on the legitimacy and productivity of the state and its ability to avoid instability. Where a state has demonstrated strong progress in providing political and economic development, then, it is more likely to direct resources toward social ends. Such has been the case in Gabon, providing important final insight into the disparities operating within this region.

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[81] NIOSI Researchers, interviewed in Brazzaville, Congo on 04 September 2019 (Interview Number 14).

[82] Congolese Former WHO Official, interviewed in Brazzaville, Congo on 05 September 2019 (Interview Number 15). This individual fled to the United States during Congo's unstable 1990s but today spends most of their time at their residence in Brazzaville, hoping to eventually see positive change through the removal from power of Denis Sassou Nguesso, who they described as 'dangerous' and a 'devil'.

As Evans (2011) argued, 'increased income is associated, in general, with improved health and expanded capabilities' and is thus integral to the pursuit of social or human development (p. 6). A 'capability enhancing developmental state' requires 'capable public bureaucracies' and 'embeddedness' between the state and society toward construction of 'more efficient administrative structures' and the provision of citizens' basic needs (pp. 9-10). In the absence of effective formal state capacities or legitimate political systems, the likelihood of a state behaving developmentally is limited (p. 10). As was made clear in Chapter 2, in other words, delivery of social or human development rests on the formal capacities and legitimacy of the state, the priorities of ruling elites, and sufficient resources to drive the necessary changes. Such processes can be derailed by conflict or instability, but where the state has been stable and demonstrated strong formal capacities, it is more likely to deploy public resources and formal institutions toward productive and socially minded objectives (ibid). In other words, a stability and consistency to domestic operations can grant the state legitimacy and incentivise leaders to 'deliver the goods' (Englebert, 2000a: p. 6).

Where institutions are characterised by 'conditions of weak initial state legitimacy', importantly, 'bureaucrats are insufficiently loyal to the state and private agents distrust its institutions', which 'raises the relative returns, for elites, for neopatrimonialism over developmental statehood' (ibid). Development, particularly in neo-patrimonial contexts, thus rests on the provision of citizens' basic needs alongside the formal capacity and legitimacy of the state in its authority and interactions with society (ibid; Evans, 2011: pp. 9-10). As La Porta et al. (1999) argued, '[g]overnment performance of a given country should be assessed in part by evaluating the quality of public good provision such as schooling, infant mortality, literacy, and infrastructure' (p. 226). 'High quality' provision of education, health care, and infrastructural necessities, 'as opposed to just high expenditures' are crucial for evaluation of development trajectories or whether a state is 'well-functioning' (ibid). Similar concerns have been integral to approaches to development centred on evaluating the 'physical quality of life' of a given populace (Mbaku, 1988: p. 100; Morris, 1978: pp. 231-232). Gabon's economic performance, formal capacities, and domestic circumstances have been

more stable and developmental than have those in Congo, Chad, and CAR, but the health, education, and *human development* of its populace offer vital insight into the outcomes from these processes, particularly considering accusations of Gabon having not 'built a single classroom' since 2009[83].

Adult Literacy in Equatorial Africa

Figure 5.5 Literacy Rate, Adult Total (% of People Ages 15 and Above)
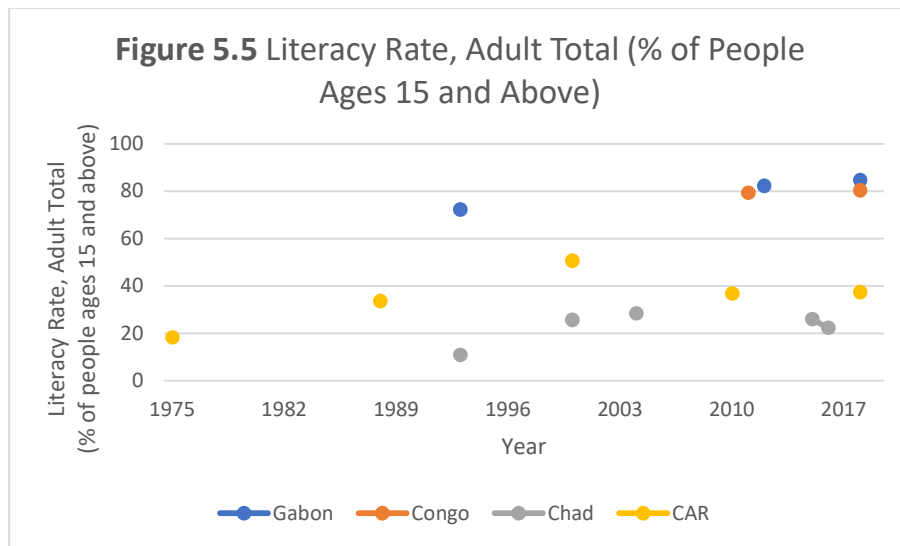
(World Bank, 2020)

The health, education, and basic needs of a given populace are central to development processes and the extent to which states have employed their 'gross national product' to enhance citizens' capabilities or 'physical quality of life' (Evans, 2011: pp. 9-10; Sen, 1999; Mbaku, 1988: pp. 100-101). The education or literacy of a given populace, furthermore, is central to its development and serves as a key indicator for the extent to which domestic resources have been employed toward social development (La Porta et al., 1999: p. 226). The education and *literacy* of a population provides key insight into the quality of skills and training among the citizenry, which is likewise integral to the overall productivity of the domestic economy (Kaplinky, 2005: p. 68). The specific metric to be employed toward these ends, *literacy rates, adult total (% of people ages 15 and above)*, is derived

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[83] Gabonese Activist, interviewed in Libreville, Gabon on 20 August 2019 (Interview Number 03). This individual argued that, since gaining power in 2009, Ali Bongo Ondimba's government 'hasn't built a single classroom', a key manifestation of the 'big lie' of development in Gabon according to this interviewee.

from the World Bank (2020) and presented in Figure 5.5 above. Though limited, data is intermittently

available for all four countries from 1970 to 2018, revealing important historical and recent trends in

these states' performance in ensuring or expanding the *literacy* of their populaces. Gabon has, for the

duration of the data available, retained the highest *adult literacy rate* in equatorial Africa, with a most

recent (2018) rate of 84.67% compared to 80.30% and 37.40% in Congo and CAR, respectively, in the

same year and 22.31% in Chad in 2016 (most recent data).

Gabon has maintained its status as the most literate state in equatorial Africa since at least

1993, with its rate in this year (72.23%) dwarfing any level achieved by either Chad or CAR. The

collective all-time high for Chad and CAR, specifically, was 50.65% (CAR, 2000). In contrast to Chad

and CAR, importantly, Congo has, despite a recent decline in the quality of education[84], come to rival

Gabon in *adult literacy* to an extent that has been rare among the other three equatorial African states

in this thesis. *Adult literacy rates* in both Gabon and Congo, indeed, have consistently exceeded

subcontinental averages. Specifically, Gabon and Congo boasted 2018 (most recent data) *literacy*

rates, adult total (% of people ages 15 and above) of 84.67% and 80.30% respectively, compared to a

sub-Saharan average that same year of 65.04%, according to the World Bank (2020). These rates,

however, do not quite approach the highest *adult literacy rates* in sub-Saharan Africa; Seychelles

(2018), Equatorial Guinea (2010), Mauritius (2018), and South Africa (2017) recorded rates of 95.87%,

94.37%, 91.33%, and 87.05%, respectively, in most recent data.

Despite not being the most literate state in the subcontinent, the rates in Gabon thus

demonstrate a clear and consistent superiority over Chad, CAR, and most other states in sub-Saharan

Africa in educating its populace. As is immediately evident from this initial metric for the social

development of these four states, there has been a clear coastal-hinterland divergence in this regard,

with above-average *adult literacy* in Gabon and Congo and low *literacy* in Chad and CAR. The impact

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[84] Tech Teachers, interviewed in the Pool region of Congo on 07 September 2019 (Interview Number 20).
These individuals argued that there had been a recent decline in educational quality in Congo whereby the
country was 'falling behind' its counterparts, teachers were undertrained, and leaders lack the capacity to
deliver improvements, with plenty of 'talking but little change'.

of this performance in Congo, importantly, has been limited given the current regime's emphasis on 'act[ing] opportunistically to stay in power for as long as possible' (Clark, 2008: p. 273) and noted shortcomings in its 'willingness to train people', 'provide access to information', or expand opportunities for 'education and engagement'[85]. Progress in *adult literacy* in Gabon, on the other hand, has been founded upon an expansion of formal capacities and the political and economic development of its state, according to the findings in this thesis. This progress in Gabon has been centred on its stability and the benefits derived for the productive utilisation of domestic rents, patterns which have stood out throughout this thesis and offer important insight into the disparities in this region and extent to which Gabon has 'shared the wealth more than some'[86].

Such patterns were similarly evident in the country's low *slums* population and *poverty headcount ratio* (World Bank, 2020), indicating long-standing efforts to pursue social development objectives within this context (Mberu et al., 2017: p. 324; Mbaku, 1988: pp. 100-101). Based on the findings to this point, in short, Gabon has been the most stable, consistent, and formally capable state in equatorial Africa, culminating in legitimate political systems conducive to the delivery of *civil liberties*, substantial economic success, the alleviation of poverty, and the education of its populace (V-Dem, 2020; World Bank, 2020; Polity V, 2018). Citizens' health and *mortality*, furthermore, are similarly integral to the pursuit of development, delivery of basic needs, and specifically the 'physical quality of life' promoted by the state (Mbaku, 1988: p. 100). Toward this end, the next metric for social development to be employed, presented in Figure 5.6 below, is the *infant mortality rate (per 1000 live births)* in Gabon, Congo, Chad, and CAR. These figures are derived from the World Bank (2020) and, importantly, represent the final particularistic indicator of development to be employed prior to overarching assessment of their outcomes based on their *human development index* ratings (UNDP, 2020).

