

## Claremont Colleges Scholarship @ Claremont

---

CMC Senior Theses

CMC Student Scholarship

---

2017

# The Socio-Political and Economic Causes of Natural Disasters

Nicole Southard  
*Claremont McKenna College*

---

### Recommended Citation

Southard, Nicole, "The Socio-Political and Economic Causes of Natural Disasters" (2017). *CMC Senior Theses*. 1720.  
[http://scholarship.claremont.edu/cmc\\_theses/1720](http://scholarship.claremont.edu/cmc_theses/1720)

This Open Access Senior Thesis is brought to you by Scholarship@Claremont. It has been accepted for inclusion in this collection by an authorized administrator. For more information, please contact [scholarship@cuc.claremont.edu](mailto:scholarship@cuc.claremont.edu).

Claremont McKenna College

**The Socio-Political and Economic Causes of Natural Disasters**

Submitted to Professor  
Rodric A. Camp

By  
Nicole Southard

For  
Senior Thesis  
Honors Year-Long 2017  
April 24, 2017



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	4
Chapter 1: Vulnerability and Natural Disasters in the 21st Century.....	6
Chapter 2: Assessing the Root Causes of Haiti’s Natural Disasters.....	27
Chapter 3: Addressing the Root Causes of Famine in Ethiopia.....	55
Chapter 4: The Political Economy of Disaster Relief – A Case Study of Earthquakes in Nepal.....	81
Conclusion.....	106
Bibliography.....	113

## ABSTRACT

To effectively prevent and mitigate the outbreak of natural disasters is a more pressing issue in the twenty-first century than ever before. The frequency and cost of natural disasters is rising globally, most especially in developing countries where the most severe effects of climate change are felt. However, while climate change is indeed a strong force impacting the severity of contemporary catastrophes, it is not directly responsible for the exorbitant cost of the damage and suffering incurred from natural disasters -- both financially and in terms of human life. Rather, the true root causes of natural disasters lie within the power systems at play in any given society when these regions come into contact with a hazard event. Historic processes of isolation, oppression, and exploitation, combined with contemporary international power systems, interact in complex ways to affect different socioeconomic classes distinctly. The result is to create vulnerability and scarcity among the most defenseless communities. These processes affect a society's ideological orientation and their cultural norms, empowering some while isolating others. When the resulting dynamic socio-political pressures and root causes come into contact with a natural hazard, a disaster is likely to follow due to the high vulnerability of certain groups and their inability to adapt as conditions change. In this light, the following discussion exposes the anthropogenic roots of natural disasters by conducting a detailed case analysis of natural disasters in Haiti, Ethiopia, and Nepal.



## Chapter One: Vulnerability and Natural Disasters in the 21st Century

Natural disasters are among the greatest threats to humanity in the twenty-first century. People of different cultures and nations are increasingly affected by climate change and vulnerable to the consequences of severe environmental hazards. However, history has illustrated that the negative impacts of events such as famine, floods, disease epidemics, hurricanes, or earthquakes are not felt equally by populations residing in the regions hit. The ability for many individuals, especially in less developed countries (LDCs), to successfully adapt to the crises repeatedly appearing in the media is determined predominantly by the ways people are able to express their needs and opinions towards government. Social, political, and economic factors are largely what determine how people structure their lives -- not the natural environment. In this sense, natural disasters are the result of two factors: the political, social, and economic processes of exclusion and marginalization rooted within a region's history, on the one hand, and the immediate impact of the environmental hazard itself on the other.<sup>1</sup> As a means of explaining the causes of disasters, one must look beyond the environmental triggers of a crisis, instead dissecting the socio-political systems, both domestic and international, that create people's vulnerability to disasters in the first place. If the international community is to effectively address the prominence of natural disasters in the modern era, disaster analysis must acknowledge that these crises are never purely natural occurrences. Rather, they are deeply embedded within the power structures of international relations and diminish people's resilience to environmental shocks or hazards in dynamic ways.

---

<sup>1</sup> Piers M. Blaikie, Ben Wisner, Terry Cannon, and Ian Davis, *At Risk: Natural Hazards, People's Vulnerability, and Disasters* (London: Routledge, 1994), 22.

