# Communal violence and the legacy of precolonial states

The level of violence in non-state societies is qualitatively different from that within states with rates of violence often being several orders magnitude higher in the former (Pinker 2011++; LeBlanc 2003; Diamond 2012). Part of this can be explained by that states’ primary objective and defining characteristic is to solve the security dilemma (Lake and Rotchild 1996; Hobbes Leviathan). Several states in contemporary sub-Saharan Africa are judicially effective, but empirically less so (Jackson and Rosberg 1982). This has resulted in pockets where resolution of violent conflicts is mainly left to local traditional mechanisms without a neutral arbiter to mediate or enforce peace should things get out of hand. There might be important variations in this semi-anarchic situation, however, as some areas have a long pre-colonial legacy of statehood which previously addressed the security dilemma between ethnic groups. Some claim that the existence of precolonial states has caused legal ambiguities that are important causes of intergroup violence (Eck, 2014), others hold that remnants of precolonial institutions directly (Herbst, 2015; Wig & Kromrey, 2018) or indirectly reduce the overall number of inter-ethnic (non-state) conflicts.

## Exising quantitative litt., should we have some on cases as well?

(Eck, 2014; Wig, 2016 (civil conflict); Wig & Kromrey, 2018; Elvfersson; Fjelde & Østby; Hillesund studies on weather?); should we have something on the general developmental consequences of precolonial states as well?

## Precolonial institutions existing informally

# How conflicts are prevented or resolved without the state:

In order to explain how areas where pre-colonial states existed reduce communal violence today, we first outline mechanisms regulating inter-communal conflicts in contexts of weak statehood, before we investigate how precolonial states might moderate these. While the literature has focused much on the type of issues that can trigger conflict between groups (Döring, 2020; Eck, 2014; Elfversson, 2015; Fjelde & Østby, 2014; Fjelde & von Uexkull, 2012; Hillesund, 2019; Theisen, 2012), we believe that a deeper understanding of the structural characteristics of the state is central, some of which the existence of precolonial states affect. With the lack of an overarching authority to arbitrate between groups or provide physical security, strategic interaction between groups arises in which physical security is paramount. Problems related to interpersonal crime or competition over resources are ubiquitous both within and between groups, but such banalities are often the trigger of communal conflicts. Strategic interactions make otherwise mundane problems of criminal punishment or competing policy preferences potential triggers of intergroup violence (Diamond, 2012; Eaton, 2008; Fearon, 1995; Fearon & Laitin, 1996; Lake & Rothchild, 1996). Since conflict is costly, however, there should be a rational interest in a bargained solution short of violence (Fearon, 1995), but the problem is, when strategic dilemmas arise, such bargained solutions are hard to establish and uphold. Three related phenomena – information problems, commitment problems, and the security dilemma – are each sufficient in causing armed conflict, but very frequently co-occur (Lake & Rothchild, 1996, p. 46).

## The problem of information when resolving interethnic conflicts

Within ethnic groups, dense networks facilitate the exchange of information through gossip, rumour and formal (e.g. churches) or informal institutions. This prevents opportunistic behaviour towards kin, as individuals can be identified and punished (Fearon & Laitin, 1996, p. 719). In cross-ethnic interactions, identifying individuals is often much harder due to less frequent interactions, thinner networks, and cultural differences that makes it harder to identify opportunists than among coethnics.[[1]](#footnote-2) The cross-ethnic information problem renders individual punishment of non-coethnic criminals difficult. Similarly, while it may be collectively rational to reveal private information to counterparts as part of a bargain to avoid conflict, groups can have strategic incentives to withhold, information particularly if revealing it make them vulnerable to an early confrontation from the other group[[2]](#footnote-3) or make them more vulnerable in the future. This can cause bargaining to crash and conflict to start. Generally, information problems tend to grow more acute with increasing state weakness (Fearon, 1995; Lake & Rothchild, 1996, p. 46f).

## The commitment problem

A second problem is that ethnic groups cannot credibly commit to mutually beneficial agreements. At least they cannot be certain that other groups stay true to their promises. The fear of being cheated against may make groups prefer to attack early than being victimized at a later occasion. Thus, formal or informal agreements between ethnic groups are often premised on a supra-ethnic authority and they are often initiated by the weaker group that have most to fear from unregulated interaction (see below on intragroup policing as an example) (Lake & Rothchild, 1996, p. 50f). In the absence of such working arrangements, the information problem causes chronic insecurity about the other group’s intentions with conflict representing a realistic alternative (Lake & Rothchild, 1996, p. 51).