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[85] Tech Teachers, interviewed in the Pool region of Congo on 07 September 2019 (Interview Number 20). These individuals emphasised the need for a new leadership with a greater 'willingness' to enhance education, training, and access to information.
[86] US Official, interviewed in Libreville, Gabon on 15 August 2019 (Interview Number 02).

Figure 5.6 Infant Mortality Rate (Per 1000 Live Births)
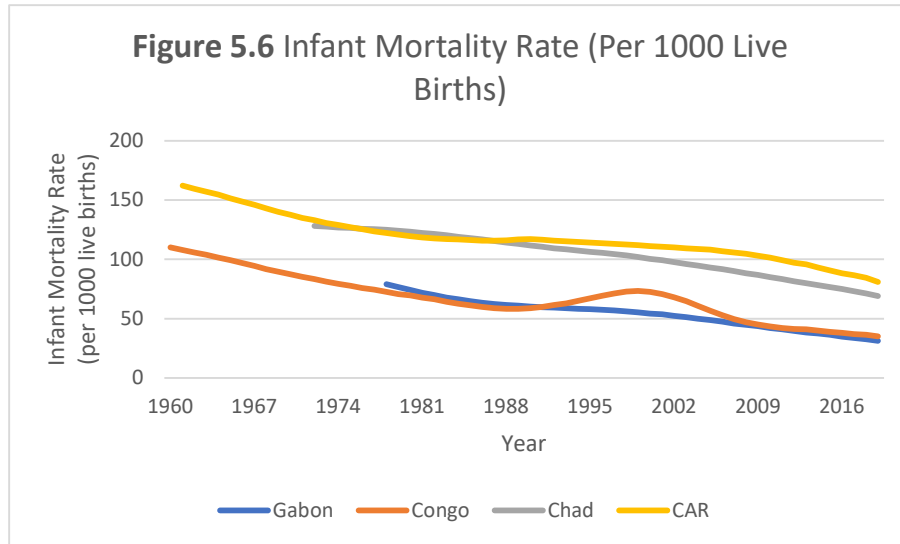
(World Bank, 2020)

As Hanson (2015), found, 'levels of infant mortality fall more quickly when levels of democracy and state capacity are higher…[indicating] that the relationship between democracy and the change in the infant mortality rate is mediated by the level of state capacity' (p. 322). *Infant mortality rates*, therefore, serve as a strong indicator for the formal capacity of the state and the extent to which it has actively pursued development (pp. 322-325). *Infant mortality* was likewise employed by Morris (1978) toward construction of a 'physical quality of life index' (PQLI) and has consistently been employed as a key indicator for the overall delivery of citizens' basic needs and social development (Mbaku, 1988: p. 100). As La Porta et al. (1999) argued, '[l]ow infant mortality, significant school attainment, low illiteracy, and high quality infrastructure typically come together' (p. 239). *Infant mortality rates* thus provide important penultimate insights into the disparate development outcomes of the neo-patrimonial states in equatorial Africa and the specific implications from the domestic circumstances, historical trajectories, formal capacities, and politico-economic development outcomes detailed to this point in the thesis.

Data from the World Bank (2020) on these states' *infant mortality rates (per 1000 live births)* are available from 1978 to 2019 in Gabon, 1972 to 2019 in Chad, and 1960 to 2019 in Congo and CAR, providing important insights into the historical trajectories of and disparities between these states. Gabon in most recent (2019) findings boasted the lowest *infant mortality rate (per 1000 live births)* in equatorial Africa, at 31.1 compared to 34.9 in Congo, 69.1 in Chad, and 81.0 in CAR. Gabon has retained this standing relative to its regional counterparts since 1991, having previously been second-best to Congo. The alternation of these two states' ratings, importantly, was founded upon similar patterns as have stood out throughout this thesis' findings: Gabon's consistency and Congo's volatility. Specifically, while Gabon has steadily diminished its *infant mortality rate (per 1000 live births)* in the data available, at no point altering this trajectory, the 'failure of democracy' and accompanying volatility in Congo in the 1990s (Clark, 2008: pp. 2-5) served to significantly disrupt its provision of basic health services by this metric. Such findings, importantly, support domestic accusations that 'they [the Congolese government] don't care about'[87] and '[are] not worried about'[88] health services delivery when concerns of power maintenance take precedence.

Republic of Congo's *infant mortality rate (per 1000 live births)* increased from 58.6 in 1988-1989 to a peak of 73.1 in 1999. Gabon's *infant mortality rate (per 1000 live births)*, in contrast, went from 60.4 in 1989 to 54.8 in 1999. Congo boasted the lowest *infant mortality rate (per 1000 live births)* for at least 1978 to 1990, but the rapid increase in its rate during this period of instability allowed Gabon to surpass Congo in regional standings and retain this status since. Gabon's recent performance in this regard, furthermore, is not only impressive by comparison to its regional counterparts but has likewise consistently outperformed subcontinental averages. Gabon's *infant mortality rate (per 1000 live births)* was 31.1 in 2019, compared to a sub-Saharan African *rate* of 51.7

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[87] Public Hospital Doctor, interviewed in Brazzaville, Congo on 06 September 2019 (Interview Number 18). This individual argued 'they [government leaders] don't care about' improving health services and said, 'I just work because I hope it will be better tomorrow'.

[88] Private Hospital Doctor, interviewed in Brazzaville, Congo on 06 September 2019 (Interview Number 19). This individual argued that the government 'is not worried about' delivering adequate care and leaders had a 'kill people all you want, but don't touch my chair' attitude toward service delivery in Congo.

in the same year; not at any point since 1990 (earliest available data) has Gabon's *infant mortality rate (per 1000 live births)* come close to matching or exceeding subcontinental averages. Compared to countries at a similar *per capita* economic standing within the subcontinent, however, Gabon still has work to do in reducing its *infant mortality rate (per 1000 live births)*. Specifically, South Africa, Seychelles, and Mauritius boasted 2019 *infant mortality rates (per 1000 live births)* of 27.5, 12.3, and 14.3, respectively, all below Gabon's rate the same year of 31.1 (World Bank, 2020).

In contrast to these countries, importantly, Equatorial Guinea, a country highly comparable to Gabon in terms of economic production[89], oil rent dependence, and size (see for instance Echendu, Iledare, and Onwuka, 2015), recorded a 2019 *infant mortality rate (per 1000 live births)* of 60.4, almost double Gabon's (World Bank, 2020). Gabon has thus been generally impressive in improving its *infant mortality rate*, outperforming states facing similar conditions or circumstances like Equatorial Guinea and its counterparts in equatorial Africa and only outperformed by a few other states in the subcontinent. Quite clear from the findings detailed to this point in this chapter, therefore, Gabon is by far the most developed state in equatorial Africa based on key metrics and, indeed, has exhibited some of the most impressive socioeconomic development performance in the subcontinent (V-Dem, 2020; World Bank, 2020; UNDP, 2020; Polity V, 2018). These outcomes have arisen despite similar initial conditions to Congo, Chad, and CAR and are rooted in Gabon's superior mobilisation of resources[90], stability, and region-low clientelism (V-Dem, 2020), based on this thesis' findings, and the consistency and productivity to operations that can be enabled by these processes (Debos, 2011: p. 426; Kelsall and Booth, 2010: pp. 3-7; Cammack and Kelsall, 2010: pp. 6-7).

While these disparities between Gabon and the rest of equatorial Africa have been evident throughout this chapter and thesis, importantly, the culmination of comparatively extensive *civil*

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[89] 2020 *GNI per capita (Atlas Method, current $USD)*: Equatorial Guinea - $5810; Gabon - $6970 (World Bank, 2020).

[90] UNOCA Official, interviewed in Libreville, Gabon on 22 August 2019 (Interview Number 05). This individual argued that a 'lack of resources' was a key factor in moulding the comparative instability of Congo, Chad, and CAR, alongside opportunities for youth, population growth, and education.

liberties provision (V-Dem, 2020) and impressive economic growth, poverty alleviation, *adult literacy,*

and *infant mortality rates* (World Bank, 2020) indicates an overall performance in the pursuit of

development that stands in stark contrast to trajectories in Congo, Chad, CAR, and most other sub-

Saharan African states. These outcomes, when considered alongside organisational consistency, the

specific manifestation of neo-patrimonialism, and strong formal capacities, therefore, indicate within

Gabon clear potential for *human development* that is absent elsewhere in the region. The final metric

to be employed in this chapter, toward these ends, is the UNDP's (2020) *human development index*

(HDI). This multidimensional metric for development has been widely employed within relevant

literatures and thus provides important insight into the socioeconomic circumstances facing a given

populace, offering an important and wholistic synthesis of the insights gained to this point (UNDP,

2020; Moran, 2007: p. 471; Noorbakhsh, 1998: p. 590).

