

Political settlements research on Sub-Saharan Africa: a conceptual framework and causal mechanism

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This paper examines the origin and development of the political settlements framework and its application to studies of African countries that have employed it. The study aims to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the political settlements framework with a particular focus on Khan's (2010) causal mechanism and the ways in which it has been employed in case studies. The paper suggests that some factors that are excluded from Khan's (2010) framework but that affect institutional outcomes (e.g., the capacity of state bureaucracies, national leaders) also be examined in the empirical analyses. It also points to the incompatibility between Khan's (2010) framework and democratic institutions. While his framework has been applied to African studies in various ways, some that have highlighted the differences in institutional outcomes across sectors seem to have shifted away from Khan's (2010) causal mechanism on institutional outcomes at the national level. The latest development of the Political Settlements Dataset (Shulz and Kelsall 2021) will potentially reposition Khan's causal mechanism at the center of political settlements research and strengthen its validity.

Keywords: political settlements

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Abstract

This paper examines the origin and development of the political settlements framework and its application to studies of African countries that have employed it. The study aims to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the political settlements framework with a particular focus on Khan's (2010) causal mechanism and the ways in which it has been employed in case studies. The paper suggests that some factors that are excluded from Khan's (2010) framework but that affect institutional outcomes (e.g., the capacity of state bureaucracies, national leaders) also be examined in the empirical analyses. It also points to the incompatibility between Khan's (2010) framework and democratic institutions. While his framework has been applied to African studies in various ways, some that have highlighted the differences in institutional outcomes across sectors seem to have shifted away from Khan's (2010) causal mechanism on institutional outcomes at the national level. The latest development of the Political Settlements Dataset (Shulz and Kelsall 2021) will potentially reposition Khan's causal mechanism at the center of political settlements research and strengthen its validity.

1. Introduction

Research on the countries in sub-Saharan Africa (hereinafter, Africa) employing the political settlements approach has proliferated over the last decade (Khan 2018a: 637; Gray 2020: 1793). The political settlements approach has been applied to a wide range of African studies with themes including economic growth, poverty reduction, public policies, corruption, and conflict.¹ While its expansion was partly attributed to research projects on political settlements funded by Western donors with the aim of enhancing the impact of their development assistance in aid recipient countries, the political settlements approach has contributed to deepening our understanding of various political, social, and economic trajectories throughout the region (Behuria, Buur, and Gray 2017; Gray 2020).

¹ For example, studies applying variants of the political settlements framework have regularly appeared in *African Affairs*, one of the most prominent journals on political, economic, and social issues in Africa since 2015 that also produced a vertical issue on political settlements by compiling a list of articles of political settlements research on its website (African Affairs 2022).

Specifically, political settlements research focusing on the relationship between institutions and power has highlighted different political or economic outcomes across developing countries by demonstrating that formal institutions do not automatically determine political or economic performance (Di John and Putzel 2009: 6).

With the growing application of political settlements analysis, both the concept and its analytical framework have been expanded and have increased in complexity, resulting in some confusion among researchers (Behuria, Buur, and Gray 2017: 510). Given this background, this paper examines the origin and development of the political settlements framework and its application to studies on African countries that have employed it. The study aims to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the political settlements framework with a particular focus on Khan's (2010) causal mechanism and the ways in which it has been employed in case studies.

The paper begins with a summary of Khan's (2010) conceptual framework of political settlements, making four related observations. It is followed by a discussion of an alternative conceptual framework presented by Kelsall (2018a) and the latest developments of the Political Settlements Database by Schulz and Kelsall (2021), which supplements Khan's causal mechanism. The paper then reviews the case studies on Africa employing Khan's (2010) political settlements framework by grouping them into three categories: (1) country-level studies; (2) sectoral or policy studies; (3) and phenomenological studies. Finally, the paper concludes by summarizing the findings.

2. What is a Political Settlement?: Khan's (2010) Conceptual Framework

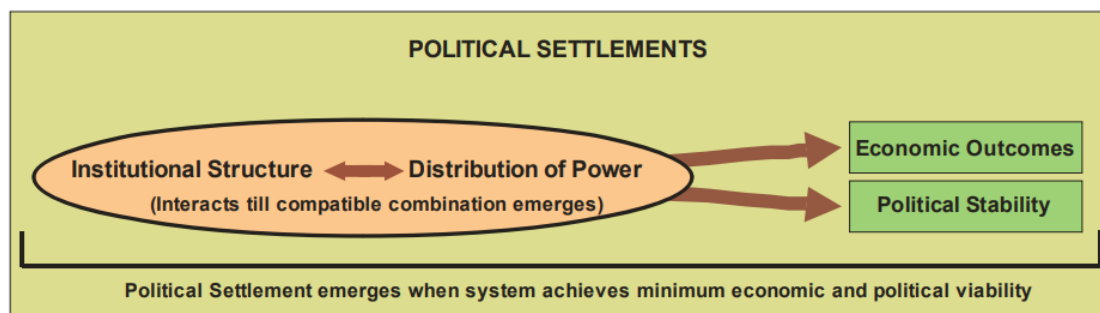
The political settlements framework in political economy analyses was originally developed by economist Mushtaq H. Khan.² Drawing on institutional analyses of the new institutional economics (NIE), the development of the framework was motivated by the question of why the same institutions work differently in distinct developing country contexts (Khan 2015, 2010). Notably, the idea of political settlements emerged against the backdrop that prominent NIE studies, such as North et al. (2009, 2012) and Acemogle and Robinson (2008, 2013), had started to pay attention to the role of power in determining the developmental outcomes of institutions (Gray 2020: 1794). Despite the expansion of the concept, a number of political settlements studies on Africa have variously employed the concept and framework presented in Khan's 2010 paper. As he elaborated and further developed the concept of political settlements in his 2018 article (Khan 2018a), the review of the political settlements literature on Africa employed in this paper centers on the concept elaborated in his 2010

² While this paper focuses on the concept of political settlements in political economy analyses, the term, political settlement has been used in the political science literature as early as the 1950s (Tadros and Allouche 2017: 188).

paper, supplemented by his 2018 article.³

Khan (2010) defines a political settlement as ‘a combination of power and institutions that [are] mutually compatible and sustainable in terms of economic and political viability’ (Khan 2010: 4). He elaborates the above definition by stating that ‘[a] political settlement that reproduces itself over time must have institutions whose benefits are consistent with the distribution of organizational power’ (Khan 2010: 4). Put differently, he argues that institutions work effectively when they are compatible with the power configuration of the country, and thus, powerful groups are satisfied with the benefits distributed by the institutions. This situation sustains a minimal level of political stability and economic growth over time. Figure 1 illustrates Khan’s (2010) definition of political settlements.