## The security dilemma

The semi-anarchic situation found in areas of weak statehood induces groups to apply self-help strategies, as they cannot credibly commit to agreements of not applying force to each other. The information problem renders groups chronically uncertain about others’ true intentions, making defensive moves by one group look suspicious causing other groups to safeguard themselves. Subsequently this makes all groups less safe, in particular when there are clear advantages to use pre-emptive tactics[[3]](#footnote-4), as Lake and Rotchild puts it ‘Fearful that the other might preempt, a group has an incentive to strike first and negotiate later’ (Lake & Rothchild, 1996, p. 53).

## In-group policing

Since minor frictions can cause costly interethnic violence, attempts at creating inter-ethnic institutions are quite prevalent, despite problems of credible commitment. Under so-called in-group policing (IGP) (Fearon & Laitin, 1996, p. 723), groups use their superior within-group information to punish individuals in their own ranks that have committed crimes against outsiders. The victim’s group refrain from collective reprisals, as they are reasonably certain of internal punishment, making the institution quite robust to smaller infringements. For IGP to be effective, the information about punishment must be received by the offended group. This both signals that the reciprocal agreement of punishing one’s own bad apples is upheld, but also good intentions by taking punishment seriously (Fearon & Laitin, 1996). An alternative to IGP, is when the perpetrator’s group help the victim’s group apprehend the culprit or simply hand him over [insert from Eaton on this]. More institutionalized forms of IGP is frequently found where some form of overarching authority is present, such as in premodern Europe and empires (Fearon & Laitin, 1996, p. 728). Independent of this, when relations between groups are particularly important, such as when trade ties are central, IGP is also more likely and those dependent on them have a particular interest in developing IGP to prevent conflict (Fearon & Laitin, 1996, p. 730).

## Peace in the threat of feud

IGP has often evolved as a consequence of another conflict preventing mechanism – the sheer fear of feuding. Here if outsiders commit crimes, the victim’s group applies violent reprisals in which all members of the perpetrator’s group are legitimate targets.[[4]](#footnote-5) Its indiscriminate nature and likelihood of triggering counter-reprisals from the other group makes it apparently irrational, but with the information-problem preventing individual punishment, the alternative to collective retaliation to infringements by individual (or collectives of) outsiders is no punishment at all signalling an inability or unwillingness to defend group members. Collective retaliation must be sufficiently likely and brutal to work as a credible deterrent, making this mechanism of fear much less robust to smaller incidents (Fearon & Laitin, 1996). An earned reputation for ruthlessness, even in the face of superior groups, can therefore work to uphold the peace [insert brief example from Omo where an inferior group launched a suicidal attack in order to make the peace pact more credible]

## Blood money

One way of further raising the costs of spiralling and thereby adding to its deterrence, is very high compensation rates once parties to the conflict finally agree to end the violence. When as much as 50-100 heads of cattle is required for compensating the killing of one man [insert refs to this for Somali and Ateker clusters] or [insert example from Papua New Guinea in Diamond], it requires a collective effort to pay, in which many members of society have to contribute. This makes the commitment both more credible but also *signalling* a collectivewill to break the spiral and uphold peace. Thus, prospective collective compensation costs create an additional incentive to prevent small misunderstandings, offenses, and other minor infringements that often cause spiralling.

## An example from East Africa

Societies where the threat of spiralling is ubiquitous create security dilemmas even at the individual level with ‘a large temptation to defect on purpose since a breakdown is likely anyway’ (Fearon & Laitin, 1996, p. 724). Frequent cattle-raiding between pastoral societies in Eastern Africa is a case in point. Most groups rely on quite similar livelihoods, with limited mutual benefits from economic exchange. Typically, the majority favours peace, but individuals can benefit substantially in the short term from taking the cattle (violently or not) from outsiders. However, this jeopardizes the peace. The victims can choose to ignore the infringement knowing that redress is difficult, or ask the locals where tracks are found for help. If this entails asking for help in a different community, chances are low, as groups practice ‘kimuk ekile’ covering their man, thus, even thieves normally despised of, when having stolen cattle from another community, are covered. Due to insecurity, language issues, and a lack of information, the pursuers are likely unsuccessful on their own. If assisted and apprehending the cattle or getting compensation, then peace will hold. This represents a very crude parallel to IGP. When not granted help, the situation is ripe for asymmetric retaliation against anyone in the thief’s community, which in turn is likely to spiral (Eaton, 2008, p. 104ff). When the threat of raids from outsiders driven by sheer opportunism looms large, even should one’s coethnics uphold the peace, expected future gains of peaceful relations are reduced and so is the inclination to uphold them. High benefits of defection, a substantive risk of the other group opportunistically breaking the peace combined with the low level of economic interdependence between groups could go some way in explaining the higher frequency of communal violence in this region. This also illustrates that for spiralling to deter defection, interethnic interaction cannot be too infrequent and/or too superficial relative to the costs of defection, lest there is simply less to lose from defection (Fearon & Laitin, 1996).