Globalization has indeed proven a powerful force in promoting human development, yet it has also generated a great amount of risk and vulnerability in the daily lives of many communities. People are increasingly moving between borders and countries are becoming more interdependent. Mass migration and urbanization are the product of different social and political environments, and these prompt trans-national vulnerabilities which are only exacerbated by environmental degradation and climate change. For example, at the turn of the twenty-first century, ethnic strife and battles over lucrative mineral resources tore apart the Congo, Sudan, South Sudan, and Darfur, displacing millions of people. These politically and economically rooted conflicts forced innumerable individuals to suffer from chronic malnutrition, physical displacement, as well as various biological diseases including cholera and HIV/AIDS. Every day, families across the world are resettling to urban centers in search of work. Rapid urbanization and unregulated development is putting a rising number of people at risk, something which the 2001 earthquake in Gujarat, India indicates. This single quake killed approximately 18,000 people, injured another 167,000 and destroyed nearly 400,000 homes.<sup>2</sup> Such are outcomes predominantly based in patterns of urban settlement -- not in the nature of the quake itself.

The political, social, and economic frameworks within which different groups of people exist determine how they interact with their environment. Some may, due to financial circumstances, be forced to inhabit regions of high-susceptibility to disaster, while others may have to accept a physically dangerous job without health care compensation to enhance family incomes. In these instances, the risks involved in people's daily lives are directly influenced by

---

<sup>2</sup> K. Sudhir, Jain et. al., *The Republic Day Earthquake in the land of M. K. Gandhi, The Father of the Nation* (Kanpur: Department of Civil Engineering Indian Institute of Technology, 2001). Available at: <https://www.nicee.org/Bhuj.php> Accessed: September 8, 2016.



the political, social, and economic constraints placed upon them through historic processes of exclusion and exploitation.

By comprehending how power and agency may shape a community struck by disaster, one acquires a deeper appreciation for the socio-political root causes of people's vulnerability to disaster. Colonialism is one of the greatest examples of such processes. The institution has engendered both past political trends and even the current ideologies and prejudices inherent to a community. Vulnerability is thus centuries in the making. Colonialism creates clear historical consequences that constrain different communities' potential for economic stability, ultimately limiting the capacity of oppressed and marginalized demographics to adapt under modern environmental crises.

The 1975 earthquake in Guatemala City is just one illustration of this insight. Here, colonial practices of indigenous exclusion and persecution forced the native populations into a state of abject poverty. Severe discrimination and marginalization against the indigenous lasted far beyond the colonial era, however, and this caused a majority of indigenous Guatemalans to settle into shantytown hamlets along eroded, dangerous terrain.<sup>3</sup> Naturally, it was this region that suffered the worst damages from the quake. Such histories illustrate why disaster analysis must acknowledge how vulnerability is structured through people's mundane daily existence. Systematic interactions between social, environmental, political, economic, and institutional actors play an integral part in defining the allocation and distribution of resources across society through a diverse chain of temporal and geographic spheres.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> P. Susman, P. O'Keefe, and B. Wisner, "Global disasters, a radical interpretation," In *Interpretations of Calamity from the Viewpoint of Human Ecology*, ed. K. Hewitt (Boston: Allen and Unwin, 1983), 263-283.

<sup>4</sup> Piers M. Blaikie, Ben Wisner, Terry Cannon, and Ian Davis, *At Risk: Natural Hazards, People's Vulnerability, and Disasters* (London: Routledge, 1994), 2-15.

For the purposes of the following discussion, vulnerability is defined as the socially-constructed risk of a population, itself the result of myriad interactions between political, social, and economic elements of history. The term natural disaster represents the combined effects of natural hazards (the storm, earthquake, etc.) upon a demographic region of high risk and insecurity. The all-encompassing occurrences of a disaster engulf various aspects of human life, affecting the environmental, social, economic, political and biological conditions of a community in dynamic ways. A population's vulnerability to disasters is thus a pivotal concept in ideologically translating the multidimensionality of disaster into concrete circumstances of life. By viewing disasters through this lens, one may begin to assess the processes which precipitate such outcomes in order to delineate policy proposals for both the prevention and mitigation of future disasters.

To this day, the Irish Potato Famine is an exceptional illustration of how a society's underlying cultural orientation creates the preconditions necessary for a disaster to strike. During the mid 19th century, the Irish population were required to produce exclusively one variety of potato under oppressive British rule. However, compulsory monocrop production left many Irish citizens with little financial capital and limited livelihood opportunities. When a vicious disease decimated the potato crops over a period of years, the Irish were left to starve. A famine resulted, due to the fact that few other crops were produced domestically under the mono-cropping policy, and also since the British prevented food aid from entering the region.<sup>5</sup> In the end, 1.5 million Irish died and an additional two million emigrated, representing one of the worst famines in recorded history. This event exposes the explicitly political and economic nature of the disaster, as it was precipitated by British biases against Irish citizens and the subsequent marginalization

---

<sup>5</sup> Mark Thornton, "What Caused the Irish Potato Famine?," *The Free Market*, May 20, 2008. Accessed August 29, 2016.

of the Irish people. Under different socio-political circumstances, the Irish populations which perished in the famine would likely have lived longer and enjoyed a better quality of life. In this sense, culturally-specific forms of discrimination surrounding the allocation of welfare or relief are highly influential in exacerbating the consequences of a natural hazard to cause full-scale disasters.