Figure 1 Political Settlements



Source: Khan (2010: 21)

Khan’s initial inquiry on the effectiveness of institutions motivated him to develop the political settlements framework; the studies that have employed the framework have commonly analyzed the evolution of the power relationships between influential political and economic actors, as discussed in detail in Section 4 below.

Three basic concepts in Khan’s (2010) definition of a political settlement—*power*, *institutions*, and *organizations*—are worth clarifying. First, by viewing *power* from the perspective of the competition among individuals or groups for benefits, he introduces the concept of *holding power*, defined as ‘the capacity of an individual or group to engage and survive in conflicts’ (Khan 2010: 6). In his conceptualization, actors are expected to exert power to obtain the benefits they want (Khan 2010: 6). Second, Khan defines *institutions* ‘as rules that define the right to do certain things or make decisions of a particular type’ (Khan 2010: 9). In his 2018 article, he refers to the definition of

³ As pointed out by Gray (2020: 1794), Khan’s concept of political settlements has evolved over time and there are some differences in the conceptualization of his 2010 paper and 2018 article, particularly with regard to the increasing emphasis on organizational power in the latter (Khan 2010; Khan 2018a). This paper focuses more on the conceptualization in his 2010 paper, which provides a comprehensive conceptual framework and is commonly used for case studies in Africa.

institutions used by the NIE: ‘the rules that emerge to solve particular “transaction” problems’ (Khan 2018a: 638). While *policies* are broadly included in *institutions*, Khan (2018a) notes that *policies* are ‘rules that are generally easier to change than institutions’ (Khan 2018a: 640). Finally, in his 2018 article, *organizations* are defined as ‘groups or individuals who work together in structured ways and are subject to the rules of interaction set by institutions in their transactions with other individuals or organizations’ (Khan 2018a: 639).

Khan (2010) explains the typical process through which a political settlement emerges in a developing country. First, order emerges in a society when a significant decline of violence occurs, and some minimal level of political stability is achieved. The social order then comes to be underpinned by institutional arrangements through which the benefits are disseminated according to the underlying distribution of power in society. In developing countries, many of these arrangements are expected to be informal. In contrast to advanced countries where *capitalist political settlements* are established by societies dominated by formal productive sectors, developing countries are characterized by *clientelist political settlements* in which a variety of informal institutions, typically patron-client organizations, emerge in line with the distribution of power in society (Khan 2010: 5, 8).

While Khan (2010) does not elaborate on the concept of *clientelism*, he explains *formal and informal institutions*. He considers institutions *formal* when the ‘rights or rules are defined openly and in public by laws and are externally enforced by formal governance agencies’ (9). By contrast, institutions are *informal* when ‘there are no formal rules written down and enforced by formal (state) enforcement ... but there are nevertheless “rules” that are systematic enough to be identified’ (Khan 2010: 10). Informal institutions may also be ‘patterns of behaviour of individuals who are following internalized norms and values’ (Khan 2010: 10), which are often included in the concept of institutions in the NIE. Political settlements in African countries, which are the focus of this paper, are assumed to be clientelist, in which power is distributed largely in line with informal institutions; in contrast, formal institutions such as public policies enacted by governments are often incompatible with the distribution of power and not enforced as envisaged.

Khan (2010) suggests that there are certain types of clientelist political settlements that have the potential for effective implementation of institutions, and the country categorized as that type of political settlement may become a developmental state. To distinguish between different types of clientelist political settlements that are seemingly important for explaining different outcomes of formal institutions, two sets of characteristics are identified. The first is the organization of the ruling coalition, or ‘the factions that control political authority and state power in different societies’ (Khan 2010: 8). Although Khan (2010) does not explain this distinction, this paper distinguishes between *the ruling coalition* and *the ruling elite* in analyzing Khan’s political settlements framework, as do other researchers (e.g., Kjær 2015; Whitfield, et al. 2015); *the ruling coalition* comprises *the ruling elite* as well as groups and individuals who support it (Kjær 2015: 231). While the *elites* discussed in Khan

(2018a) are different from *the ruling elite*, as he names large landlords and educated professionals as examples of *elites* (Khan 2018a: 653), it is important to note that Khan (2018a) emphasizes the relevance of examining the ruling coalition and organizations in society instead of the more limited groups of *elites*.

Based on the idea that the ruling elite is challenged by other factions horizontally and vertically, Khan (2010: 65) developed a typology of clientelist political settlements, which shows the structure of the ruling coalition based on the strengths of the horizontal and vertical distributions of power. If the factions that are excluded from the ruling coalition (horizontally) or the lower-level factions within the ruling coalition (vertically) are powerful, the ruling elite becomes vulnerable and may find it difficult to enforce institutions. The challenges posed by rival factions horizontally or vertically shorten the time horizon of the adopted economic strategies (Khan 2010: 8–9). Conversely, when both the power of horizontally-excluded factions and the lower-level factions within the ruling coalition are relatively weak, the ruling elite is more likely to enjoy a long time horizon and high enforcement capacity, with its interests aligned with the development goals. Khan (2010) calls this category a ‘potential developmental coalition’ (65–66). He argues that weak rivalry factions horizontally and vertically are a necessary but insufficient condition for the construction of a developmental state (Khan 2010: 65–66). Figure 2 shows a simplified version of the typology.