[add examples from Papua New Guinea, the Amazon and other places to show generality].

# What lingering effects to precolonial states have today?

States tend to assimilate populations through state-building (Anderson, 2006). In some cases this results in the consolidation of new ethnic groups, but in other instances it serves to make the boundaries between ethnic groups softer facilitating increased peaceful interaction in the form of trade, mixed settlements, and increased cross-group marriages. These effects of previous statehood have a conflict-dampening effect on the mechanisms described above.

- interethnic interaction

- mixed settlements

- decreasing the information problem

- individual reputation

- understanding of cultural codes

- economic development

- precolonial structures made it easier for colonial masters to successfully integrate and develop colonized areas through more effective indirect rule

- the lack of statehood and subsequent development I South Sudan

- the lack of a head chief prevented land rights for certain groups in Darfur, causing trouble when ecological changes forced these groups to stay longer on others’ lands (as they had no land on their own)

# Parameters in interethnic institutions that are affected by precolonial states

## Frequency of interethnic interaction

For both mechanisms to work, *intra*-ethnic cooperation must be sufficient to ensure collective action. Both the incentive to defect against coethnics must be low, and those who do defect against coethnics must have an incentive to accept their punishment. Furthermore, relatively frequent intraethnic relative to inter-ethnic encounters must take place for group cohesiveness to be sufficiently strong for intraethnic sanctions to work. Consequently, ethnic groups often have ways of deterring too much mingling with outsiders, such as taboos on cross-ethnic marriages, and strong norms on intragroup behavior. For instance, Bollig (1993, p. 177) reports that in Pokot society, there are strong norms for solving intraethnic conflicts peacefully to the extent that strong words are discouraged. Over a forty-year period, he recorded two murders for a group of 10-20,000 persons, constituting a murder rate (0.33) lower than all but a few contemporary Western societies – in striking contrast to their very violent relations with neighbouring groups.

For persons to behave nicely against outsiders, the threat of some form of punishment must be present, or (and often less likely) the long-term *individual* gains for cross-ethnic cooperation must be higher than the *individual* gains from defecting today. The frequency of interethnic interaction affects the proclivity to behave nicely towards outsiders (Fearon & Laitin, 1996, p. 721), as more (less) frequent cross-ethnic interaction implies more (less) chances of building an individual reputation for trust; more (less) to gain from trade; and less (more) effective anonymity for outsiders of one’s own ethnic community.

Similar as to under the spiralling mechanism, interethnic relations cannot be too frequent for IGP to work as this would reduce group’s ability to punish coethnics (see also below/transition to the point below).

## Economic dependence

For the fear of spiralling to be effective, immediate gains from cheating must be lower than (potentially lost) future gains from cooperating. Conversely, substantial immediate individual gains from cheating outsiders and limited future gains from cooperation, increases the risk of cheating. For instance, Olsson argues that three decades of drying removed the basis for trade between different livelihood groups in Darfur causing markets to collapse. As groups became more autarkic, the division of resources became less mutually beneficial and more conflictual, laying the ground for appropriative conflicts from the mid-1980s onwards (Olsson, 2016).

## Abnorm hospitality but also conformism in nonstate societies

This creates cultures that encourage nosiness in coethnics affairs, and norms of thick-skinnedness, extreme self-restraint, generosity, hospitality and politeness towards outsiders[[5]](#footnote-6), and strongly discourage hot-headedness. In the words of Colson (Cohen & Vandello, 2004, p. 199f; 1975, p. 37 cited in ) ‘people live in what appears to be a Rousseauian paradise because they take a Hobbesian view of their situation…’ going out of their way to avoid those single acts of aggression they fear will cause long spirals of violence. However, and as the strong emphasis on norms of ‘niceness’ towards outsiders in peacetime reflects, these societies are found to be much less effective at containing violence once cross-ethnic disputes occur as the failure to retaliate violently would reduce the credibility of this deterrent strategy (Fearon & Laitin, 1996, p. 723f).