Even so, a complex array of factors, many of which are overlapping and interdependent, each play a decisive role in determining how individuals and communities can choose to respond to the outbreak of an environmental crisis. The creation of popular vulnerability to disaster is a multilevel and multi-scalar process, the roots of which lie in the trans-generational oppression, inequalities, and marginalization of a community. In many ways, the same social and cultural processes that give rise to vulnerability are enmeshed within the broader international economic and political systems of capitalism and globalization.<sup>6</sup> Examples of such concepts include: the Native American tribes residing near abandoned uranium mines in the United States, the indigenous Amazonian tribes who are currently facing the consequences of careless oil dumping by Texaco, or the millions of central Africans who are daily terrorized by armed warlords seeking to dominate lucrative mineral trades -- to name a few. The economic institutions of the Western marketplace often create insecure access to some of the most vital resources amongst the marginalized and impoverished communities of underdeveloped nations, creating ample space for conflict and exploitation.

This is especially the case in regards to goods such as clean water. On a global scale, the rapidly accelerating commodification of water has led many to argue that such is a human right and should not be considered an economic good, since the market forces of capitalism are not

---

<sup>6</sup> Piers M. Blaikie, Ben Wisner, Terry Cannon, and Ian Davis, *At Risk: Natural Hazards, People's Vulnerability, and Disasters* (London: Routledge, 1994), 23-24.

sufficient to guarantee the commodity's resilience under the outbreak of a natural hazard. By turning water into a private good, property rights and market mechanisms only guarantee access to clean water for those who can afford to pay a premium. Even so, under disaster conditions access to clean water becomes highly unpredictable -- even for the upper classes with the financial means to acquire it.

Such was the case in Egypt during the late 19th century, when malaria spread rapidly through the British-engineered irrigation channels that allocated "premium" water to the sugar and cotton plantations of the Upper Nile. Although designed to maximize economic efficiency and serve private enterprise in the region, the Nile River control projects also enabled malaria infected mosquitos to easily jump between barriers, taking advantage of the recent irrigation works that changed patterns of water use and inadvertently made the disease more transmittable.<sup>7</sup> Combined, drought and the wartime lack of nitrate fertilizer around the Nile basin created a politically-based famine which, when combined with the modern irrigation systems of privatized water, led to the death of over 600,000 individuals.<sup>8</sup>

The political ecology of land rights and notions of property ownership are also crucial to understanding the vulnerabilities of certain populations to disasters. In many rural and developing regions across the globe, land is the primary means of production used to generate a family's income. For these communities, land is also the main asset that farmers have to accumulate wealth and transfer it to future generations.<sup>9</sup> In order to industrialize economic

---

<sup>7</sup> Timothy Mitchell, *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> B. Nega, B. Adenew and S. Gebre Sellasie, *Current Land Policy Issues in Ethiopia* (Addis Ababa: Ethiopian Economic Policy Research Institute, 2003), 103-124.

output, however, governments will often redefine patterns of land distribution and accessibility rights, reducing the livelihood security of many pastoral communities.

Such is the current situation of the majority Oromo population in Ethiopia, whereby recent government development programs have been met by peaceful protests against the widespread displacement of Oromo farmers. In this instance, the ability for Oromo villages to access the lands and waterways which have been worked by their families for generations is being restricted by the state without adequate compensation. The Ethiopian government conducted these land grabs as part of the Addis Ababa Master Plan, which initially promised to bring great economic growth to the region through industrialization and foreign direct investment. Although the Plan has indeed boosted GDP growth substantially, it is very unpopular amongst rural peasants.<sup>10</sup> Economic growth in Ethiopia has come at the expense of traditional land tenure practices. This led to great insecurity surrounding Oromo livelihoods by preventing large parts of the population from conducting their traditional forms of pastoral agriculture. One outcome of the Oromo's destitution has been an excessive increase in the group's vulnerability to hazards such as drought or disease. The usurpation of traditionally communal farmlands has overturned prior notions of land access and entitlement, severely restricting the Oromo's ability to bring their herds to the fields and lakes upon which they have relied for centuries. Thousands of villages are left increasingly vulnerable to disasters, while the government's violent crackdown in response to the protests has created poignant civil unrest. An increasing number of people have fled Ethiopia and sought refuge in neighboring African countries such as Malawi or Sudan.<sup>11</sup> Yet, the changing movements of mass numbers of people, especially under the

---

<sup>10</sup> Felix Horne, *Such a Brutal Crackdown -- Killings and Arrests in Response to Ethiopia's Oromo Protests* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2016).