Human Development in Equatorial Africa

Figure 5.7 Human Development Index Ratings
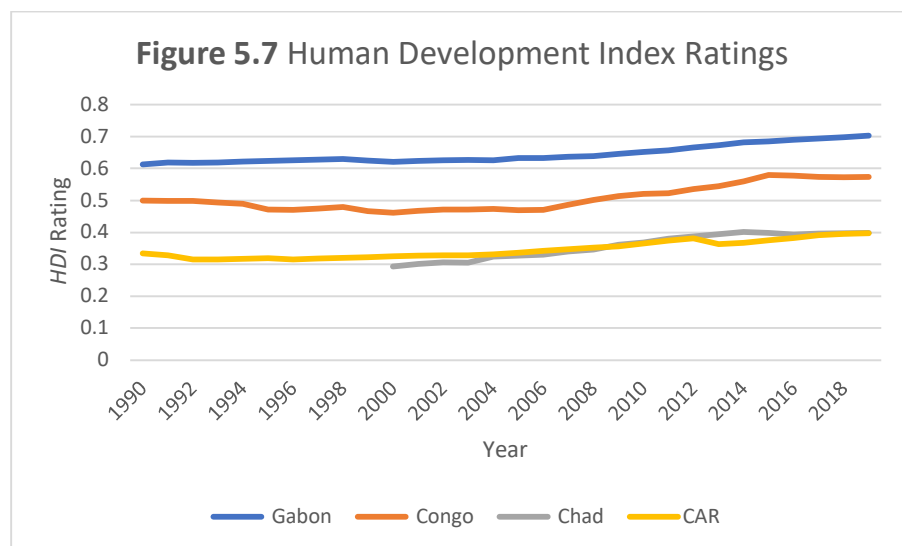
(UNDP, 2020)

As Moran (2007) summarised, the UNDP's *human development index* is 'a widely used

measure of national development, [that] captures how conducive conditions are for residents of a

country to enjoy long, healthy, and creative lives' (p. 471). Specifically, '[t]he HDI is a composite index

of four indicators. Its components are to reflect three major dimensions of human development: longevity, knowledge, and access to resources' (Noorbakhsh, 1998: p. 590). In assessing citizens' ability to pursue 'a long and healthy life, being knowledgeable and hav[ing] a decent standard of living', then, the *HDI* draws on metrics for 'life expectancy at birth', 'mean of years of schooling for adults aged 25 years and more', 'expected years of schooling for children of school entering age', and 'gross national income per capita' (UNDP, 2020). The *HDI* thus draws on similar metrics to those employed above, consolidating the implications therefrom into an overarching perspective on the *human development* of a given state (ibid). Scores in the *HDI* range from 0 to 1, with 0.800 or higher indicating 'very high' development, 0.700-0.799 'high' development, 0.550-0.699 'medium' development, and below 0.550 indicating 'low' *human development* (ibid).

Gabon in 2019 (most recent data) recorded an *HDI* score of 0.703, ranking 119 out of 189 in the world. This was up slightly from a 2018 score of 0.697 and, importantly, indicates 'high' *human development* within this context according to the UNDP (2020). In contrast, Republic of Congo rated 0.574 (i.e., 'medium' development) in 2019, ranking 149 globally, while Chad and CAR were rated 0.398 and 0.397 and received global rankings in 2019 of 187 and 188 out of 189, respectively, predictably demonstrating 'low' (i.e., below 0.550) *human development* (ibid). Only four countries in sub-Saharan Africa boasted higher *HDI* scores than Gabon's (0.703) in 2019. Specifically, South Africa in 2019 recorded an *HDI* score of 0.709; Botswana scored 0.735; Seychelles scored 0.796; and Mauritius, the only state in Africa exhibiting 'very high' *human development*, scored 0.804 in 2019. Gabon has, furthermore, steadily improved its scoring in this *index* throughout the data available, starting at 0.613 in 1990 and increasing in every year since to attain its current (2019) 'high' development status. All of Congo, Chad, and CAR, in contrast, have experienced recent backsliding in this regard. CAR's rating, for instance, declined from 0.381 in 2012 to 0.363 in 2013 as it again fell victim to civil conflict; similar patterns are likewise evident in Congo and Chad.

Republic of Congo's *human development index* score peaked in 2015 at 0.580 and has declined

in every year since, reaching 0.574 in 2019. Chad, similarly, peaked in 2014 at 0.401 and has stagnated

since, declining somewhat to reach 0.398 in 2019. Such recent patterns stand in stark contrast to the

improvements toward 'high' *human development* exhibited by the Gabonese state and indicate a

growing depth to the disparities between this small state and its counterparts. Not only is Gabon the

most developed state in equatorial Africa and among the most developed states in the subcontinent,

in other words, but it has been far more consistent in improving its performance than its equatorial

African counterparts, according to the UNDP (2020). Such disparities have been evident throughout

this chapter and point to the potential benefit from stability and institutional coherence for a state's

ability to surmount endemic neo-patrimonialism and pursue development. Despite similar initial

conditions, Gabon has significantly distinguished itself from its regional counterparts and come to

represent a key and unique instance of neo-patrimonial developmentalism through its stability,

legitimacy, formal capacities, and socioeconomic outcomes.

This does not mean, however, that Gabon has been flawless in its pursuit of development or

alleviation of domestic socioeconomic issues; as the UNDP's (2020) *inequality adjusted HDI*

demonstrates, domestic inequalities remain an influential issue throughout this region. Specifically,

in most recent (2019) figures, Gabon's *iHDI* was 0.544, a significant drop from its 'high' overall

development. Congo, Chad, and CAR, likewise, recorded 2019 *iHDIs* of 0.430, 0.248, and 0.232,

respectively. These figures in Chad and CAR, indeed, were the two lowest *iHDI* scores in the world in

the UNDP's most recent (2020) report. Although all four of these countries have increased this rating

in recent years, the wide disparity between overall *HDI* scores and *inequality adjusted HDI* throughout

the region, and implications from these ratings for the long-term pursuit of development, are

significant. As scholars including Alesina et al. (1996), Alesina and Perotti (1996), Ali and Thorbecke

(2000), and Fosu (2002a, b) have argued, domestic inequality, and the extent to which this is

diminished, can be integral to economic growth, poverty alleviation, and development. While

significant, however, Gabon's inequality, much like most factors in these states' development, has long been the lowest in equatorial Africa[91] (UNDP, 2020).

Despite a regional tendency toward high inequality[92], therefore, Gabon's standing in the UNDP's (2020) *human development index* has indicated the depth of disparity to evolve in this region over the course of these countries' independent histories, the specific benefit derived for Gabon's society from its long-standing stability, and the implications from these dynamics for the productive distribution of rents toward developmental ends. Gabon boasts the fifth highest *HDI* score (UNDP, 2020) and third highest *GNI per capita* in sub-Saharan Africa (World Bank, 2020) alongside significant strides toward alleviating poverty (ibid), delivering *civil liberties* (V-Dem, 2020), and ensuring the health and education of its populace (World Bank, 2020). These outcomes have been moulded by the long-standing stability in this small neo-patrimonial state (Akum, 2018; Systemic Peace, 2018; Yates, 1996: pp. 41-51), comparatively low clientelism (V-Dem, 2020), and the benefits derived from these unique domestic circumstances for the allocation of domestic resources and provision of basic services (World Bank, 2020), based on the findings in this thesis.

As has been captured throughout this chapter, therefore, Gabon has attained a level of development that few states in sub-Saharan Africa, and none of Congo, Chad, or CAR, can match (ibid; UNDP, 2020; V-Dem, 2020; Polity V, 2018). Chapters 3 and 4 found strong support for the proposition that unique circumstances, 'abundant' resources, and weak clientelism can coalesce to promote 'regime stability' and reinforce formal capacities for development (ibid; Arriola, 2009: p. 1345). These preceding chapters thus demonstrated the potent impact from a stable domestic environment, consistent and coherent state operations, and strong formal institutions for the overall productivity and success of the Gabonese state. This chapter, furthermore, has added to these insights an analysis of the specific political, economic, and social outcomes within these four states, culminating in overall

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[91] 2019 UNDP (2020) Inequality Coefficient Figures: Gabon – 22.5; Congo – 24.9; Chad – 37.4; CAR – 41.3.
[92] Director of Population and Development, interviewed in the Pool region of Congo on 03 September 2019 (Interview Number 12). This individual identified rampant inequality and ethno-regional disparities within Congo and throughout the region as important factors in their instability and underperformance.

human development disparities between Gabon and its counterparts that are significant to say the least (UNDP, 2020). Such trajectories and outcomes have been evident throughout this chapter and, importantly, are founded upon the long-standing variance that has stood out throughout this thesis.

5e. Conclusion

The analysis in this thesis is aimed at explaining the institutional processes through which divergent outcomes in equatorial Africa have been produced. This chapter has sought to investigate the disparate outcomes in Gabon, Republic of Congo, Chad, and Central African Republic and the extent to which their circumstances and operations detailed in Chapters 3 and 4 have promoted significant differences in the political, economic, and social development of these four states. Gabon has been evaluated as boasting the weakest clientelism (V-Dem, 2020), most consistent domestic operations, and strongest formal capacities in equatorial Africa (ibid; World Bank, 2020), culminating in significant potential for political, economic, and social development. As has been discussed extensively in Chapter 2 and throughout this thesis, furthermore, domestic instability such as has been evident in Congo, Chad, and CAR can weaken legitimacy, subtract from the formal capacities of the state, prevent the incentivisation of elites toward long-term objectives, and impede the coherent pursuit of development. Such patterns have been evident throughout this chapter and shed light on domestic circumstances in Gabon that have served to promote the coherent and long-term pursuit of key objectives conducive to development.

While Chapters 3 and 4 revealed the variance among these states in their domestic circumstances and state operations, the present chapter has provided important insight into how and to what extent these differences have moulded the intra-regional divergence in outcomes that is of central concern in this thesis. Specifically, while multi-party competition, economic growth, or education provision may not be sufficient for development in the absence of formal capacities and incentivised ruling elites, where the state has actively sought to employ these toward provision of *civil liberties*, reduction of *poverty*, and the overall *human development* of society, it is more likely to be

successful in pursuit of development. In this vein, this chapter has assessed the political, economic, and social development of equatorial African countries through key metrics (World Bank, 2020; UNDP, 2020; V-Dem, 2020; Polity V, 2018) to investigate the implications from their formal systems, informal operations, and domestic circumstances for their overall pursuit of development.