## END INTEGRATED SECTION

* + 1. *Factors in above mechanisms that the legacy of precolonial states could affect*
       1. For groups that previously constituted a state:
          1. In the case groups are the direct successors of precolonial states, they also often inherit formalized institutions, very often the kind of institutions found in precolonial states in sSA (though not necessarily recognized by the current state). By giving political authority a clear centre it makes these groups better at collective action, rendering the likelihood of defection and spoiler behaviour lower and increasing trustworthiness by ensuring all group members pulling in the same direction. These factors in combination with the predictability that comes with long-lasting institutions enhances outsiders’ ability to judge likely future behaviour, particularly if institutions are formalized in a way that makes understanding cultural codes less crucial. In essence, this reduces the information problem that permeates interethnic relations. [TRY TO FIND EXAMPLE] The stronger internal coherence should also make in-group policing be more effective, and therefore also more credible, reducing the chances that cross-ethnic individual disputes spiral into violence [TRY TO FIND EXAMPLE]. A stronger potential for collective action should also enhance the deterrent effect of the threat of feuding. In addition to reducing both the information and spoiler problems, inheritor groups have other ways of making it more credible that they uphold contracts. They can tie an agreement to its own institutions, the breaking of which would weaken/jeopardize the institutions themselves or, if tied to formal (though not necessarily state recognized) institutions, contract-breaking would require that the very same institution overturns its own previous decisions. These effects make inheritor groups more credible partners (Wig & Kromrey, 2018). [TRY TO FIND EXAMPLE]
       2. Another important fault-line of communal violence is that which occurs between different clans or communities within the same ethnic group. Prominent examples include the wars between different Nuer-subgroups in current day South Sudan (UCDP; Johnson) or between different Somali clans and subclans. In the presence of state or statelike supra-ethnic institutions – which the abovementioned cases have very little of – a common authority structure helps settle disputes peacefully or even de-escalate violent encounters through both mediation and credible enforcement mechanisms. Wig and Kromrey (Wig & Kromrey, 2018, p. 5) as well as Zartman argue that particularly customary courts are particularly efficient in resolving conflicts in that they enhance the legitimacy of settlements (Zartman, 2000).
       3. or groups that previously lived together with other groups under the same state umbrella:
          1. the presence of a state facilitating peaceful interaction and mutual dependence. In some circumstances, this went so far as to assimilate different groups into one (states as the big assimilator – ask Marius for input from sSA and examples),
          2. in instances where groups did not assimilate into one but remained distinct units, precolonial states sometimes

made ethnic markers less salient as the incentive to ‘police’ ethnic boundaries is reduced under a state.

left the legacy of institutions that go beyond the feuding and in-group policing mechanisms described above (examples – joking relationships (was it the states that made this possible?); other examples?).

By keeping the civil peace and enforcing contracts, precolonial states facilitated increased trade and hence economic interdependence. Increased economic interdependence increases the long-term returns from cooperation relative to the short-term benefits from defection.

In addition, increased interethnic economic cooperation also likely diversifies the local economy making it to suffer relatively more from conflict than a less interwoven and more internal economy.

By facilitating increased economic interdependence, it also facilitated increased interaction between members of different ethnic groups, which had the effects of (see point below)

Over time had the effect of the cumulation of intergroup trust. Increasing cross-ethnic trust (the interaction hypothesis) increased mutual trust reduces the chances of opportunistic behaviour (Ostrom, 2010). When trust is higher, the likelihood of cooperation is higher, as this leads people to have different expectations of what would happen in the breakdown of cooperation compared to when trust is lower (Fearon & Laitin, 1996, p. 720).

Increased trade and interaction as well as resolving the security dilemma, precolonial states Facilitated mixed settlements which in turn:

(i) together with general increased cross-ethnic interaction increased trust:

(ii) increased the likelihood that of informal conflict resolution mechanisms were established (Ostrom, 2010). Examples from Mali and Burkina Faso on how precolonial state-driven institutions still facilitate peaceful dispute settlement

(iii) With increased cross-ethnic interaction, members of ethnic group A will know more about what happens within ethnic group B. In these instances, non-coethnics interact much more frequently and thus the veil covering the acts of individual non-coethnics is partly lifted (Fearon & Laitin, 1996, p. 721). This improves the prospects for identifying outsider perpetrators and thereby punishing them individually, reducing the chances that collective retribution will be reverted to. Thus, the more there are durable long-term relationships between members of different ethnic groups – joking relationships in parts of the Sahel being one example – the easier apprehending and punishing individual culprits of a different ethnic group is.