<sup>11</sup> This information was gathered during interviews conducted with Felix Horne of Human Rights Watch and Bonnie Holcomb of the Oromo Studies Association between June 1, 2016 and August 5, 2016.

conditions of violent warfare felt throughout the central and east African region, exacerbates the transmission of disease epidemics and people's vulnerability to disasters; thousands have died while many others have become stateless refugees.

The instances cited above illustrate how the resource allocation patterns of any given society are central to determining a people's vulnerability to disaster. These patterns are expressions of the dominant ideologies which govern international mediation between the society concerned and government.<sup>12</sup> Practices of resource distribution indicate where, when, how, and to whom goods and services (including social capital) are allocated. Those affected by a hazard face less risk and vulnerability to disaster when more of society's resources are easily accessible. Therefore, political and economic power interact with social customs and cultural tradition to constrain the array of livelihood opportunities and coping mechanisms available to different groups or individuals at any given time. People who are viewed with negative social biases, who are of a marginalized identity, or of a low-income bracket, face restricted access to resources and capital. Such status limits their capacity to cope when the outbreak of an environmental hazard strikes and inevitably propels a community's experience of natural hazards (a hurricane, flood, drought, etc.) from a state of severe weather to a crisis-level disaster. This is especially the case for people with little political or economic influence in society, like the indigenous groups of the Guatemalan highlands, residents of Brazil's informal favela communities, or any of the 65.3 million displaced refugees around the world.<sup>13</sup> Such individuals wield less power to demand assistance when needed, being both disenfranchised, marginalized, and many even stateless. They are also often forced to also accept risky or unsafe living

---

<sup>12</sup> Greg Bankoff, Georg Frerks, and Dorothea Hilhorst, *Mapping Vulnerability: Disasters, Development, and People* (London: Earthscan, 2004), 2.

<sup>13</sup> Adrian Edwards, "Global Forced Displacement Hits Record High," *UNHCR News*, June 20, 2016. Accessed on 09 September 2016.

<http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/news/latest/2016/6/5763b65a4/global-forced-displacement-hits-record-high.html>

conditions due to lack of education or out of financial necessity. The divergence in various socio-economic classes' access to social goods and material resources alter the opportunities they face to improve their livelihood and diminish overall risk to disasters.

One potent illustration of this phenomena, the effects of which are still apparent to this day, lies within the communities most gravely affected by Hurricane Katrina. Approximately 5.8 million people lived in the areas struck hardest by the hurricane, and more than one million of these individuals lived in poverty prior to the hurricane's onset.<sup>14</sup> Those who suffered most were families who, due to economic constraints, could not easily adapt or cope with the unexpected changes to their environment. US census data confirms that African Americans made up a disproportionate share of the hurricane's victims: about one in three people who lived in the areas hit hardest by the hurricane were African American.<sup>15</sup> Further analysis also indicates that thirty-five percent of black households in New Orleans, and nearly sixty percent of poor black households, lacked a vehicle with which to evacuate.<sup>16</sup> This data exposes the embedded racial constraints of American culture, forcing certain demographics to have no choice but accept riskier living conditions and fewer economic opportunities -- the consequences of which are clearly greater vulnerability to natural disasters.

Contrastingly, families hit by Katrina who were well educated, and therefore held well-paying jobs, could afford to hurricane proof their homes and evacuate the area immediately when notified of a severe hurricane warning. Of all the white non-Hispanic households in New Orleans, only 15 percent lacked a vehicle.<sup>17</sup> While many families held savings accounts and

---

<sup>14</sup> Arloc Sherman and Isaac Shapiro, *Essential Facts About the Victims of Hurricane Katrina* (New York, NY: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 2005).

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> US Census Bureau, *Federal Emergency Management Assistance in 2000* (Washington D.C.: GPO, 2000). [www.censtats.census.gov/data/LA/04022.pdf](http://www.censtats.census.gov/data/LA/04022.pdf) . Note: designated "Black or African American" includes individuals who specified more than one race.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

insurance agreements which gave them the financial support necessary to recover from Katrina, those on fixed incomes often lost their livelihoods and all assets in the storm. With Hurricane Katrina in mind, it becomes clear how natural disasters are defined by the underlying social, political, and economic forces of a community. These factors figure centrally in creating crisis-level outcomes. The effects of such dynamic socio-political pressures affect populations across the world, in developed nations as much as in LDCs, for social inequality and marginalization are traits inherent to every nation state, no matter how big or small.