Gabon has, based on the findings in this thesis, exhibited characteristics indicative of neo-patrimonial developmentalism to an extent none of Congo, Chad, or CAR can match and achieved a level of development that makes it one of the most successful states in sub-Saharan Africa (World Bank, 2020; UNDP, 2020). Despite remaining centred on the maintenance of highly presidential and corrupt systems, the stability and consistency of domestic operations and comparatively productive allocation of resources in Gabon allowed for the early and long-standing consistency that has been vital to the performance of this neo-patrimonial state. This foundation promoted the construction of significant formal capacities for extraction, coercion, and administration and the long-term application of domestic rents toward the pursuit of economic growth and human development. Gabon, out of these unique circumstances, has attained the third highest *GNI per capita* (World Bank, 2020) and fifth highest *HDI* score in sub-Saharan Africa (UNDP, 2020), founded on the protection of *civil liberties* (V-Dem, 2020), delivery of key health and education services, and consistent exhibition of economic performance conducive to the expansion of opportunity, incomes, and livelihoods (World Bank, 2020).

These outcomes in Gabon contrast with those in its comparatively volatile and incapable counterparts, elucidating the important role to be played by long-standing stability, legitimacy, and formal capacity in promoting the coherent long-term management of domestic rents and pursuit of neo-patrimonial developmentalism. While Gabon is a 'high *human development*' state on the rise according to the UNDP's (2020) *human development index*, Congo is a 'medium *human development*' state on the decline and Chad and CAR both are among the least 'developed' states in the world (UNDP, 2020). Such wide disparities have been evident throughout this chapter and have been moulded by the specific circumstances and systems detailed in Chapters 3 and 4. Specifically, Gabon

exhibited the most consistent results in V-Dem's (2020) *neo-patrimonial rule index* and has recorded the lowest *clientelism index* score in the region for much of its history (ibid); boasts among the highest *GDPs per capita* in the subcontinent (World Bank, 2020); wields a virtual *monopoly on the use of violence* within its territory (BTI, 2020a); and employs a comparatively *rigorous and impartial public administration* (V-Dem, 2020), based on the metrics employed in this thesis.

These systems and the specific balance between formality and informality implied thereby have been integral to the comparative success of the Gabonese state in its pursuit of key political, economic, and social objectives. The findings in Chapters 3 and 4 revealed the unique circumstances facing Gabon's neo-patrimonial state, the important role played by its historical stability, and the overall implications from these patterns for its legitimacy, formal capacities, and pursuit of development. This chapter, furthermore, has made clear the extent to which these circumstances in Gabon have resulted in political, economic, and social performance indicative of neo-patrimonial developmentalism. Gabon is, according to Polity V's (2018) assessments, the second-most democratic state in equatorial Africa, exhibiting a hybrid political system that is the longest standing non-authoritarian state in the region. These systems and the stability thereof have enabled the empowerment of citizens through increased *civil liberties* (V-Dem, 2020) and promoted some of the most impressive *GNI* growth in sub-Saharan Africa (World Bank, 2020). The political conditions and economic productivity in Gabon, furthermore, have been integral to the alleviation of poverty and pursuit of social development in this context, based on key metrics (ibid; UNDP, 2020).

Beyond systemic and economic improvements, the formal capacity and rapid growth in Gabon has proven conducive to significant poverty alleviation and a comparatively low *slums* population (World Bank, 2020). Gabon has, furthermore, attained outcomes in key health and education metrics (ibid) that have contributed to overall *human development* within Gabon that rivals almost any state in sub-Saharan Africa and significantly surpasses the other states of equatorial Africa (UNDP, 2020). Gabon thus represents a key example of neo-patrimonial developmentalism whereby the specific

manifestation of clientelism, presidentialism, and regime corruption and formal capacities vested within the state have proven conducive to outcomes which outperform most other states in the subcontinent including all three of its regional counterparts (ibid). Domestic circumstances and ruling elites within a given state, based on the propositions outlined in Chapter 2, are central to its ability to surmount neo-patrimonial dysfunction or pursue development. While Congo, Chad, and CAR have all been stricken by instability and frequent executive turnovers, the stability, capacity, and productivity exhibited by Gabon have proven integral to its comparative success and long-term development.

The early and long-standing security of the Gabonese state evident throughout this thesis has been central to its pursuit of development and has promoted outcomes that none of its regional counterparts, and few other states in sub-Saharan Africa, can match. These unique domestic circumstances have added to consistent and comparatively productive state operations to institutionalise the long-term pursuit of key objectives indicative of neo-patrimonial developmentalism, based on the findings in this thesis. While insecurity and illegitimacy have impeded formal capacities and development in Congo, Chad, and CAR, Gabon has come to represent a key example of neo-patrimonial developmentalism whereby domestic circumstances and state operations have culminated in one of the most successful and under-appreciated states in sub-Saharan Africa, in stark contrast with its regional counterparts. This divergent performance in Gabon has stood out throughout this thesis, offers important insight into how domestic circumstances and state operations in this context have been distinct from its regional counterparts, and indicates key processes through which these conditions have promoted development performance that rivals almost any state in the subcontinent.

Chapter 6

Conclusions

6a. Research Questions and Aims

This thesis has been centred on exploring and explaining the processes involved in moulding the divergence in outcomes among ostensibly similar neo-patrimonial states. Specifically, the thesis investigated the circumstances and dynamics that have promoted significant intra-regional disparities among the states of equatorial Africa to assess the key factors behind Gabon's historical and modern divergence from Republic of Congo, Chad, and Central African Republic. The preceding chapters, in this vein, captured the specific circumstances and manifestations of neo-patrimonialism, clientelism, presidentialism, and regime corruption among these states; their formal capacities for extraction, coercion, and administration; and the divergent political, economic, and social outcomes from these processes. Despite being classified as being nearly as neo-patrimonial as the most neo-patrimonial state in sub-Saharan Africa, Gabon has, based on the findings in this thesis, benefited from its long-standing security to rule, consistency to formal and informal operations, and comparative productivity to deliver outcomes that surpass its regional counterparts and rival the most developed states in the subcontinent.

Gabon ranks among the five most developed states in sub-Saharan Africa, compared to middling performance in Congo and outcomes in Chad and CAR among the most disappointing in the world, based on key metrics. This thesis has been aimed at explaining these disparities and the institutional processes involved in generating such variable outcomes. This has rested on an eschewing of economistic explanations for this performance and, as was demonstrated in Chapter 4, the need for explanations for these divergent outcomes that go beyond consideration of comparative economic growth or *natural resources rents*. Integral to this analysis was the theoretical framework

set out in Chapter 2, which elucidated the contentions and propositions behind the institutional processes and historical explanations explored in this thesis. Specifically, this thesis was designed to investigate the interaction between formality and informality within these contexts, the factors impacting on this relationship, and the outcomes resulting from this variance in these states' operations. All four of these states are neo-patrimonial, characterised by the particularistic distribution of resources, excessive centralisation of executive authority, and abuse of public office for personal gain. The specific manifestation of these systems and their impact on the formal capacities and priorities of these states, however, have been far from identical and central to Gabon's long-standing advantages over its regional counterparts.

As Chapter 2 made clear, the manifestation of neo-patrimonialism is far from universal and the outcomes from these systems are moulded by the formal capacity of the state and surrounding domestic circumstances. To test these theoretical propositions and evaluate the dynamics moulding disparate performance among the ostensibly similar neo-patrimonial states in equatorial Africa, this thesis employed a mixed methods approach centred on the combined application of quantitative and qualitative data sources to explore the specific systems, processes, and outcomes distinguishing Gabon from Congo, Chad, and CAR. Specifically, this thesis has applied the theoretical contentions established in Chapter 2 toward a historiographical analysis of equatorial Africa aimed at inductively discovering the processes and differences generating such disparate outcomes among these ostensibly similar and intimately linked countries. These disparities have, based on the findings in this thesis, rested on the specific manifestation of neo-patrimonialism among these states, the formal capacities enabled by their respective circumstances, and the implications from this case-specific balance between formality and informality for their institutional performance.

Gabon is nearly as neo-patrimonial, presidential, and corrupt as Congo and Chad and more-so than CAR, according to their ratings in Chapter 3. The comparatively apolitical and productive management and distribution of domestic resources in Gabon, however, has been integral to its

performance. Gabon experienced rapid economic growth, the least incidence of executive turnover in the region, and no significant instances of civil conflict after 1964, in clear contrast to its regional counterparts. Gabon, in other words, has demonstrated the potent significance of a state's historical circumstances and a relative absence of instability for the dysfunction bred by informality, the operation of formal institutions, and the outcomes generated. While this thesis was initiated with the knowledge that these states were characterised by disparate outcomes, in short, the findings from the preceding analysis have been aimed at revealing the important dynamics and processes involved in moulding this divergence.

With these aims in mind and seeking to reveal the specific dynamics moulding the variance in outcomes among these states, this thesis sought to address two core research questions:

(1) In what ways have domestic circumstances and state operations in Gabon differed from those in Congo, Chad, and CAR?

(2) How have these case-specific circumstances and dynamics resulted in such significant divergence between these ostensibly similar and intimately linked countries?