* + 1. Other ways precolonial states can reduce the risk of communal violence today that do not directly affect the mechanisms discussed above:
       1. By being explicitly (Zulu; Ashanti) or implicitly (examples) recognized as functional parts of the modern state. This then works to:
          1. strengthen the capacity of the modern state by providing relatively functional institutions that have more gradually developed to fit the local context than modern state institutions often do, hence *reinforcing the capacity of the modern state*
          2. …and as a consequence *strengthening the legitimacy of the modern* state [insert ref to studies using Afrobarometer who find support of this]
       2. Precolonial states have been found to increase levels of development all else equal [refs to Rainer; Greeks; Acemouglo et al.). Since collective violence is less frequent in more economically developed areas of states – due to both enhanced state policing capacity, and at the individual level, increased opportunity costs of crime and violence as well as less relative deprivation – precolonial states through the economic development mechanism work to reduce the risk of all forms of violence, including communal violence

END structured section

* + 1. Hence, any inter-ethnic conflict resolution mechanism must address the information asymmetry between coethnics and non-coethnics.
    2. Add caveat from Diamond on that defending something is a premise BUT also counterarg that based on Diamond, pastoralist areas of EA should not see much feuding, but they do
    3. Outsiders to any of the ethnic groups in dispute/conflict can also be hired/engaged to resolve disputes. These can be helpful in suggesting solutions that the parties to the conflict desire deep down, but which the parties are reluctant to come up with on their own. If such third-parties are available, then interethnic tensions should be easier to calm (Fearon & Laitin, 1996, p. 730) [see if example from BFO]
    4. One important cause of interethnic tension is the lack of information about non-coethnics past behaviour and therefore a context for interpreting current intentions. **Pre-colonial states contribute to reduce this information problem in a similar way to how intra-ethnic information flows easier than inter-ethnic information: by developing social networks and by facilitating more frequent interaction this enables more individual reputations** (Fearon & Laitin, 1996, p. 730)– indeed, one frequent consequent of very solidified statehood over a long period of time is assimilation of its citizens into one ethnicity/nation. Relatedly, being under the same state umbrella and (therefore) interacting more frequently also increases the cultural familiarity of other groups and thereby also boosts noncoethnic’s ability to separate out opportunists among non-coethnics.
    5. The same information access and networks that facilitate ingroup policing can also be hijacked by ethnic entrepreneurs to sanction noncompliers and fight outsiders (Fearon & Laitin, 1996, p. 331)
    6. Leaders of ethnic groups have an incentive (collective action and cohesiveness) to construct and maintain borders against “others”: this may be less efficient the more peaceful cohabitation there has been in the past
    7. Also argument on (relative) group size in F&L: but if we cannot test it, I suggest leaving it out/footnoting it.
    8. Ambiguity in our argument: if there is too much interethnic interaction, the importance of ethnic boundaries decline and, subsequently, the effectiveness of the spiralling mechanism declines – unclear precisely why, but likely due to a sufficient level of cohesiveness is necessary for making collective action in spiralling violence feasible as a certain level of intraethnic interaction is necessary for intraethnic sanctions to work (F&L:722 – but they do not mention this problem for the intragroup policing mechanism). BUT if the effectiveness of the spiralling mechanism declines, this may be a symptom of increased integration into one group
    9. Pinker’s argument includes: states, commerce and cosmopolitanism
    10. Groups hailing from precolonial states more often supported by the state (Wig & Kromrey, 2018, p. 5). With government bias often playing a role in inter-ethnic violence, but also with governments being more incentivized to help groups that are important for the regime – which the collective capacity of precolonial state groups make them – increases the probability that states intervene to prevent escalation or end conflicts when these groups are involved.
    11. African states rely on customary authorities in resolving local conflicts (Beyene, 2009)
    12. Triggering causes:
        1. Ethnic conflicts often caused by fears about the future
        2. Changing demographic balance whereby the weaker group being fearful of the future intentions of the group that grows stronger attacks today when they are stronger than in the future (L&R) – more likely to a background factor increasing the systemic uncertainties between groups
        3. Changing beliefs about the intentions of other groups (Similar to changing demographic balance) (L&R:51)
        4. Competition over resources, including land (L&R44). Lake and Rotchild (1997:44) state that a.o. property rights can be contentious as they confer rights on groups.
        5. Information problem between groups: always some suspicion, with ‘the past’ representing a heuristic for assumed future behavior of the other group
        6. Effective states can enforce ethnic contracts (L&R:52) but when states weaken, ethnic fears rise. It is only the physical presence of states that keep the peace (L&R:43) (-> a weakening of the state increases interethnic fears about being unprotected in the future -> pre-emptive preparation for conflict)
        7. Information problem in itself can drive arms race between groups as they are uncertain both about the intentions and capabilities of other groups, and they cannot credibly commit to each other to not attack each other (L&R:52). If there is a military advantage of striking first – such as when offensive tactics such surprise and mobility dominates, giving clear advantages to the attackers – the temptation to strike first to avoid a worse fate in the future increases.
        8. The past in the form of myths, experiences and emotions influences the polarizing effects of ethnic activists and entrepreneurs (L&R53) (precol: if precol states have enforced interethnic peace in the past, such negative memories will be fewer and weaker, providing less fertile soil for ethnic entrepreneurs to stoke up emotions) BUT only likely to contribute to violence if a state that cannot solve info prob; enforce contracts; alleviate the security dilemma – ethnic activists expected to become prominent when either of the strategic dilemmas are present (L&R55)
        9. The drawing of ethnoc boundaries tends to glamorize one’s own and vilify other groups so that others’ demands are seen as unjustifiable but one’s own group’s reasonable and seeing oneself as honest but the other untrustworthy
        10. = Strategic interactions within and between groups can have the joint effects of producing conflict