In this sense, it is important to understand that environmental hazards are naturally occurring events, while disasters are not. Disasters, rather, are the complex physical manifestation of underlying social, political, and economic inequalities (such as irregular urban settlements and weak regulatory practices) that render a society less resilient to shocks from hazards.<sup>18</sup> Such inequalities often times force people to also accept unsafe and unsanitary living conditions. The result of such trends is to exacerbate the destructive effects of a hazard -- both as it occurs and throughout the process of recovery -- heightening the vulnerability of the marginalized or low-income populations affected. Such is especially the case in economically and politically underdeveloped states whose governments lack the capacity to respond or to implement institutional forms of civilian support and security. Therefore, multiple factors are central to assessing a people's risk and vulnerability in relation to disaster: where they live and work, the level of government protection from hazards, collective preparedness to address environmental threats, the knowledge base of a community, as well as an individual or population's wealth, class, gender, age, ethnicity, migrant status, and overall health. Many more

---

<sup>18</sup> Dorothea Hilhorst and Greg Bankoff, "Theorizing Vulnerability in a Globalized World: A Political Ecological Perspective," in *Mapping Vulnerability: Disasters, Development, and People*, eds. Greg Bankoff, Georg Frerks, and Dorothea Hilhorst (London: Earthscan, 2004), 2-3.



conditions also determine the severity of risk and vulnerability which people face, and each of these elements plays a dynamic, interdependent role with others to generate the modern disasters we see today.

As the Red Cross exposed in the *World Disasters Report 2001*, the impact of extreme natural events upon countries with high, medium, and low scores on the Human Development Index (HDI) is indicative of how a people's vulnerability to disaster correlates with their access to society's goods and resources. The HDI is a marker of development which emphasizes that people and their capabilities should be the ultimate criteria for assessing the development of a country, not economic growth alone. As such, the HDI provides a summarized measurement of a nation's average achievement in key dimensions of human development. These include: living a long and healthy life, being well-educated, and having a decent standard of living. It is important to note, however, that the HDI simplifies and captures only part of what human development entails. Therefore, it is a tool to gain insight rather than a clear marker of regional vulnerability and levels of development. The HDI does not reflect upon inequalities, poverty, human security, or empowerment, but rather offers other composite indices as a broader proxy on some of the key issues of human development, inequality, gender disparity, and human poverty.<sup>19</sup> As a conceptual tool, the HDI can thus be used to question national policy choices: how can two countries with the same level of gross national income (GNI) per capita end up with grossly different human development outcomes?

As the 2001 UNDP report indicates, extreme environmental hazards which triggered the deadliest natural disasters across the world were experienced predominantly in countries with low HDI scores (approximately two thirds of all deaths from hazards reported between 1991 and

---

<sup>19</sup> United Nations Development Program, *UNDP Human Development Reports* (Geneva: United Nations Development Program, 2015). Available at <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/human-development-index-hdi>

2000). In the last decade of the 20th century, approximately 2,557 natural disasters were reported to the UN, and more than half were in countries of medium human development (MHD).<sup>20</sup> However, two-thirds of all deaths reported to the UN during this timeframe came from countries of low human development (LHD), and only two percent came from highly developed nations.<sup>21</sup> Clearly, there is a recurring divergence between the hazards reported and the casualties incurred amongst LHD, MHD, and developed states.

It also important to note that for the purposes of this report, the United Nations categorized both China and India as medium development countries. Yet these states each experience high levels of inequality, poverty, and environmental insecurity; in various ways India and China are subject to many of the same demographic and environmental instabilities of LHD states. While both states are considered MHD countries by UN standards, World Bank Data confirms that a vast portion of both countries' populations are politically marginalized and suffer from severe poverty as well as poor access to healthcare and education.<sup>22</sup> Combined, these constraints indicate that the populous, low income communities of India and China may often reside in regions of high risk to environmental catastrophe. These people are the most vulnerable to disasters due to their disenfranchisement, marginalization, and economic insecurity. The irrefutable correlation between low HDI scores and a population's vulnerability to disasters highlights why disaster analysis must acknowledge the prominent role of social and political forces in exposing people to risk and making them more vulnerable to disasters. It is essential to

---

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, *World Disasters Report 2001*, eds., Jonathan Walter (Geneva: International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 2001), 162-170. Available at: [http://www.ifrc.org/Global/Publications/disasters/WDR/21400\\_WDR2001.pdf](http://www.ifrc.org/Global/Publications/disasters/WDR/21400_WDR2001.pdf)

<sup>22</sup> The World Bank Group, *Inequity Report on China* (Washington D.C.: The World Bank Group, 2016). <http://povertydata.worldbank.org/poverty/country/CHN>.  
The World Bank Group, *Inequity Report on India* (Washington D.C.: The World Bank Group, 2016) <http://povertydata.worldbank.org/poverty/country/IND>.

remember that disasters are the result of social environments, resource allocation, and the sustainability of livelihoods among the parties affected by hazards.