Figure 2 A Simplified Version of Khan’s Typology of Clientelist Political Settlements

		Horizontal Distribution of Power: Excluded Factions	
		Weak	Strong
Vertical Distribution of Power: Lower level Factions	Weak	Potential Developmental Coalition	(Vulnerable) Authoritarian Coalition
	Strong	(Weak) Dominant Party	Competitive Clientelism

Source: The author based on Khan (2010: 65)

The second characteristic that explains different types of clientelist political settlements is ‘the technological capabilities of productive entrepreneurs in that society and their relationship of power with the ruling coalition’ (Khan 2010: 9). Productive entrepreneurs examined in the empirical

analyses may vary from those in a particular sector, region, or the country's entire economy, depending on the types of institutions in which the studies are interested (Khan 2010: 70). Institutions implemented by the ruling coalition may be challenged by factions opposing the excessive distribution of benefits to productive entrepreneurs. Alternatively, the entrepreneurs themselves may challenge the ruling coalition if the institutions it adopted seek to discipline their economic activities. The level of the challenge is determined by their technological and entrepreneurial capabilities and their power relative to that of the ruling coalition. Moreover, if the ruling coalition relies on the entrepreneurs' support, they may be politically strong (Khan 2010: 70). Although Khan (2010) does not provide details on how to measure the level of technological and entrepreneurial capabilities of productive entrepreneurs, he mentions that these capabilities are determined by the 'historical process of accumulation and learning and are relatively slow to change' (Khan 2010: 70). It is also suggested that entrepreneurs who run big organizations or whose markets are global are considered highly capable, yet such entrepreneurs are few in most developing countries (Khan 2010: 70–71).

Khan (2010) argues that, when productive entrepreneurs have high technological and entrepreneurial capabilities but their power is relatively weak, the ruling coalition can potentially be developmental. For example, the political settlement in South Korea from the 1960s to the 1980s was characterized by this combination. It allowed 'the implementation of an industrial policy that not only directed significant resources to a growing productive sector but was also able to enforce discipline and compulsion to ensure high levels of effort in learning' (Khan 2010: 72). However, Khan (2010) also posits that this combination does not automatically lead to a developmental state because the ruling coalition may be interested in gaining more immediate benefits or developing other sectors and have short-term views (72). Thus, while the examination of the characteristics of productive entrepreneurs and their relationship with the ruling coalition is an essential component of political settlement analyses, their causal linkages with institutional outcomes must be carefully examined.

Khan (2010) notes that there are other factors related to the distribution of power that affect institutional performance, signifying difficulties in identifying the most important aspects of the distribution of power that determine the effectiveness of institutions (75). Having said that, he emphasizes the importance of examining the combination of the two sets of characteristics discussed above, or other factors, if necessary, because changes in the combined characteristics affect institutional outcomes (Khan 2010: 75). He also points out that the two characteristics and institutions affect each other, suggesting that the evolution of political settlements is a mutually interactive process (Khan 2010: 75–76).

From the perspective of causality, four observations can be made about the two sets of characteristics distinguishing the different types of clientelist political settlements. First, combining both characteristics, the degree of power concentration, or more concretely, the strength of the power held by the ruling coalition vis-à-vis prominent political and economic actors, is the most important

component in Khan's conceptual framework. Second, given the strong emphasis on the power of the ruling coalition relative to their rival factions, the two characteristics not only differentiate the four types of clientelist political settlements, but more importantly, they suggest a causal relationship between the distribution of power as the independent variable and institutional outcomes (e.g., the effectiveness of public policies) as the dependent variable. In short, his main argument based on the typology is that the centralization of power by the ruling coalition is a necessary but insufficient condition for the effective implementation of institutions. Indeed, by comparing the political settlements framework to weather systems, he contends that 'understanding the characteristics of a political settlement can tell us how particular institutions or policies may be distorted or blocked' (Khan 2018b: 693).

While Khan (2010) presented his political settlements concept as a potential causal mechanism, Behuria, Buur, and Gray (2017), who provide a helpful overview of political settlement studies in Africa, adopt a cautious position regarding the causal relationship of Khan's clientelist political settlements framework. They state that it is 'deeply misleading' (524) to apply the four types of clientelist political settlements to political settlement research, 'as *if* one can actually predict certain outcomes depending on how a particular settlement is classified' (524). Referring to the empirical study suggesting that countries with similar ruling coalition structures within the same institutional context can have different outcomes for the implementation of industrial policies (Whitfield et al. 2017), they argue that 'the real value of Khan's ideal types is not the ability to predict, but the approach ... is a good basis for constructing informed hypotheses' (Behuria, Buur, and Gray 2017: 524). Moreover, they welcome further elaboration of the typology to construct new hypotheses (Behuria, Buur, and Gray 2017: 524). Gray (2020) added that 'the typologies provided a useful starting point for hypothesis forming but cannot not (sic) be used in predicting policy successes and failures for particular countries' (1802).

From the perspective of causality entailed in Khan's (2010) political settlements framework, the third observation can be made about other factors that also affect institutional performance, for example, the capacity of the state bureaucracies that execute institutional arrangements to influence institutional outcomes. Regarding bureaucratic capacity, Khan (2010) acknowledges the different levels of internal capabilities of government agencies (e.g., personnel, physical infrastructure, resources, incentives) that affect their enforcement capabilities. He then argues that their enforcement effectiveness depends on the distribution of power in society or on whether powerful groups in society resist or support the institutional rules they implement (Khan 2010: 19). Khan (2010) also notes that the generalization of the strength of governance capability is unhelpful, particularly in developing countries, because enforcement capabilities vary depending on institutions as well as across state agencies (Khan 2010: 4).