This thesis thus set out to explain the disparate outcomes among the states of equatorial Africa and the specific historical processes and circumstances that have served to distinguish Gabon from its regional counterparts. In so doing, the analysis employed the theoretical contentions established in Chapter 2, secondary sources, interview data, quantitative metrics, and expert-assessed indices to elucidate the differences in these states' formal and informal operations and the impact these case-specific dynamics have had on modern outcomes. The findings from this analysis are central to an investigation of the specific dynamics moulding disparities within this region and offer broader implications for the circumstances and conditions that can prove conducive to the pursuit of development amidst the operation of neo-patrimonialism.

As was discussed in Chapter 2, a neo-patrimonial state's path to development rests on the specific manifestation of clientelism, presidentialism, and regime corruption, the surrounding

domestic circumstances, the capacity of its formal institutions, and the extent to which ruling elites are incentivised toward productive ends. Where the state is able to remain secure and legitimate, productively manage resources, and perform core rational-legal bureaucratic functions, it is more likely to surmount the detriment from informality to pursue development. The performance of a country in pursuing development, furthermore, rests on its ability to manufacture secure and legitimate political systems, grow the economy, and deliver key social needs. Where a neo-patrimonial state exhibits strong formal capacities for extraction, coercion, and administration and applies these toward long-term political, economic, and social objectives, in other words, it is more likely to avoid or surmount the dysfunction bred by clientelism, presidentialism, and regime corruption. With these propositions in mind, this thesis' key findings have provided important insights which explicitly address the core research questions outlined above and elucidate the key processes causing this region's disparate outcomes.

6b. Key Findings

Investigation of the variance in outcomes between Gabon, Republic of Congo, Chad, and Central African Republic has been centred on testing the theoretical contentions established in Chapter 2 to trace the historical processes through which divergent results have been generated. Neo-patrimonial developmentalism, the meaning of which is at the heart of this thesis, rests on the specific manifestation of informality, domestic circumstances, formal capacities, and the dominant interests moulding state actions and priorities. Where a state is legitimate and capable of extracting resources, coercing support, and administrating effectively, it is more likely to surmount the informal dysfunction bred by clientelism, presidentialism, and regime corruption to pursue political, economic, and social development. Application of this theoretical framework to analysis of the states of equatorial Africa was executed through a tracing of key institutional processes to test historical explanations for these states' respective and comparative outcomes. This was executed and grounded through application of insights from secondary sources, quantitative data, qualitative assessments, and interview data to

reveal through a diversity and synthesis of insights key points of difference or similarity among these states. This analysis and the specific approach employed have provided important findings indicating the key dynamics among these ostensibly similar and intimately linked states.

All four states in equatorial Africa are neo-patrimonial based on the insights and findings outlined in this thesis. The specific manifestation of these systems, however, has been far from identical and, based on the findings in this thesis, shaped by specific domestic circumstances, the formal capacities vested in their states, and, most importantly, the stability exhibited by Gabon. These dynamics have been central to the differences between Gabon and its regional counterparts and the extreme variance in outcomes within this region. Gabon has been by far the most stable country in equatorial Africa, culminating in relatively consistent formal and informal operations and the comparatively productive application of domestic resources, based on the findings in this thesis. In assessing the ways in which domestic circumstances and state operations in Gabon have differed from those in Congo, Chad, and CAR and how these have moulded disparate outcomes, then, this thesis has revealed important factors and processes that have been significant for Gabon's long-standing divergence and offer answers to the research questions driving this thesis' analysis.

1) *In what ways have domestic circumstances and state operations in Gabon differed from those in Congo, Chad, and CAR?*

Gabon's stand-out circumstances were established in the foundational years of independence and the security to rule enjoyed by the Gabonese regime following the restoration of its deposed inaugural president, Gabriel Léon M'ba, in 1964. Such restoration and reinforcement of a deposed executive was rare among France's former colonies and provided Gabon with a unique foundation for centralising control over rents, extracting domestic resources, and manufacturing a monopoly over the use of violence within its territory. The inaugural regimes in Republic of Congo, Chad, and Central African Republic would not be so fortunate, imparting a distinct volatility to domestic operations and

perpetuating the legitimisation of 'power taken by guns'[93]. Central to the security in Gabon in these formative years was the installation of intricate patron-client relationships that would change very little over the course of its history and were central to the French favouritism and sustenance enjoyed by the Gabonese state in the latter years of M'ba's reign and throughout that of the Bongo dynasty.

The specific manifestation of clientelism within Gabon was, based on the findings in this thesis, central to its rapid economic growth, productive allocation of resources, and overall security beginning in the middle of the 1960s. Gabon was found to have wielded the weakest clientelism in equatorial Africa for all but two years since independence, remaining the most consistent state in the region in its operationalisation of these systems based on the *indices* employed (V-Dem, 2020). While Gabon has remained consistent in this regard, Congo, Chad, and CAR have all experienced significant volatility and, over time, expansion in the manifestation of informal systems, based on this thesis' findings. These disparate trajectories have been integral to these states' comparative performance and have been rooted in the perpetuation of civil conflict in the latter three states concurrent to the four-decade reign of Omar Bongo in Gabon. Central to Gabon's outperformance of its regional counterparts and overall consistency in formal and informal operations, furthermore, has been the combined operation of clientelism with presidentialism and regime corruption, the consistency of these operations, and the impact from these processes on overall capacity and performance.

While clientelism was shown in Chapters 2 and 3 to be integral to the overall operation of and outcomes from neo-patrimonialism, such processes likewise rest on the effective centralisation of authority and incentivisation of ruling elites to coherently mobilise, manage, and distribute domestic resources toward productive ends. Though Gabon was evaluated by V-Dem's (2020) experts as being almost as presidential and corrupt as Congo and Chad and more-so than CAR, the specific forms these systems have taken, and the unique foundation granted to Gabon, have promoted far different outcomes from these potential sources of institutional dysfunction. The single party regime sustained

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[93] Gendarmerie Colonel, interviewed in Brazzaville, Congo on 06 September 2019 (Interview Number 17).

by Omar Bongo in Gabon between 1967 and 1990 was vital for its success, the security of the state, and the ability of ruling elites to pursue long-term objectives. This provided an important foundation for the consolidation of power, co-optation of domestic elites, and rapid extraction of domestic resources, which were integral to its growth and legitimacy. The consistency of these systems since the early years of Bongo's reign was vital for Gabon's success and was most evident through the operation of regime corruption, based on the insights employed.

Gabon's *regime corruption index* rating has been by far the most consistent component of neo-patrimonialism among these four states and is indicative of the overall stability and consistency of domestic operations in this context. These circumstances promoted rapid economic growth, recording the most significant *GDP growth (annual %)* rates on record for the region in three consecutive years in the 1970s. The consistency of Gabon's operations evident in V-Dem's (2020) *clientelism, presidentialism, regime corruption indices* culminated in similarly consistent performance in its overall *neo-patrimonial rule index* ratings and, importantly, mirror the overall consistency and coherence evident throughout the history and trajectory of the Gabonese state. Despite being nearly as neo-patrimonial as the most neo-patrimonial state in sub-Saharan Africa based on these evaluations, the specific manifestation of these systems, productive allocation of domestic rents, and generally stable domestic circumstances in Gabon have promoted a specific balance between formality and informality in this context that is integral to the operation of neo-patrimonialism and the divergent outcomes generated.

Gabon's specific manifestation of neo-patrimonialism is indicative of a state that has effectively centralised control over corruption and domestic rents, has been characterised by the least personalistic distribution of domestic resources in equatorial Africa, and has not been prompted to significantly expand the influence of clientelism, presidentialism, or regime corruption, based on this thesis' findings. These systems have evolved within a domestic environment that has been the least volatile in equatorial Africa, has been vested with substantial resources, and has manufactured

comparatively capable rational-legal bureaucratic structures. In assessing how the disparate

circumstances and unique manifestation of neo-patrimonialism in Gabon have manifested in

significant divergence among these ostensibly similar and intimately linked countries, in other words,

the formal capacities exhibited by the state are crucial. As was discussed in Chapters 2 and 4, a state

unable to extract resources, coerce support, and administrate effectively is unlikely to be productive

or stable in pursuit of development and more likely to succumb to neo-patrimonial dysfunction.

2) ***How have these case-specific circumstances and dynamics resulted in such significant***

divergence between these ostensibly similar and intimately linked countries?

In assessing the mechanisms involved in moulding the significant divergence between these

four states, their respective and comparative capacities for extraction, coercion, and administration

are central to the balance between formality and informality and the outcomes from these systems.

Formal capacities provide vital insight into the processes through which disparate circumstances and

specific dynamics have generated significant divergence among ostensibly similar states. Gabon was

shown in Chapter 3 to have exhibited the most consistent domestic circumstances and manifestation

of neo-patrimonialism in equatorial Africa, characterised by the least particularistic distribution of

domestic rents in the region. The impact from these systems is determined by the case-specific

balance between such sources of informality and the formal capacity vested in the state. Where a

state is weak, insecure, or starved of revenues, it is unlikely to pursue development even in the

absence of neo-patrimonialism.

It is thus significant that Gabon has boasted not only the most consistent and productive

domestic circumstances and manifestation of neo-patrimonialism in equatorial Africa but, likewise,

the most significant formal capacities for extraction, coercion, and administration in the region, based

on the findings in this thesis. Gabon, put simply, was found to be the most formally capable state in

equatorial Africa, specifically characterised by the highest *GDP per capita* in the region (World Bank,

2020), a relative absence of *fragility* (Systemic Peace, 2018), a near-complete *monopoly on the use of*

violence (BTI, 2020a), and a comparatively *rigorous and impartial public administration* (V-Dem, 2020). Though Gabon has been shown to be relatively weak in its *statistical capacity* (World Bank, 2020), the overall capacities exhibited by this state for extracting resources, coercing support for or acquiescence to its rule, and administrating effectively reveal key avenues through which this state's domestic circumstances and state operations have promoted its comparatively impressive outcomes.