Cases such as China or India also demonstrate that an individual or community's relative vulnerability to disaster is as much the result of people's access to social and material resources as it is a function of how dominant power structures in society manipulate access to these goods. Such resources may include, but are not limited to: adequate health care, proper sanitation, communication and transport infrastructure, as well as education. On the macro level, the role of the national government in providing a supportive welfare system and the proper disaster mitigation measures is an essential component in determining the risk and vulnerability of any given community. Countries with a more developed infrastructure and welfare support system (such as the United Kingdom, Denmark, or Germany) have equipped their citizens with the resources necessary to diminish vulnerability to disasters, allowing for successful adaptation should a hazard strike. In less developed countries, however (like the Congo, Haiti, Guatemala, or Nepal), the state apparatus lacks the means to provide its citizens with this sort of security and support. As a consequence, their citizens of underdeveloped states are often forced to accept riskier livelihood conditions and face situations of greater vulnerability.

Therefore, the prominent correlation between the political and economic instabilities of LDCs and a population's greater overall vulnerability to disasters can be attributed to inconsistencies of the state regarding resource provisions and upholding human rights. Divergent regional policies surrounding people's access and entitlements to resources and social goods, many of which are influenced by global capitalism and the residual elements of colonial policies, inevitably mean that the effects of a severe drought will vary from relatively little impact in some areas to extreme suffering in others. Pockets of regional vulnerability are difficult to detect,

however, since such processes and conditions most significantly affect small and isolated communities.<sup>23</sup> The complexity of natural disasters arising from such a situation inevitably means that in order to ensure the successful recovery and the future protection of affected communities, sectoral needs at the local, district, and national levels must be acknowledged by domestic as well as international actors and revised accordingly. This would allow for appropriate government agencies to address the needs of their citizens -- assuming that the state has resources to provide such infrastructure in the first place. The absence of such support mechanisms often produces slum dwellings, poor rule of law, and generally less respect for the state apparatus, as there is poor communication between citizens and government. Faltering governments often lead to societies of unsafe environmental conditions, corruption, excessive economic insecurity surrounding peoples' livelihoods, and recurring outbreaks of violence or biological epidemics due to high levels of migration and environmental degradation.

Unless one is capable of understanding the historically-embedded root causes and broader social patterns that precipitate economic inequality, unsafe living conditions, and poignant political marginalization, it will be impossible to effectively develop a means of addressing natural disasters in the twenty-first century. One must analyze not only disasters in general, but rather go a step further and dissect the underlying forces that make people and their environment vulnerable to such crises in the first place. Countries must work to identify and address the broad range of needs that their citizens demand on both a micro and macro level, while also enhancing communication and coordination between people and government to ensure needs are met. This must be done at the local, regional and national level, while also taking into account the poignant effects of globalization. Disasters cannot be artificially

---

<sup>23</sup> Jonathan Walter, *World Disasters Report 2001* (Geneva: International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 2001). Available at: [http://www.ifrc.org/Global/Publications/disasters/WDR/21400\\_WDR2001.pdf](http://www.ifrc.org/Global/Publications/disasters/WDR/21400_WDR2001.pdf)

separated from the functionings of normal, everyday society, for such factors are inherent to the escalation of hazards into disasters. The risks and constraints placed upon an individual's daily life expose how disasters are created by compounding the effects of a trigger event (the hazard) within the underlying vulnerabilities of a society, as they are produced through temporal, regional, and international spheres of influence.

However, vulnerability is more than a concept to be identified with poverty. Impoverishment alone is not sufficient to generate the complex array of social, political, and economic conditions that precipitate vulnerability to disaster. Other factors deeply embedded within the political economy and ideological views of a community are actually the strongest determinants of vulnerability in any given community. While it is true that populations who suffer from poverty, resource depletion, and marginalization are generally more vulnerable and face greater risk to disasters, one cannot declare a direct causation between poverty and a people's vulnerability.