Information problem: can be accentuated when groups have the incentive to bluff about their strength or numbers etc as this can help them attain a more favourable division of resources. The problem can also be accentuated when groups simultaneously negotiate and prepare for war: revealing war plans would sacrifice the opportunity for success on the battlefield, but not revealing it prevents a ‘mutually satisfying compromise’ (L&R47)

Insert Eaton on the fruitlessness of peacemeetings

* + - 1. Pre-emptive strikes (not only in instances of crime) In the absence of an enforcing state, when at least one of the groups cannot reassure the other about its future good intentions, avoiding the potentially disastrous consequences of being exploited in the future, groups may resort to pre-emptive strikes (L&R48)
      2. Implicit or explicit contracts between ethnic groups on political power, distribution of wealth etc. can reduce the chances of interethnic conflict by including self-enforcing mechanisms, but they require a relatively well working state <- the remnants of precolonial states solidify current states’ abilities to provide such goods

1. remnants of precolonial institutions, although less effective in resolving disputes that have escalated into violence between communities, are effective in reducing the number of less serious disputes, thereby reducing the overall number of disputes that could escalate to a level largely uncontrollable for inter-ethnic (non-state) institutions.
   * + 1. Attitudes that are shaped by violence can be inherited through generations

# How do states solve these problems (prevent and solve conflicts)?

* Do precolonial states help?
  + Reducing conflicts by providing some institutions
  + Ending conflicts by providing some instutions
  + The state may select to intervene only if violence escalates to a certain level, and might therefore seem absent under low-level violence. Aware of this, groups often contain their violence under this upper boundary through the development of mechanism that limits spiralling, such as in-group policing (Fearon & Laitin, 1996, p. 331).

# Are any of the ways states solve and prevent conflicts likely to endure even after the state is gone?

# To what extent can we expect current states to be strengthened, weakened or unaffected by precolonial states’ efforts to prevent and solve conflicts?

The more limited the modern state reach, the more important are informal mechanisms.

# How state-level societies resolve internal conflicts.

Pre-colonial state-structures can reduce conflict potential in at least three partly separate ways. First, in some instances [identify examples] these institutions are present in themselves to a greater or lesser extent in modern states, but operate outside formal state structures. This could represent an efficient way of resolving low-level disputes that have escalatory potential. Case studies from SSA indicate that if a resource dispute arises…locals prefer to turn first to friends, neighbours and relatives, before resorting to traditional authorities like village elders or a chief (Turner et al., 2012, p. 749f)[[6]](#footnote-7). Formal institutions are at this stage often shunned. They are seen as less in touch with the local context, thus making inflexible judgements; being more costly and corrupt; and creating long-standing grievances between families. The presence of pre-colonial institutions today can therefore represent a more trusted venue for resolving disputes, in turn reducing the pool of incidences with escalatory potential.