Gabon has boasted the highest *GDP per capita* in equatorial Africa since gaining independence in 1960 and in 2020 recorded a *GDP per capita* that was more than triple that exhibited by Congo and ten- to sixteen-times those in Chad and CAR (World Bank, 2020). *GDP per capita* is an elucidatory metric for states' extractive capacities that offers insight into not only the overall productivity of the economy but likewise the state's ability to remain stable and administrate effectively, revealing the inherent endogeneity between states' formal capacities. Gabon's 2020 *GDP per capita* was the fourth highest in sub-Saharan Africa (ibid). This state has thus been vested with an abundance of resources that has been integral to its formal capacities and the extent to which it has diminished the dysfunction bred by its neo-patrimonial systems. Gabon has, furthermore, generated the most substantial *tax revenues* as a share of its GDP in the region for all but two years on record, despite remaining below subcontinental averages (ibid). Equatorial Africa in general remains below-average in mobilising *tax revenues*, patterns that were predicted by the rentier literatures outlined in Chapter 2, but Gabon was the only state in the region to maintain double-digit percentages in this figure throughout the data available, compared to three total years among Congo and CAR (data unavailable for Chad) (ibid).

Region-high *tax revenues* amidst sustained *GDP growth* and *oil* and *natural resources rents* that are less than half of Congo's as a share of respective *GDPs* in most recent data (ibid) are indicative of a state in Gabon that has taken advantage of its relative abundance of resources to promote sustained success. While these resources have been necessary for Gabon's superior performance, they are not sufficient in the absence of formal capacities for the management and legitimate extraction of resources from a variety of sources. Gabon, in short, has been the most consistent and

effective state in equatorial Africa at extracting and managing domestic resources. This was most potently evident in the rapid growth enjoyed in the 1970s and the relative absence of major depressions or volatility in the decades since. These capacities were integral to the comparative advantages granted to the Gabonese state throughout its history and, specifically, the consistent presence of substantial enough resources to pursue long-term objectives, legitimise state actions, and enforce rules and norms. These figures in Gabon are significant and offer vital insight into the factors moulding the outcomes from its unique circumstances and manifestation of neo-patrimonialism. Given the endogeneity between states' formal capacities, such significant capacities for extraction as have been exhibited by Gabon are likely to be accompanied by similar capacities for coercion and administration. Such has indeed been the case.

Gabon, in addition to boasting the fourth-highest *GDP per capita* in sub-Saharan Africa, has been characterised by a relative absence of *state fragility* (Systemic Peace, 2018), the largest *armed forces* as a share of total labour force in the region (World Bank, 2020), and a nearly complete *monopoly on the use of violence* (BTI, 2020a). These findings are revealing for the comparative coercive capabilities of the Gabonese state and, thus, key mechanisms involved in providing for the long-standing security that has been central to its performance and outcomes. The stability and legitimacy established and maintained under Omar Bongo was central to the specific manifestation of neo-patrimonialism in this context and the relative absence of significant alterations thereto. This granted the Gabonese state the ability to expand formal capacities and rapidly extract domestic resources to provide a strong foundation for future economic growth and development, culminating in the historical and modern divergence between this state and its former fellow-*territoires*.

Republic of Congo, Chad, and Central African Republic have all been characterised by a historical persistence of civil conflict, frequent executive turnovers, and a consequent inconsistency to domestic operations. These circumstances have been instrumental in moulding the disparities between Gabon and its regional counterparts. Congo, Chad, and CAR are all more fragile than Gabon

(Systemic Peace, 2018), wield moderate-at-best *monopolies on the use of violence* (BTI, 2020a), and have been generally inconsistent in mobilising significant *armed forces personnel* as a share of their total labour forces (World Bank, 2020), based on the findings in this thesis. These processes and circumstances are indicative of weak formal capacities for coercion and, when added to weak extractive capacities, paint a telling picture of the avenues through which disparate circumstances and state operations have promoted such divergent outcomes among these ostensibly similar and intimately linked countries.

Gabon's specific circumstances have promoted significant formal capacities for extraction and coercion which have been integral to the stability of its regime, the consistency to its formal operations, and the relative productivity of public resource management, based on the findings in this thesis. These trends and capacities are entirely distinct from those among Congo, Chad, and CAR and, as was predicted by the theoretical propositions outlined in Chapter 2, are indicative of formal rational-legal administrative structures in Gabon that are more *rigorous and impartial* than those among its counterparts (V-Dem, 2020). Though Gabon has exhibited some noted weaknesses in its *statistical capacity* (World Bank, 2020) that are illustrative of its lack of immunity from the dysfunction bred by neo-patrimonialism, its region-high *GDP per capita* (ibid), nearly complete *monopoly on the use of violence* (BTI, 2020a), and administrative structures assessed as having been the most *rigorous and impartial* in equatorial Africa since 1990 (V-Dem, 2020) are indicative of significant rational-legal foundations that have served to promote greater productivity, stability, and coherence in Gabon than has been exhibited by any of its regional counterparts.

The capacities exhibited by the Gabonese state, based on the findings in this thesis, have served to promote a stable environment, domestic productivity, and an overall consistency to the operation of its formal and informal structures that none of Congo, Chad, or CAR can rival. As has been a driving force behind this thesis' analysis, importantly, the variance in capacities, circumstances, and manifestations of neo-patrimonialism among these four states has promoted widely divergent

outcomes and, specifically, development in Gabon that surpasses each of its regional counterparts to rival almost any state in the subcontinent. Only four countries in sub-Saharan Africa were rated higher in the UNDP's (2020) *human development index*, providing important insight into the extent to which circumstances in Gabon have promoted comparatively developmental outcomes. The 'high human development' exhibited by Gabon, importantly, contrasts with declining 'medium human development' in Congo and 'low human development' in both Chad and CAR (ibid).

Chad and CAR in 2020 were among the three least-developed states in the world according to the *human development index* (ibid). The wide disparities in outcomes between these states and Gabon largely prompted this thesis' analysis and, importantly, are reiterated throughout metrics capturing the political, economic, and social development of these four states. Based on the findings in Chapter 5, Gabon boasts the longest-standing current non-authoritarian regime in equatorial Africa, exhibiting hybrid characteristics through the highly presidential nature of its otherwise multi-party systems (Polity V, 2018). These systems in Gabon are distinct from the comparatively authoritarian regimes in Congo and Chad and an overall inconsistency to operations in CAR that has repeatedly challenged the sustenance of its comparatively open and competitive electoral systems (ibid). Gabon has, furthermore, been assessed as having delivered the most substantial *civil liberties* in the region consistently since 1991, founded upon the relative absence of *physical violence* in this context (V-Dem, 2020). Gabon's political systems and preservation of citizens' liberties, in other words, have been linked to the relative stability of its domestic environment and consistency to formal and informal operations, in contrast to its regional counterparts.

Gabon has thus demonstrated key characteristics indicative of strong performance in pursuit of political development. As has been noted extensively, the installation of these endogenous and legitimate systems in Gabon have rested on the overall stability to its domestic environment, the balance between formality and informality operating within its state, and the productivity of the Gabonese economy. The early and consistent economic growth exhibited by the Gabonese state,

indeed, has been vital for its overall performance. Gabon's 2020 *GNI per capita* was the third highest in sub-Saharan Africa, dwarfing those in Congo, Chad, and CAR (World Bank, 2020). Specifically, Republic of Congo, Chad, and Central African Republic recorded *GNIs per capita* in 2020 that were equivalent to 26.3%, 9.5%, and 7.3% of Gabon's, respectively (ibid). Gabon has boasted the highest *GNI per capita* in equatorial Africa throughout its independent history, but the rapid economic growth enjoyed in the 1970s in the formative years of Omar Bongo's reign were central to the depth of disparity that would evolve over the proceeding decades.

Not only has Gabon demonstrated early and sustained economic performance that rivals almost any state in the subcontinent, but it has, based on the findings in this thesis, applied these resources toward productive and socially minded objectives. Specifically, Gabon recorded the least incidence of slum conditions among these four states as well as the lowest levels of poverty and inequality, demonstrating substantial social benefits derived from the economic growth exhibited (ibid; UNDP, 2020). Such performance and outcomes, furthermore, have been evident in the specific delivery of key social services in this state, with Gabon boasting both the highest *adult literacy rate (% of peoples ages 15 and above)* and lowest *infant mortality rate (per 1000 live births)* in the region (World Bank, 2020), bettering subcontinental averages in both metrics. Gabon has, in other words, exhibited the most impressive performance in delivering the political, economic, and social development of its society in the region. These outcomes stand out from the rest of equatorial Africa and have, based on this thesis' findings, arisen out of processes linked to the specific domestic circumstances, variable manifestations of neo-patrimonialism, and disparate formal capacities exhibited by these states.

This thesis is fundamentally aimed at revealing the institutional processes causing the disparate outcomes among the states of equatorial Africa. This has rested on the application of the theoretical framework established in Chapter 2 toward assessment of the extent to which domestic circumstances and state operations in Gabon have been distinct from Congo, Chad, and CAR and how

these dynamics have yielded such significant modern disparities among these four states. Gabon is among the five most developed states in sub-Saharan Africa based on key metrics and has consistently outperformed its former fellow-*territoires* in delivering political, economic, and social development. These outcomes have arisen out of Gabon's unique domestic circumstances and, specifically, the early and long-standing security to rule that has been integral to its performance and the manifestation of neo-patrimonialism.