This contention is clearly illustrated by the status of favela communities throughout Rio de Janeiro. Favelados are indeed impoverished, yet their vulnerability is a product of their marginality and disenfranchisement rather than a direct lack of financial capital. In Rio de Janeiro, a multi-generational history of economic necessity has forced favela residents to construct shantytowns in the city's treacherous slopes and hillsides. The history of Rio's favelas date back to the 1940s when migrant workers from the northern regions of Brazil came to the city during an era of widespread industrialization.<sup>24</sup> These workers provided the main source of labor to construct the city that exists today. However, due to housing shortages, workers were

---

<sup>24</sup> Julio Cesar Pino, "Sources on the History of Favelas in Rio de Janeiro," *Latin American Research Review* (32)3 (1997): 111-122. JSTOR.

forced to take residence in the hillsides of the city, building illegal settlements that the government was incapable of regulating.<sup>25</sup>

To this day, the relationship between Rio's favelas, which currently house approximately twenty-five percent of the city's population (1.5 million people), and the municipal government is tenuous. Favelados still lack many of the legal entitlements of citizenship. As of July 2015, a total of 77,206 people have been forcibly removed from their homes since the government-led eviction initiative began in 2009.<sup>26</sup> This comes after two decades of relatively secure land tenure for the Favelados, since the 1988 Constitution guarantees a squatter's right to build housing on fallow land.<sup>27</sup> The people's forced displacement has exacerbated vulnerability to disaster amongst favela communities in multiple ways. First, displacement strips Favelados of the only assets they have been able to acquire: their homes. Second, displacement reinforces the status of favela residents as inferior citizens in the eyes of the municipal government.

For generations Favelados have had little access to many of the goods and services which wealthier civilians, located in the city center, take for granted. Lack of proper sewage or drainage systems as well as inadequate access to healthcare and education are prominent indicators of the favela residents' marginality and vulnerability to disasters. Each year, many people die in the mudslides which come with the heavy rains.<sup>28</sup> Expanding deforestation at the edge of the Rocina favelas has worsened this risk. Meanwhile, the government still lacks the capacity and

---

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Catalytic Communities database available at: <http://catcomm.org/favela-facts/>

<sup>27</sup> See the Federal Constitution of 1988: Article 5, item XXIII which delineates the "social function of property" and Article 183 which explicitly states that "Someone who possesses as theirs an urban area up to 250 square meters for five years, uninterrupted and without opposition, using it for housing for them or their family, acquires it as their domain as long as the claimant is not the owner of another urban or rural property. Title and concession of use shall be given to a man or a woman, or both, independent of their civil state."

See also Article 9 of the City Statute.

<sup>28</sup> World Watch Institute, *Residents of Rio's Favelas Face Diverse Risks* (Washington D.C.: World Watch Institute, 2016). Available at: <http://www.worldwatch.org/node/4756> .

motivation to remediate such conditions. For decades there has been relative silence within political discourse regarding the issues surrounding favela communities, the least of which include racial and other types of social discrimination, merely reinforcing the favelados' widespread exclusion from citizenship.<sup>29</sup> Favela communities' living conditions and socio-economic situation are the result of life decisions made due to the constraints placed upon them by both cultural and historic forces; their vulnerability, and the daily risks they face, are primarily generated by how power and resources are withheld or distributed throughout society. Such may be through traditional practices of entitlement, government-imposed restrictions to individual access, or through kinship networks within the community.<sup>30</sup> All of these factors, it must be noted, are not stagnant and are subject to constant change, adaptation, or revision, like all components of culture and civil society. As such, globalization has altered the nature of resource allocation and traditional patterns of human interaction, and especially in the face of political turmoil, economic downturns or hazard events, Favelado's access to the resources and services they need are increasingly unpredictable.

The favela dwellings of Rio, nearly all of which lack sanitation systems, have only grown over the decades. Residents have put generations-worth of income and physical labor into the construction and consolidation of their homes which are built upon areas of high-environmental risk to mudslides and earthquakes. Common views surrounding the existence of favela dwellings in Rio hinge upon the notion of a "culture of poverty", whereby these (predominantly Afro-Brazilian) individuals are seen as obstacles to their own progress by the state and upper classes

---

<sup>29</sup> Brodwyn Fischer, *Cities From Scratch: Poverty and Informality in Urban Latin America* (London: Duke University Press, 2014), 9-30.

<sup>30</sup> Piers M. Blaikie, Ben Wisner, Terry Cannon, and Ian Davis, *At Risk: Natural Hazards, People's Vulnerability, and Disasters* (London: Routledge, 1994), 64-70.

of society.<sup>31</sup> The rampant presence of drug trafficking and violent gangs in the favelas has only reinforced such social perceptions. As a result, police continue to have a large presence in the region, seeking to dismantle rampant networks of organized crime by enforcing government-led pacification programs. However, the abuse of police authority and an enduring history of political isolation has reinforced a strong lack of trust between favela residents and government.