The presence of precolonial structures can also pose problems for peace. In an analysis of a selection of sub-Saharan States Eck (Eck, 2014) argues and finds support for that the presence of both precolonial property systems and modern property systems increases the risk of communal violence.

## Precolonial institutions explicitly recognized

* Should reduce the problem argued for by Eck

Second, and partly in contrast to the above hypothesis, in some settings, pre-colonial institutions have been formally integrated into the state, the prime example being the integration of chiefs and kingdoms in contemporary Ghana. Studies using Afrobarometer data show that trust in traditional institutions translates into trust in modern institutions (Logan, 2009). This relation arguably also goes the other way, as informal institutions are more fragile if not recognized by the state (Ostrom, 1990). As there is some notion of British rule effectively being more indirect (thus not only in name) than former French and Lusophone colonies and therefore in the former pre-colonial states have been more effectively been incorporated in colonial and post-colonial states.

Third, pre-colonial states have left an imprint in terms of norms of intergroup behaviour that is different from areas without a legacy of pre-colonial statehood. By having reduced the security dilemma in past times, pre-colonial states have often facilitated the co-habitation of different ethnic groups in the same settlements, hence reducing the kind of segmentation often found in feuding societies (see e.g. Diamond 2012).[[7]](#footnote-8) By this states can indirectly facilitate the development of genuine inter-ethnic interaction and subsequent inter-ethnic norms and institutions for resolving disputes as ‘communities living together over time often establish institutions for dispute settlement and conflict- resolution (Hagberg, 1998). When a new group enters an area, such inter-ethnic institutions are not present and have to be built. Although this can be successful (Bogale and Korf, 2007; Adano et al.et al., 2012), it is far from certain. Newcomers might challenge local notions of property rights (Feyissa, 2011) or might have less secure claims to land (Turner et al.et al., 2012, p. :202). In a comparative study of eleven 11 cases of inter-group conflict in arid or semi-arid areas of SSA, Seter et al.et al. (2017) find that in-migration of new ethnic groups without previous relations can create problems over renewable resources as they have little previous experience with resource sharing arrangements and conflict management. Contrasting the peaceful, long-standing co-existence between pastoralist Fulbe and Mossi farmers in the Central Plateau of Burkina Faso with the recent in-migration of Fulbe into northern Côte d’Ivoire causing intense violence, Breusers et al.et al. (1998, p. :375) suggest that ‘“…the extent to which the ethnic groups involved have had a “‘common”’ history is probably of the utmost importance’” for how conflicts are resolved.’

Institutions can be defined as ‘stable, valued, recurring patterns of behavior’ (Huntington, 1965, p. 394). A central distinction can be drawn between formal (state-made) and informal (made by non-state actors) institutions.

Another selling point: Theories of interethnic cooperation and violence are very often not involving the state directly (Lake and Rotchild 1996; Fearon and Laitin 1996), and to test such mechanisms one should therefore test them on data on inter-group violence. Hitherto these theories have mostly been tested on data whereby insurgents challenge the state.

Cases to substantiate: there is an excellent article on Bawku in northern Ghana and a conflict that erupted there. There are actually also ABM interview from that village.

Also interviews from Sasuri (Bungoma)

Why study Africa

* • (Wig, 2016, p. 510)
* State authority and control in SSA is gradual, hence measuring the contemporary influence of precolonial states should reflect this.

# Likely redundant

Based on the premise that despite tension and mistrust, no one wants violent conflict, Fearon and Laitin (Fearon & Laitin, 1996) point out that formal and informal institutions usually work to cauterize disputes. Hence, even in areas where state presence is weak, interethnic relations are mostly non-violent if not directly cooperative. They present two causal mechanisms preventing interethnic conflict, but that sometimes break down.

# Bibliography

Anderson, B. (2006). *Imagined Communities* (Second Edition). Verso.

Beyene, F. (2009). Property rights conflict, customary institutions and the state: The case of agro-pastoralists in Mieso district, eastern Ethiopia. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, *47*(2), 213–239.

Bollig, M. (1993). Intra-and Interethnic Conflict in Northwest Kenya. A Multicausal Analysis of Conflict Behaviour. *Anthropos*, *88*(1/3), 176–184.

Cohen, D., & Vandello, J. (2004). The paradox of politeness. In *Cultural Shaping of Violence* (pp. 119–132). Purdue University Press.

Colson, E. (1975). *Tradition and Contract*. Aldine.