Gabon's stability has promoted a consistency to formal and informal operations, diminished the detriment from its endemic neo-patrimonialism, and enabled a strong central authority to coordinate formal institutions around key long-term objectives, based on the findings in this thesis. The specific manifestation of neo-patrimonialism and domestic circumstances moulding state and elite priorities in Gabon have been distinct from its regional counterparts and have enabled the construction of formal institutions that are comparatively capable of extracting resources, coercing support, and administrating effectively. This case-specific interaction of formality and informality derived from Gabon's unique foundation and circumstances have resulted in political, economic, and social outcomes that evidence the depth of disparities operating between Gabon and its regional counterparts. These findings and their implications for the specific processes moulding the region's variable outcomes offer important insight into 1) the ways in which Gabon's domestic circumstances and state operations have differed from those in Congo, Chad, and CAR; and 2) how these dynamics have produced such significant intra-regional divergence. Building from these findings, this thesis has produced some important overarching conclusions.

6c. Overall Conclusions

This thesis has been centred on testing the theoretical contentions established in Chapter 2 within the contexts of equatorial Africa to reveal key processes, operations, and circumstances that have served to differentiate Gabon from its regional counterparts. Neo-patrimonial developmentalism is moulded by case-specific domestic circumstances, the informal systems employed, the capacity of formal

institutions, and the extent to which these are oriented toward key long-term objectives. Where capacities are weak or the state has been unstable, like in Congo, Chad, and CAR, informal dysfunction is expected to be more significant and to impede progress toward development. Where the state is stable and effective, like in Gabon, it is more likely to be capable and legitimate in its mobilisation of resources and application of these toward key objectives conducive to the security and development of society. In exploring these dynamics within the specific contexts of equatorial Africa, this thesis has applied secondary sources, empirical data, qualitative assessments, and interview data to trace the processes behind and historical explanations for this region's divergence. In so doing, this thesis' analysis has produced important conclusions regarding the region's performance and, generally, the key processes moulding the variance in outcomes among ostensibly similar neo-patrimonial states.

The thesis has shown that Gabon has exhibited consistent performance, impressive productivity, and outcomes that stand out from its former fellow-*territoires* and most other states in sub-Saharan Africa. These processes and outcomes have been moulded by Gabon's distinct domestic circumstances and state operations, which have promoted a security and productivity to domestic operations that has been vital for its continued success. Offering important foils, Republic of Congo, Chad, and Central African Republic, despite sharing a colonial history and similar initial set of conditions with Gabon, have been comparatively unstable, inconsistent in their domestic operations, and consequently unable to deliver the levels of development exhibited by their regional counterpart. Gabon, in short, has been the most consistent, effective, and productive state in equatorial Africa since 1960, culminating in domestic circumstances and state operations that have been integral to its divergent performance and modern outcomes.

These dynamics and disparate outcomes among the countries of equatorial Africa have offered important conclusions for their comparative performance, the processes moulding Gabon's divergent outcomes, and the broader implications from stability for institutional coherence and neo-patrimonial developmentalism. Most immediately, it has been made clear through the findings

presented in this thesis that the variable performance exhibited by the states of equatorial Africa has been rooted within their disparate domestic circumstances and the implications from these conditions for the manifestation of neo-patrimonialism, the formal capacities of their states, and their pursuit of development. While Gabon has been comparatively stable and consequently consistent in its domestic operations, Republic of Congo, Chad, and Central African Republic have been far less-so, culminating in inconsistent performance, repeated instances of civil conflict, and comparatively disappointing development outcomes. Gabon's perpetual stability, established following the restoration of its inaugural regime in 1964 and consolidated under the four-decade reign of Omar Bongo, has thus been central to its stand-out performance and outcomes.

Gabon's performance is among the most impressive in sub-Saharan Africa and has been moulded by the stability to its domestic environment, the consistency of its formal and informal operations, and the productivity enabled by these circumstances. These processes and resultant divergent performance, furthermore, have produced outcomes that clearly differentiate Gabon from its former fellow-*territoires* and offer important explanations for the specific avenues through which Gabon's circumstances and formal-informal balance have promoted such divergent results. Gabon has, through these processes, delivered development on a scale few states in the subcontinent can match. Though stability has been central to these disparate outcomes, importantly, this is not the only factor to have stood out from this thesis' findings. Beyond remaining stable and insulated from the civil conflict characterising its regional counterparts, specifically, Gabon's circumstances promoted a productivity and legitimacy to formal operations that has been integral to its long-term pursuit of development.

Gabon is among the five most developed states in sub-Saharan Africa based on key metrics and has outperformed its regional counterparts throughout their independent histories. As has been evident throughout the findings in this thesis, Gabon's long-term performance and ever-widening advantages over its regional counterparts were moulded by the early and long-standing productivity

of this state. This was linked to the specific, and comparatively weak, form of clientelism employed within this context, the overall consistency to its operations, and the early exploitation of domestic resources which enabled rapid 1970s growth. These early circumstances were distinct from those among its regional counterparts and cemented the depth of intra-regional disparity among these states that remains in place today. These economic advantages granted to Gabon, furthermore, have been employed toward productive and social ends, based on the findings in this thesis.

Gabon has been more effective than Congo, Chad, and CAR in preserving citizens' civil liberties, has maintained and improved upon region-low poverty and inequality, and has delivered key social services to its populace, culminating in overall human development that few states in Africa can match. The outcomes in Gabon, therefore, are not only impressive by comparison to its regional counterparts but have come to rival almost any state in the subcontinent. These circumstances offer important overarching insight into Gabon's divergent outcomes and, broadly, point to the role that stability and a consequent consistency to formal and informal operations can play in enabling neo-patrimonial developmentalism, offering an important contribution to the ever-evolving literature assessing these processes in sub-Saharan Africa. Put simply, Gabon's stability provided legitimacy to the state, enabled long-term productivity, and incentivised ruling elites to coherently pursue long-term objectives, based on the findings in this thesis. These circumstances have been central to the disparate outcomes between Gabon and its regional counterparts and offer important insight into the broad interaction between domestic circumstances, manifestations of neo-patrimonialism, and states' formal capacity to pursue long-term development.

Neo-patrimonialism can breed institutional dysfunction and inhibit development, but these outcomes are not automatic and are moulded by domestic circumstances, the case-specific manifestation of neo-patrimonialism, and the formal capacities vested in the state. In Gabon, these factors have coalesced to promote outcomes that are impressive by comparison to almost any state in sub-Saharan Africa. The distinct circumstances, formal and informal operations, and outcomes in

Gabon, therefore, offer important generalisable insight into key factors moulding historical patterns of divergence among ostensibly similar neo-patrimonial states. As was discussed within the methodological reflections in Chapter 1, the insights gained from the type of theory-based process tracing employed in this thesis remain generalisable due to their rooting in general theories related to neo-patrimonialism, formal state capacities, and the pursuit of development. The theoretical framework established in Chapter 2 and the key contentions therein have thus offered an important grounding for the analytical findings in this thesis, revealed key processes explaining the disparate performance in equatorial Africa, and enables this thesis' findings to relate to the broader literatures on neo-patrimonialism and the potential for developmentalism amidst such systems.

Most immediately, the findings in this thesis support the proposition that the manifestation of and impact from neo-patrimonialism is inherently variable and moulded by domestic circumstances, formal capacities, and the priorities of ruling elites. Such patterns align with recent literatures on neo-patrimonial developmentalism and thus provide important general insight into the operation of and impact from these informal systems. Beyond this general insight, furthermore, the thesis revealed the specific processes and contingencies at play within the context of equatorial Africa, a region that hitherto rarely figured in these debates. Despite ostensible similarities derived from a shared colonial heritage and similar political foundations, the stability in Gabon has been integral to its consistency and long-term outperformance of its regional counterparts. The specific circumstances facing the Gabonese state have thus been central to the specific manifestation of neo-patrimonialism employed, the formal capacities manufactured, and the long-term pursuit of development within this context. Neo-patrimonial developmentalism rests on the capacity of the state, resources available, and the extent to which these have been employed productively. Gabon's rapid and consistent economic growth, evident capacities for extraction, coercion, and administration, and provision of key social needs, therefore, are indicative of strong formal capacities and important foundations for neo-patrimonial development.

Based on the findings in this thesis, in short, stability can be crucial for the pursuit of neo-patrimonial developmentalism. The domestic circumstances enabled by a relative absence of conflict or executive turnover can promote institutional coherence, elite incentivisation, and domestic productivity that can be vital for long-term development. The volatility, inconsistency, and illegitimacy promoted by a tendency toward instability and civil conflict, on the other hand, can be self-perpetuating, reinforce the dysfunction promoted by endemic neo-patrimonialism, and impede development. Neo-patrimonial developmentalism, at least within the contexts of equatorial Africa, thus rests on the stability of the domestic environment, the capacity and legitimacy of formal institutions, and the application of substantial resources toward long-term objectives. Gabon has exhibited the potential benefits to be derived from stability and institutional coherence for the pursuit of development amidst neo-patrimonialism. Neo-patrimonial developmentalism, in sum, rests on the domestic circumstances facing the state, its formal and informal operations, and the extent to which these enable or inhibit the mobilisation, management, and productive application of domestic resources and formal institutions toward long term-objectives.