Whitfield et al. (2015) also incorporate state capabilities into their political settlements

analysis. Similar to Khan (2010), they contend that the strong state capacities that countries need are the result of political settlements because the state bureaucracies need ‘political backing from ruling elites and a significant autonomy from political pressure stemming from within the ruling coalition’ (Whitfield et al. 2015: 20). When state bureaucracies are supported by ruling elites and are knowledgeable of the policies for which they are responsible, a *pocket of efficiency* emerges even within inefficient and corrupt bureaucracies (Whitfield et al. 2015: 20). Yet, the question remains as to whether the level of capacity of state bureaucracies is always determined by the distribution of power in society. In particular, provided that both the capacity of state bureaucracies and the technological capacity of productive entrepreneurs seem to be similarly affected by the distribution of power in society, it is unclear why only the latter is treated as an explanatory factor for the nature of clientelist political settlements in Khan’s (2010) framework, while the former goes unmentioned.

Another potential variable affecting institutional outcomes relates to the views and interests of national leaders and their decisions, particularly those of presidents in the context of African countries. From the NIE perspective, the interests of national leaders are shaped by institutions. For example, North (1990) posits that institutions ‘structure incentives in human exchanges, whether political, social or economic’(3). Khan’s (2010) framework seems to take for granted that the ruling elite is inherently interested in the long-term development of the country. Accordingly, the four types of clientelist political settlements appear to suggest that only the power held by rival factions and the capacity of productive entrepreneurs are critical for the decisions made by national leaders and the implementation of institutions. This may not, however, be the case, particularly in many African countries where executive power is highly concentrated in the hands of presidents. Admittedly, Khan mentions that ruling coalitions may have short-term views and seek to gain immediate benefits, as noted earlier. Yet, similar to the point made regarding the capacity of state bureaucracies above, what kinds of views and interests national leaders inherently have and how they make decisions seem to be a matter that requires an examination in its own right, instead of simply assuming that they are determined by political settlements.

In this regard, Kjær (2015) notes that ‘[p]olitical settlement analysis offers a deeper explanation that opens up the black box of political will in order to explain what policies are politically feasible’ (230). Behuria, Buur, and Gray (2017) also state that the political settlements approach is structural, combining structural factors with individual choices that are, in turn, shaped by the distribution of power in society (522). What is not explained, however, is the extent to which the distribution of power in society determines the will and choices of individual rulers. Partly due to the absence of particular interests of national leaders within the framework, national leaders are treated differently in the case studies that employ Khan’s (2010) political settlements, as discussed in Section 4 below.

The final observation about Khan’s (2010) political settlements framework is its

incompatibility with democratic institutions. Because his central argument is that institutions are more likely to be effective when power is centralized within the ruling coalition, Khan's framework appears unable to accommodate democratic institutions that are aimed at expanding political inclusion and liberty. His 2018 article responds to this concern. He states that, in the case of developing countries, political parties may seek to deliver resources only to their clients at the expense of the wider society, and the limited number of productive firms may collaborate with clientelist politicians to expand their incomes. In this situation, institutions that are designed to enhance political inclusion may either strengthen these relationships or facilitate the emergence of additional clientelist organizations that seek to capture resources for more constituencies (Khan 2018a: 646). Consequently, 'reforms making political institutions more inclusive may not have a positive effect on economic development in every context' (Khan 2018a: 646). Instead, he posits that the impact of changes in political institutions must be evaluated through a careful examination of the structures and capabilities of organizations (Khan 2018a: 646).

In relation to democratic institutions, Khan (2018a) also discusses authoritarianism. His position is that the idea advanced by some developmental state theorists that authoritarianism may be helpful at the early stages of development is misleading because authoritarian rulers may be challenged by other factions, either horizontally or vertically. He also notes that only a few developmental states have experienced a trajectory of '[d]evelopment first and political inclusion later' (Khan 2010: 647) (e.g., South Korea) and that many other countries failed to sustain economic growth or political stability with authoritarianism, even after successful development in the short term (e.g., Pakistan in the 1960s, the Philippines under Marcos). He then suggests that the political settlements framework helps explain these differences (Khan 2010: 646–647). However, by hypothesizing that institutions may work effectively if the horizontal and vertical power of rival factions, as well as the power of productive entrepreneurs, is limited, the potential causal mechanism in his political settlements framework suggests that authoritarianism is favorable for economic development.

3. An Alternative Conceptual Framework: Kelsall's (2018a) Political Settlements

Khan's (2010) political settlements framework has been employed by a number of studies, which has resulted in 'considerable differences in the core concepts and causal mechanisms that are described as constituting a political settlement framework' (Gray 2020: 1794). This was accelerated by many research institutions funded by donors that defined and operationalized the framework for their own purposes by adding different theories to the basic concepts of power and institutions. The framework initially caught the attention of donors in the early 2000s because of the critique of the assumption about the relationship between institutions and economic development entailed in the 'good governance' agenda (Gray 2020: 1794). However, the expansion of the framework was also due to the

contributions made by individual researchers who developed their own research objectives (Gray 2020: 1794).

While the variants of political settlements can be classified differently, the most prominent difference seems to exist between the two approaches suggested by Gray (2020). This first approach, including Khan's (2010) framework, primarily views a political settlement *as a process* while the other views them *as an action* (Gray 2020: 1795). A political settlement *as a process* is conceptualized as 'a stable political order that has not necessarily been planned or consciously willed by different social groups' (Gray 2020: 1795). Instead, it emerges 'out of a continuous interaction between different actors seeking to contest or retain particular patterns of rent flows (income)' (Gray 2020: 1795). The second approach that considers a political settlement *as an action* emphasizes 'the role of agreements made by powerful groups or elites to purposefully establish institutions that generate inclusion, stop war, or reduce violent conflict' (Gray 2020: 1795). These agreements can be either formal or informal. This approach has been particularly prominent in studies of internal conflicts, violence, and state-building, many of which are funded by donors who seek to achieve inclusive political settlements to end war or reduce violence (Gray 2020: 1795–1796). Therefore, the domains of the two approaches are fundamentally different from each another.