Diamond, J. (2012). *The World Until Yesterday*. Viking Press.

Döring, S. (2020). Come rain, or come wells: How access to groundwater affects communal violence. *Political Geography*, *76*, 102073. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2019.102073

Eaton, D. (2008). The Business of Peace: Raiding and Peace Work Along the Kenya–Uganda Border (Part I). *African Affairs*, *107*(426), 89–110. https://doi.org/10.1093/afraf/adm085

Eck, K. (2014). The law of the land: Communal conflict and legal authority. *Journal of Peace Research*, *51*(4), 441–454. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343314522257

Elfversson, E. (2015). Providing security or protecting interests? Government interventions in violent communal conflicts in Africa. *Journal of Peace Research*, *52*(6), 791–805.

Fearon, J. D. (1995). Rationalist Explanations for War. *International Organization*, *49*(3), 379–414. https://doi.org/10.2307/2706903

Fearon, J. D., & Laitin, D. D. (1996). Explaining Interethnic Cooperation. *American Political Science Review*, *90*(4), 715–735. https://doi.org/10.2307/2945838

Fjelde, H., & Østby, G. (2014). Socioeconomic Inequality and Communal Conflict: A Disaggregated Analysis of Sub-Saharan Africa, 1990–2008. *International Interactions*, *40*(5), 737–762. https://doi.org/10.1080/03050629.2014.917373

Fjelde, H., & von Uexkull, N. (2012). Climate triggers: Rainfall anomalies, vulnerability and communal conflict in Sub-Saharan Africa. *Political Geography*, *31*(7), 444–453. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2012.08.004

Herbst, J. (2015). *States and Power in Africa* (Second). Princeton University Press.

Hillesund, S. (2019). Choosing Whom to Target: Horizontal Inequality and the Risk of Civil and Communal Violence. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, *63*(2), 528–554. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002717734286

Lake, D. A., & Rothchild, D. (1996). Containing Fear: The Origins and Management of Ethnic Conflict. *International Security*, *21*(2), 41–75. https://doi.org/10.1162/isec.21.2.41

Olsson, O. (2016). Climate Change and Market Collapse: A Model Applied to Darfur. *Games*, *7*(1), 9. https://doi.org/10.3390/g7010009

Ostrom, E. (2010). Beyond Markets and States: Polycentric Governance of Complex Economic Systems. *American Economic Review*, *100*(3), 641–672. https://doi.org/10.1257/aer.100.3.641

Theisen, O. M. (2012). Climate clashes? Weather variability, land pressure, and organized violence in Kenya, 1989–2004. *Journal of Peace Research*, *49*(1), 81–96. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343311425842

Wig, T. (2016). Peace from the past: Pre-colonial political institutions and civil wars in Africa. *Journal of Peace Research*, *53*(4), 509–524. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343316640595

Wig, T., & Kromrey, D. (2018). Which groups fight? Customary institutions and communal conflicts in Africa. *Journal of Peace Research*, *55*(4), 415–429. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343317740416

Zartman, J. B. P. of I. O. and C. R. and D. of A. S. I. W. (2000). *Traditional Cures for Modern Conflicts: African Conflict “medicine.”* Lynne Rienner Publishers.

1. This should depend on the degree of interethnic interaction, which in turn can be facilitated by states – see discussion below. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. For instance, Eaton (Eaton, 2008) notes that pastoral groups in East Africa are reluctant to invite members from adversaries to peace negotiations in their territories as they may use the opportunity to scout for future raids. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Since mobility increases the advantages of offensive relative to defensive tactics, one expectation could be that pastoralist groups whose livelihoods depend on mobility are more likely to resort to preemptive tactics and therefore see more violence in the end. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Whether all member or e.g. all adult male relatives or some other collectively derived criteria makes member of the perpetrator’s group legitimate targets depends on the context, but secondary to our argument. The point is that retribution is based on collective characteristics. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. Thus the first section of the main text *Hávámal* on Norse norms, literally ‘the guest’s section’ (Gestaþáttr) of *Hávamál* contains maxims allegedly given by the head deity Odin to men for proper conduct in a nonstate society inducing almost sacred norms of hospitality and reciprocity towards stranger guests, but also patience and cautiousness on behalf of the visitor. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. Ref to author in-depth interviews in Northern Tanzania fall 2016 and check survey data from ABS. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. Note parallel to the bonding vs bridging debate within political behaviour literature focusing on increasing polarization in the West. E.g. Putnam. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)