Such conclusions reveal key areas of general concern within neo-patrimonial contexts and offer important avenues for future research on the conditions conducive to neo-patrimonial developmentalism, the diversity of manifestations of and outcomes from these systems, and the factors moulding significant disparities among ostensibly similar African states. This thesis has shown that the comparative stability and productivity of the Gabonese state at an early stage in its history was integral to its overall performance and success in characterising neo-patrimonial developmentalism in contrast to Congo, Chad, and CAR. Future research, however, should employ similar frameworks to assess the impact of (in)stability on other neo-patrimonial states, whether this thesis' conclusions apply in the absence of a significant natural resource allotment, and if these dynamics are unique to Francophone cases. Equatorial Africa has revealed important factors that can be conducive or deleterious for neo-patrimonial development and the diversity of outcomes from

these conditions, but future work should apply these general insights to test the applicability of these findings to other neo-patrimonial African states.

6d. Generalisability and Future Research

As has been noted, the methodology employed in this thesis preserves the generalisability of these case-specific findings, offering important insight into the operation of neo-patrimonialism and how disparate circumstances can yield variable outcomes among ostensibly similar states. Though the generalisability of these findings was not of primary concern, the insights gained from this region's experience are significant for an overall understanding of the variable operation of and impact from neo-patrimonialism. Gabon's long-standing stability and resulting consistency has been crucial for its overall performance, provided an important early economic foundation, and has been centred on the coercive capacity and *monopoly on the use of violence* it has exhibited. Such emphases on coercion have been common among other African neo-patrimonial developmental states like Rwanda (see for instance Mann and Berry, 2015) and are thus central to such states' ability to remain stable to pursue development.

The case-specific manifestation of neo-patrimonialism is integral to the performance of a neo-patrimonial state and its pursuit of development. Central to these processes is the specific operation of systems related to endemic clientelism, which can promote the personalistic or politicised distribution of resources and thereby constrict economic growth and development. Gabon boasting the weakest clientelism in equatorial Africa based on the findings in this thesis, therefore, has been central to the productivity of its economy and its pursuit of key long-term objectives. This offers important insight into the necessary conditions for neo-patrimonial developmentalism. Specifically, Gabon's success has rested on the comparatively apolitical and subsequently productive distribution of domestic resources, which has been integral to its long-standing economic advantages, stability, and delivery of key services. Neo-patrimonial developmentalism, therefore, rests on the productivity

of the economy, the capacity of formal institutions to manage and apply the benefits derived, and the security of ruling elites' position to enable the coherent long-term pursuit of key objectives.

Gabon, put simply, represents an important and under-appreciated example of African neo-patrimonial developmentalism whereby perpetual stability, long-standing productivity, and the coherence of formal institutions have coalesced to promote highly impressive outcomes. This state offers important lessons for other neo-patrimonial states seeking to pursue development and reveals important avenues for future research in this vein. Application of this framework to other cases of African neo-patrimonial developmentalism or exploration of comparatively underperforming neo-patrimonial states can offer important insights into the conditions and variance characterising these systems. Future research in this area should be geared toward analysis of the specific domestic circumstances, political operations, and processes moulding the impact of and outcomes from neo-patrimonial systems. As has been emphasised throughout this thesis, states' historical dynamics are central to the circumstances impacting upon state operations, the specific manifestation of neo-patrimonialism, and the outcomes generated. Future research on neo-patrimonial developmentalism, then, should likewise explore historical explanations for the specific circumstances and processes moulding the manifestation of these systems and their impact on development.

The region of equatorial Africa is generally under-studied within relevant socio-political literatures and thereby offers a final important avenue for future research. Specifically, while this thesis has offered an important contribution to knowledge on, and revealed important avenues for future research related to, how variable circumstances can promote variable operations and performance among ostensibly similar neo-patrimonial states, the specific region studied requires further attention. There is a relative dearth of literatures covering Gabon, Republic of Congo, Chad, and Central African Republic, and even fewer that have specifically addressed the processes moulding their respective or comparative performance. These states offer crucial insight into the variable circumstances facing African states, the variable forms that informal systems linked to neo-

patrimonialism can take, and the variable outcomes that can arise from ostensibly similar foundations. Beyond imploring future researchers to delve into the historical and institutional processes moulding the performance of neo-patrimonial African states, therefore, this thesis concludes with an emphasis on the need for future research on these four under-studied states in equatorial Africa. These four countries share an intimately linked history but represent important variations on the plausible outcomes from similar political foundations. While Gabon individually is among the most impressive and under-appreciated states in the subcontinent, the region of equatorial Africa, as a whole, is one that requires further attention from relevant scholars.

6e. Concluding Statements

The region of equatorial Africa has provided elucidatory insights into the variable operation of neo-patrimonialism, the importance of domestic circumstances in moulding state processes and outcomes, and the important role played by formal institutions in these processes. Gabon has, throughout its independent history, outperformed its regional counterparts to obtain a level of overall development that none of Congo, Chad, or CAR, and few other states in the subcontinent, can match. These disparate outcomes have been moulded by the domestic circumstances facing Gabon and, specifically, the stability and security to rule that promoted greater productivity and institutional coherence than was exhibited by its volatile counterparts. These circumstances in Gabon promoted a consistency to state operations and capacities for extraction, coercion, and administration that were central to its long-term performance and modern outcomes. Put simply, Gabon has, through its stable history and productive, centralised management of domestic rents, attained development outcomes that put its counterparts to shame, rival the most developed states in the subcontinent, and offer important lessons for other neo-patrimonial states seeking to pursue development.

This thesis has explored the divergent trajectories and outcomes among the states of equatorial Africa and come to argue that the specific domestic circumstances, manifestation of neo-patrimonialism, and formal capacities exhibited by Gabon have been unique from those in Congo,

Chad, and CAR and integral to the former's superior performance. The manifestation of and impact from neo-patrimonialism is inherently variable and moulded by case-specific circumstances. Where the state is stable, productive, and coherent in its management of domestic resources, it is more likely to employ these toward key long-term objectives related to development. Neo-patrimonial developmentalism in Gabon has relied on the stability of its domestic circumstances, the specific manifestation of neo-patrimonialism, its strong formal capacities, and the productive application of these mechanisms and conditions toward long-term objectives.

Despite being almost as neo-patrimonial as the most neo-patrimonial state in the subcontinent based on the findings in this thesis, Gabon has employed its unique circumstances to conclusively surmount much of the dysfunction from these systems and attain development outcomes that rival the most developed states in sub-Saharan Africa. These outcomes in Gabon contrast with the underperformance of Republic of Congo, Chad, and Central African Republic and offer vital insight into the role to be played by (in)stability in the manifestation of neo-patrimonialism and its impact on states' ability to pursue development in the long term. Neo-patrimonialism can impede formal capacities, promote illegitimacy and insecurity, and limit prospects for development. Where a state is capable, secure, and productive, however, it is more likely to be legitimate and able to surmount the dysfunction bred by neo-patrimonialism to coherently pursue long-term development. Such has been the case in Gabon, offering important lessons for other states' pursuit of neo-patrimonial developmentalism and yielding performance and outcomes that are among the most impressive and under-appreciated in the subcontinent.

Appendix: List of Interviews

Interview Number	Description	Location	Date
01	UNAIDS Official	Libreville, Gabon	14 August 2019
02	US Official	Libreville, Gabon	15 August 2019
03	Gabonese Activist	Libreville, Gabon	20 August 2019
04	Congolese Academic	Libreville, Gabon	21 August 2019
05	UNOCA Official	Libreville, Gabon	22 August 2019
06	UNOCA Chief of Staff	Libreville, Gabon	22 August 2019
07	Congolese Academic	Brazzaville, Congo	26 August 2019
08	Mining Worker	Brazzaville, Congo	28 August 2019
09	Restaurant Owner	Pool, Congo	28 August 2019
10	Assistant Director of Mining	Pool, Congo	29 August 2019
11	US Official	Brazzaville, Congo	30 August 2019
12	Director of Population and Development	Pool, Congo	03 September 2019
13	Congolese Activist	Brazzaville, Congo	04 September 2019
14	NIOSI Researchers	Brazzaville, Congo	04 September 2019
15	Congolese Former WHO Official	Brazzaville, Congo	05 September 2019
16	Women's Commune Members	Pool, Congo	05 September 2019
17	Gendarmerie Colonel	Brazzaville, Congo	06 September 2019

18	Public Hospital Doctor	Brazzaville, Congo	06 September 2019
19	Private Hospital Doctor	Brazzaville, Congo	06 September 2019
20	Tech Teachers	Pool, Congo	07 September 2019

List of Abbreviations

AEF – *Afrique-Équatoriale Française*; French Equatorial Africa

BTI – Bertelsmann Transformation Index

CAR – Central African Republic

Congo – Republic of Congo (Brazzaville)

DRC – Democratic Republic of the Congo (Kinshasa)

GDP – Gross Domestic Product

GNI – Gross National Income

HDI – Human Development Index

IHDI – Inequality Adjusted Human Development Index

IMF – International Monetary Fund

MNR – *Mouvement National de la Révolution*; National Movement of the Revolution

MPS – *Mouvement Patriotique du Salut*; Patriotic Salvation Movement

OECD – Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development

PDG – *Parti Démocratique Gabonais*; *Gabonese* Democratic Party

PCT – *Parti Congolaise du Travail*; Congolese Labour Party

PQLI – Physical Quality of Life Index

SFI – State Fragility Index

UDDIA – *Union Démocratique de Défense des Intérêts Africain*; Democratic Union for the Defence of African Interests

UN – *Union Nationale*; National Union party

UNAIDS – Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS

UNOCA – United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa

UNDP – United Nations Development Programme

USD – US Dollars

V-Dem – Varieties of Democracy

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