While most researchers who apply political settlements to their research select either of these approaches, Kelsall (2018a) sought to unify them through a criticism of Khan's definition of political settlements. Kelsall also attempted to strengthen the causality encompassed in Khan's (2010) framework by conceptualizing political settlements differently (Kelsall 2018a: 664). Since then, Kelsall has been applying his own political settlements framework to studies of African cities (Kelsall 2018a; Kelsall 2018b; Kelsall et al. 2021). Furthermore, Schulz and Kelsall (2021) created an original dataset of political settlements based on his conceptualization. Given Kelsall's extensive work on political settlements, it is worth examining his conceptualization in comparison with Khan's (2010). While Kelsall (2013) may have initially affirmed Khan's (2010) idea of political settlements, he came to problematize the detachment of Khan's definition from the commonly used meaning as well as the separation of the concepts between those discussed in development studies and conflict studies (Kelsall 2018a).

In reaction to Khan's (2018a) modified definition of the distribution of organizational power as a political settlement (637), Kelsall (2018a) states that 'by defining a political settlement as the distribution of organizational power, Khan serves the concept from some of its commonsense roots as an agreement among conflicting parties' (657). Kelsall (2018a) continues to point out that a political settlement in popular usage means 'a settling down, resolution, or aversion of conflict, most likely the

result of an agreement, perhaps, official, presumably between the parties to conflict' (660).⁴ He then provides an alternative definition: a political settlement is '(1) an ongoing, conflict-ending agreement among powerful groups, around (2) a set of political institutions and distribution of power, expected to deliver, (3) an acceptable distribution of benefits' (Kelsall 2018: 662).

Kelsall (2018a) elaborates the concepts in the above definition. *Powerful groups* are 'groups that have the ability to overthrow or seriously disrupt the settlement' (662). *Agreements* can be 'formal or informal, voluntary or imposed' (Kelsall 2018a: 662), ranging from an agreement on how to divide benefits to a detailed vision for society. *Political institutions* are 'the basic rules of the political game' (Kelsall 2018a: 663), including formal institutions (e.g., constitutions, electoral systems, electoral regulations, the rules around leadership selection) and informal institutions (e.g., paradigmatic ideas, ideologies, conventions around political participation, norms) (663). Benefits may be material or nonmaterial (Kelsall 2018a: 663). He also suggests that researchers can disaggregate any of the three dimensions of the concept mentioned above, depending on their research questions, and relate them to 'hypothesized characteristics or effects' (Kelsall 2018a: 663).

Kelsall's (2018a) development of an alternative definition of political settlements was also motivated by his doubts about the ability of Khan's (2010) framework to establish causality. Kelsall (2018a) states that

[t]hrough several case studies, Khan has shown that his framework can be a powerful tool for explaining industrial policy outcomes in a variety of countries. However, he has not yet, to our mind, proved that it is the *only* or *most* powerful tool for the job. ... Even by his own admission, Khan's framework cannot fully explain *why* some potential developmental coalitions choose long-term industrial policy and others do not ... By conjoining the Khan framework to other political settlement dimensions, however, or by unpacking the dimensions in slightly different ways, we believe the explanatory potential for political settlements analysis can be augmented. (663)

He then added a new concept, *social foundation*, by highlighting individuals or groups with the ability to seriously disrupt, unsettle, or overturn the political settlement (Kelsall 2018a). Assuming that national leaders are likely to either co-opt or repress these groups, he suggests that the characteristics of the co-opted groups, which he calls the *social foundation*, help our understanding of the contents of public policies or at least of their efforts. His suggestion is based on the assumption that national leaders are expected to co-opt groups that have strong disruptive potential (e.g., garment producers,

⁴ In political science, the term "political settlements" has been used similarly as an everyday use of the term. Di John and Putzel (2009: 6) found that 27 articles published in *Political Science Abstracts* between 1960 and 2009 included the term "political settlement" in their titles, and most of which were related to the commonplace use of the term in peace studies.

working-class women, Catholics) by executing institutions favorable to them (Kelsall 2018a: 666–667). Kelsall (2018b) used his concept of social foundation and developed a political settlements typology by identifying two dimensions: 1) whether the social foundation is broad or narrow; and 2) whether power concentration is dispersed or concentrated. By applying this typology, he illustrates the political settlement trajectories in Tanzania (2018b).

In response to Kelsall's (2018a) development of his own conceptualization of political settlements, Khan (2018b) clarifies the differences between the two approaches by stating that he views a political settlement as *an interactive order*, while Kelsall (2018a) views it as *a planned order* (691). Khan (2018b) also notes that '[p]olitical settlements are not based on agreements between the powerful or anyone else' (691), provided that power is usually based on networks or coalitions (691). Khan (2018b) also criticizes the definition of a political settlement as an agreement because it gives the impression that policy-makers can directly help to achieve a settlement even if it was not intended by academic researchers (692).

There are two main differences between Khan's (2010; 2018a; 2018b) and Kelsall's (2018a; 2018b) conceptualizations of political settlements. First, as explained by Kahn (2018b) himself, their definitions of political settlements are different, as Khan views them *as processes*, while Kelsall views them *as actions*. Second, although Kelsall's idea of social foundation seems to be broadly in line with Khan (2010)'s concept of the ruling coalition by elaborating the co-opted groups by the ruling elite within internal factions, their causal mechanisms are distinct. Put simply, while both view institutional outcomes as the dependent variable and the centralization of power by the ruling elite as the primary independent variable, Khan considers the power and capacity of productive entrepreneurs as the second independent variable; in contrast, Kelsall views the characteristics of the co-opted groups by the ruling elite as the second independent variable.

Drawing on Kelsall's conceptualization of political settlements (2018a; 2018b), the Effective States and Inclusive Development (ESIR) research center at the University of Manchester developed the Political Settlements Dataset, which is the first database on cross-national and cross-temporal characteristics of power configurations (Schulz and Kelsall 2021: 5). The dataset includes over 200 political economy variables that were mainly created from expert surveys and coded for 42 developing countries from 1946 or the period of independence to 2018, totaling 2,718 country-years. They created two indices: first, the Social Foundation Size Index, which measures 'the share of the population that is both mostly co-opted and potentially threatening to the country's top leadership' (Schulz and Kelsall 2021: 5); and second, the Power Concentration Index, which measures the degree of power concentration in the hands of top leadership (Schulz and Kelsall 2021: 5). Schulz and Kelsall (2021) present some interesting findings from the analyses using the dataset. For example, they examined the relationship between regime types and the two indices and found that, while democratic countries tend to have 'broader social foundations and less concentrated power configurations than

autocracies' (Schulz and Kelsall 2021: 5), as expected, there is wide variation in the degree of power concentration during the periods when the regime type remains unchanged. They also found cases in which power is more concentrated in democracies than in autocracies. This finding suggests that political settlements and regime types are distinct from each other (Schulz and Kelsall 2021: 5).

Examining the relationship between the level of power concentration and several political economy outcomes, including corruption and industrial growth, Schulz and Kelsall (2021) also found that countries with the highest level of power concentration tend to experience a faster reduction of corruption and industrial growth than those at the lowest level of concentration (20–21). It is noteworthy that this research finding underpins the causal relationship between the centralization of power by the ruling coalition and the effective implementation of institutions suggested by Khan (2010). Schulz and Kelsall (2021) argue that more detailed studies and robustness checks are needed to support this finding (21). Nonetheless, contrary to Behuria, Buur, and Gray (2018), Kelsall (2018a) and Gray (2020), who are cautious about the treatment of Khan's (2010) clientelist political settlements as a causal mechanism based on case studies, the Political Settlements Dataset may potentially contribute to enhancing Khan's (2010) framework in establishing causality. This suggests that Khan and Kelsall's approaches may complement each other.

4. Case Studies Employing the Political Settlements Framework

Khan's (2010) political settlements framework has been employed by a variety of African studies. These studies can be grouped broadly into the following three categories, depending on the levels or characteristics of the institutional outcomes that they primarily examine: 1) country-level studies; 2) sectoral or policy studies; and 3) phenomenological studies. This section reviews a few studies in the three categories by focusing on the causal mechanisms they exhibit. First, some political settlement studies analyze economic growth or poverty reduction at the national level of a country or countries for comparison. As mentioned earlier, although some of them are not African countries, Khan (2010) analyzes the evolution of the political settlements in five countries or regions, namely, Thailand, Maharashtra, West Bengal, Bangladesh, and Tanzania (77–126), with a more detailed study undertaken on Bangladesh (Khan 2011). In his latter paper, Khan demonstrated that contemporary Bangladesh went through four stages of clientelist political settlements, namely, *military authoritarianism* (1958–1971), *dominant party authoritarianism* (1971–1975), *clientelist authoritarianism* (1975–1990), and *competitive clientelism* (1990–present). Each phase had implications for institutional performance relating to economic growth and political stability (Khan 2011). This study exemplifies the basic application of Khan's (2010) typology of clientelist political settlements to empirical analyses.

Another study examining country-level institutional outcomes using the political settlements framework is Gray's (2018) comparison of economic growth and poverty reduction in Tanzania and

Vietnam. This study is among the most comprehensive country-level case studies employing Khan's framework with an original contribution of the new concept—socialist political settlements—to strengthen the framework. Her central research question is why poverty dramatically fell in Vietnam but not in Tanzania over the previous thirty years, despite the fact that both countries were socialist after independence and they have similar experiences with market liberalization and sustained high economic growth during the same period (Gray 2018). She pointed to two major differences in the nature of economic development between the two countries. First, while economic transformation in Vietnam was characterized by the rapid expansion of the manufacturing sector from the early 1990s, economic growth in Tanzania was driven primarily by the expansion of mining (Gray 2018: 11). Second, the Vietnamese government maintained greater control of economic policy than did the Tanzanian government while achieving a more rapid rate of industrialization (Gray 2018: 3). This difference was partly due to the different levels of influence by international financial institutions on the governments' economic liberalization policies (Gray 2018: 28).

Gray (2018) then identifies two major differences in the nature of political settlements between Vietnam and Tanzania. First, in terms of the distribution of vertical power, the struggle for independence implemented power decentralization to the local level and strengthened party institutionalization in Vietnam, while power remained centralized in the hands of the top leadership in Tanzania (Gray 2018: 88). Second, in terms of the evolution of the relationship between the ruling elite and productive entrepreneurs, both countries had powerful nonindigenous commercial groups following independence (i.e., the Chinese in Vietnam, Asians in Tanzania). Yet, while the power of the intermediate classes, including the Chinese business class, outside the ruling party was suppressed in Vietnam during the socialist period (with the exception of some groups that persisted in the south), the Asian commercial class continued to operate during the socialist period under the protection of the ruling party in Tanzania (Gray 2018: 94–98). Vietnam's political settlement is characterized by the power held by the state and party institutions at local levels, which facilitated the emergence of a viable political relationship between the state and economic actors within the party structure. It led to a 'more intensive monitoring of industrial rents through informal processes of competition for investment by local state and party institutions' (Gray 2018: 196), despite the uneven progress across provinces. Conversely, in Tanzania, the continuing relationship between the ruling party and the dominant Asian–Tanzanian group who controlled the manufacturing sector resulted in corruption that was channeled into personal enrichment instead of industrialization (Gray 2018: 106, 196).

The second group of African studies employing Khan's (2010) political settlements framework examines institutional outcomes in specific sectors or policies. The second group can be divided into two subgroups: 1) comparative studies examining multiple sectors to highlight different institutional outcomes across sectors in the same country; and 2) studies examining outcomes of one sector or one policy. There are some overlaps between comparative studies examining multiple sectors

and the country-level studies discussed above because comparative studies are similarly interested in illuminating the characteristics of whole countries that they examine by delineating the differences across sectors within them. For example, Kjær (2015) adopted a political settlements framework to explore why the ruling elite in Uganda support some productive sectors and not others. By analyzing three productive sectors—fish, agriculture, and dairy—she finds that political support for the dairy sector was sustained, while it declined in the export fish sector and agricultural advisory services reforms. She argues that particular productive activities are likely to be promoted ‘when the relationship between the ruling elites and the relevant industry actors is important for building and/or maintaining the ruling coalition’ (Kjær 2015: 231).

Whitfield et al. (2015) also demonstrate the variations in the ways in which the distribution of power affects institutions across sectors. They explore why industrial policies in Africa have not led to economic transformation, which would increase incomes and raise living standards. Adapting Khan’s (2010) political settlements approach, they created the Politics of Industrial Policy framework to understand the conditions under which industrial policies are implemented successfully. They then applied it to examine the industrial policies of Ghana, Mozambique, Tanzania, and Uganda. While they find that industrial policies have generally not been successful in the four countries studied, they have also revealed variations in the level of success across them, as well as across sectors within the same country. Whitfield et al. (2015) conclude that industrial policies in particular sectors are likely to succeed when the ruling elite views them as important for their political survival when mutual interests between the ruling elite and productive entrepreneurs (even foreign investors) emerge, and when the competition within the ruling coalition is controlled. They suggest that the accumulation of such successes may change the economic structure of the country and improve conditions for industrial policies (Whitfield et al. 2015: 307). The emergence or absence of mutual interests between the ruling elite and productive entrepreneurs are identified as a determining factor of institutional outcomes in other case studies as well.

Among the African countries, the recent success in economic growth in Rwanda has drawn the attention of many researchers. For example, Behuria and Goodfellow (2016) examine state-business relationships in four economic sectors (i.e., coffee, mining, construction, financial services) in Rwanda by applying Khan’s (2010) political settlements framework and the ‘deals environment’ approach (Pritchett and Werker 2012). Although this study relies mainly on the deals environment theory, Behuria and Goodfellow (2016) posit that the Rwandan government can be categorized as a case of Khan’s (2010) *potential development coalition*. They argue that, because factions excluded by the ruling coalition and lower-level factions within it are both weak, ‘the ruling coalition has interests that are strongly aligned with growth and strong implementation capacities to make growth-oriented policies a reality’ (Behuria and Goodfellow 2016: 8).

Usman (2019) examines the political settlements in Nigeria during the post-military period

since 1999. By analyzing four dimensions of the distribution of power, namely, elite bargains, coalitions with societal groups, economic agenda, and institutionalization, she demonstrates why service sectors such as telecommunications grew in the country while the oil sector stagnated. She argues that external pressure on the ruling coalition's access to oil rents made the government reform-oriented, and with its capacity to mobilize the local business class, telecom's liberalization was successful. Yet, inequalities in the distribution of benefits generated by the diversification of the economy raised pressure by horizontal factions and the wider society, which prevented reforms from being implemented in the oil sector.

An example of political settlement studies examining specific sectors or policies is Abdulai and Hickey's (2016) work on resource allocation within Ghana's education sector between 1993 and 2008. They find that the country's northern regions received fewer resources for education than southern regions because power held by the elite from the north within the ruling coalition remained weak during the period in question, regardless of changes in the ruling party (Abdulai and Hickey 2016: 71). Their analysis demonstrates a variation in institutional outcomes across regions within a country, depending on the power held by different internal factions within the ruling coalition.

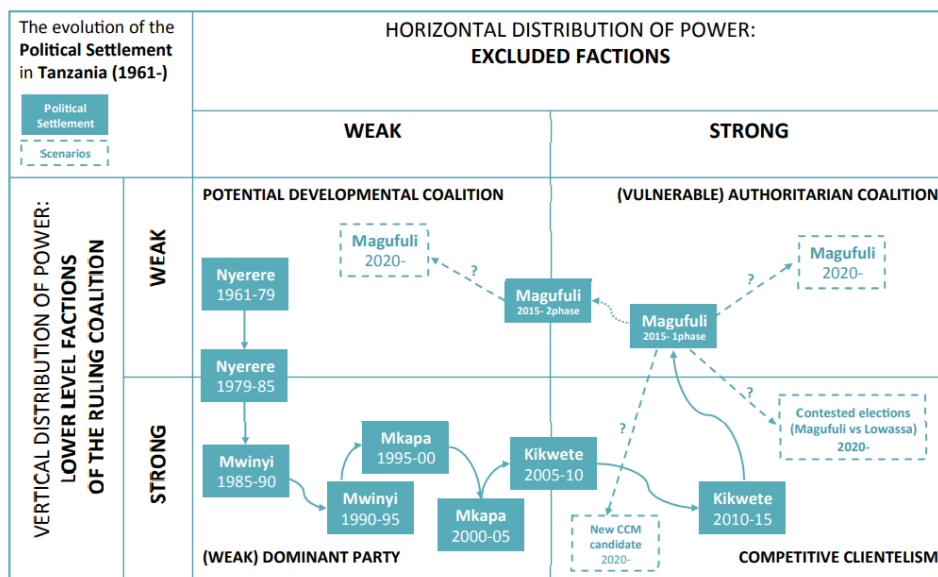
Another example of political settlement research focusing on specific sectors or policies is Languille (2016)'s analysis of the government policy on textbooks of primary schools in Tanzania. By exploring the changes in the distribution of power within the state from the 1990s to the 2010s, she found that the ambiguous relationships between the ruling party elites, bureaucrats, and the capitalist class, with the declining influence of donors, prevented Tanzania's textbook policy from supporting the local publishing industry (Languille 2016).

Bofin, Pedersen, and Jacob (2020) analyze the petroleum sector in Tanzania by applying the political settlements framework. They examine the changes in ideas and the interests of the ruling coalition, particularly those of three consecutive presidents, and their influence on three projects related to the commercialization of natural gas in the country. They found that significant delays in the implementation of the three projects were due to the changes in policy priorities by new presidents who challenged the contents of the deals made by their predecessors (Bofin, Pedersen, and Jacob 2020: 21). As such, their study emphasizes the changes in national leadership as opposed to the power structure of the ruling coalition, which was the main focus of Khan's (2010) structuralist approach.

The third group of African studies employing Khan's political settlements framework centers on specific political, economic, or social phenomena. For example, there are two political settlement studies on corruption in Tanzania. First, Gray (2015) examines four major public finance corruption scandals in Tanzania between 2000 and 2014. She demonstrates that the ruling party consisted of several internal factions with equal power and argues that none of the party's elite, not even the president, was able to halt the massive corruption in the country. The second example of political settlement research on corruption is Andreoni's (2017) study analyzing the relationship

between the changing political settlements in Tanzania under the leadership of President John Magufuli and his anti-corruption measures. He explicated the history of political settlements in the country by using Khan’s (2010) typology of clientelist political settlements and argues that, while Magufuli’s anti-corruption approach reflected the political settlement of a *vulnerable authoritarian coalition*, he seemed to attempt to shift the structure of the ruling coalition to a *potential developmental coalition* (Andreoni 2017). Figure 3 illustrates the political settlements in Tanzania using Khan’s (2010) typology of clientelist political settlements.

Figure 3 Change and Persistence in Tanzanian Political Settlements since Independence



Source: Andreoni (2017: 43)

Goodfellow’s studies uniquely applied political settlements to the research on urban development in Rwanda (2014) and, more broadly, in Africa (2017). He used political settlements as an analytical tool to explain the patterns of urban development in Rwanda, demonstrating that development of its capital, Kigali, exemplifies the ruling party’s effort to construct an ‘institutionally sophisticated city’ (Goodfellow 2014: 325). Later, he expanded his research to other cities in East Africa, with a view that national political settlements can be better understood by analyzing urban development, particularly issues such as land use and allocation, the form of construction, environmental regulations, and housing (Goodfellow 2017: 199). He then compares the characteristics of the development of Kampala, Kigali, and Addis Ababa from the political settlement perspective (Goodfellow 2017). Instead of viewing urban development as an institutional outcome that is compatible with the distribution of power in society, he considers that urban development and political settlements augment each other. In other words, he contends that the political settlement approach

helps interpret the development of cities, and the examination of cities, in turn, helps understand the country's political settlements.

While all the case studies share an interest in the influence of power dynamics on institutional outcomes, it is evident that the ways in which Khan's (2010) political settlements framework is employed, or which dimensions of the framework are used, in the empirical analyses vary significantly. Some country-level studies (e.g., Gray 2018) and phenomenological studies (e.g., Andreoni 2017) examine both of the two characteristics of Khan's (2010) clientelist political settlements to delineate the power configuration of the countries. Some also classify the countries into Khan's (2010) typology of clientelist political settlements (e.g., Andreoni 2017).

On the other hand, some sectoral studies have challenged the generalization of institutional outcomes at country levels and instead argue for the examination of different results across sectors within the same country (e.g., Kjær 2015, Whitfield et al. 2015, Usman 2019) or across regions within the same sector (e.g., Abdulai and Hickey 2016). In particular, the studies examining different outcomes across sectors tend to attribute the successful implementation of institutions to the emergence of mutual interests between the ruling elite and productive entrepreneurs. While this causal mechanism is compelling, it is different from Khan's (2010) concept of national political settlements. By focusing on sectoral differences, these studies seem to have shifted away from the country-level causal mechanism of Khan's (2010) political settlements framework. Indeed, Behuria, Buur, and Gray (2017) note that 'a study of political settlements in developing countries is generally a macro-level study, which requires an analysis of the distribution of holding power and what constitutes such power in societies' (516) and 'sectoral studies cannot *necessarily* be extrapolated to cover such macro-level analysis' (516).

In this regard, despite the basic difference in the conceptualization of political settlements between Khan (2010a; 2018a; 2018b) and Kelsall (2018a; 2018b), as discussed earlier, Schulz and Kelsall's (2021) Political Settlements Dataset may have opened a new avenue for examining Khan's (2010) original framework by promoting country-level and cross-national research on political settlements. Indeed, their analysis that uses the Power Concentration Index of the dataset signifies a support for the causal relationship between the centralization of power by the ruling coalition and effective implementation of institutions as originally hypothesized by Khan (2010). While Khan's (2010) conceptualization of political settlements is likely to continue receiving attention by scholars who are interested in the relationship between institutions and power and more variants of political settlements frameworks may be developed, the causal mechanism in his framework can be enhanced through the examination of institutional outcomes at the country level.

5. Conclusion

This study reviewed Khan's (2010) conceptualization and analytical framework of political settlements by focusing on its potential causal mechanism. In essence, its explanatory mechanism posits that institutional outcomes are likely to be determined by a combination of (a) the distribution of horizontal and vertical power and (b) the capacities and power held by productive entrepreneurs. When power is highly concentrated in the ruling elite, institutions are likely to be successful because of the low level of resistance to institutions. While his framework is aimed at explaining different institutional outcomes across developing countries from a structuralist perspective, this paper argues that other factors affecting institutional outcomes (e.g., the capacity of state bureaucracies, national leaders) also be considered in the empirical analyses, instead of assuming that these variables are determined by the distribution of power in society. Another issue that needs to be addressed in Khan's (2010) discussion on political settlements is its incompatibility with democratic institutions and trade-off between economic growth and democracy.

The case studies on African countries reviewed in this paper employed Khan's (2010) political settlements framework in various ways. While some studies examine the two characteristics of Khan's clientelist political settlements and classify the cases according to its typology to explain institutional outcomes at the country level, other studies have adapted his political settlements approach to analyze different outcomes across sectors or regions within a country. Notably, from the latter studies, the emergence of mutual interests between the ruling elite and productive entrepreneurs is identified as a necessary factor for effective policy implementation. While these studies have advanced the discussion on political settlements, they have also diverged from the original causal mechanism suggested by Khan's (2010) political settlements framework. On the other hand, the newly created Political Settlements Dataset (Shulz and Kelsall 2021), especially its Power Concentration Index, seems to have the potential to systematically analyze the relationship between the degree of power centralization and institutional outcomes at country levels. This may return Khan's original question of why the same institutions work differently across developing countries as well as his causal mechanism to the center of political settlements research and, potentially, strengthen its validity.

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