The historically-embedded social relations and power structures which exist between Favelados and the government of Rio thus determines the vulnerability of these marginal communities. Such is manifest through the favela population's limited access to social capital and resources, as well as their exclusion from political activity. Simultaneously, Favelado's vulnerability to disaster is embedded within how the wealthier communities of Rio perceive favela residences. Not only are favela communities highly vulnerable to disasters from triggers such as earthquakes, floods, or landslides, but these populations also have minimal capacity to effectively recover and adapt. In the face of a disaster, the little land inhabited by these informal residents loses all productive value, their homes are destroyed and many lives are lost. Yet, without proper sanitation, health care, nutrition, nor sufficient government support in the aftermath, many more people will become ridden with disease, physically displaced, and perish.

The Favelado's history of interaction with government has made their relationship with municipal officials only more strained over time, for a belligerent government and lack of legal protection to rights of citizenship have left Rio's Favelados extremely vulnerable indeed. Their needs are repeatedly overlooked or misaddressed by government-funded development programs, while little is done to improve economic security for these communities. The result is a vicious

---

<sup>31</sup> Brodwyn Fischer, *Cities From Scratch: Poverty and Informality in Urban Latin America* (London: Duke University Press, 2014), 33-34.



cycle of increasing vulnerability rooted in political marginality, lack of economic opportunity, and deeply-embedded cultural biases.

To accurately analyze the underlying causes of natural disasters and develop effective modes of crisis prevention are more pressing issues in the twenty-first century than ever before. The frequency and cost of natural disasters is rising globally, most especially in developing countries where the most severe effects of climate change are felt. Media outlets, politicians, as well as social and scientific scholars have highlighted the poignant concerns which climate change is coming to play in shaping the world we live in. As this discussion contends, while climate change is indeed a strong force impacting the severity of contemporary catastrophes, it is not directly responsible for the exorbitant cost of the damage and suffering incurred, both financially and in terms of human life. Rather, the true determinants of disasters lie within the power systems at play in any given society when these regions come into contact with a triggering hazard event. The media often portrays the suffering of vulnerable communities during a disaster to be the result of natural processes and climate change: that nature has become an existential threat to mankind and the cause of human suffering. The dominant argument here is that disasters are to be attributed to natural causes, and can therefore be explained in terms of exceptional environmental events, not of continuing and normal social processes.<sup>32</sup> However, this view overlooks some of the most critical root causes and dynamic socio-political pressures that create disasters.

---

<sup>32</sup> See the work of Gini and De Castro as well as Kenneth Hewitt for more information on this topic. Kenneth Hewitt, *Interpretations of Calamity from the Viewpoint of Human Ecology* (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1983).  
Josué de Castro, *The Geopolitics of Hunger* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1977).

In fact, disasters are directly attributable to different forms of interaction between distinct populations, state governments, and the environment. These modes of interaction may be broken down into three basic categories: the degree to which a rights culture exists in civil society and is upheld by government, the developmental capacity of the state to address the needs and demands of its citizens, and finally the degree to which the environment and natural resources have been disrupted as a result of manipulation by political and economic agents. The strengths or weaknesses of the state along any one of these three elements alters the vulnerability of civilians to natural disasters by changing people's capacity to cope with adverse weather conditions, as well as by determining environmental resilience to severe hazards. In a weak, underdeveloped state, disaster prevention and response units are either non-existent or ill equipped to address the needs and demands of citizens. Similarly, in regions with a poor history of upholding human rights, not only are many citizens forced to accept unsafe living conditions and insecure livelihoods, but people's access to the resources necessary for effective adaptation are often withheld and coping mechanisms obstructed. Finally, under conditions where resource extraction and excessive industrial development have degraded the integrity of the natural environment to the point of severe instability, a hazard such as a monsoon or hurricane can create catastrophic flooding and landslides. Under the proper conditions, such events can easily escalate into a natural disaster.

By utilizing these three frameworks of analysis, the following discussion will expose how the damage inflicted by natural disasters is not merely a product of severe weather, but is rather a manifestation of the pre-existing socio-political and economic structures that have generated unsafe conditions for the marginal and disenfranchised residents of such regions. The outbreak of disaster thus exposes the moment when these instabilities come into contact with an

environmental hazard. Historic processes of isolation, oppression, and exploitation, combined with contemporary international power systems, interact in complex ways to affect different socioeconomic classes distinctly. The result is to create vulnerability and scarcity among the most defenseless communities. These processes affect a society's ideological orientation and their cultural norms, empowering some while isolating others. When the resulting dynamic pressures and root causes come into contact with a natural hazard, a disaster is likely to follow due to the high vulnerability of certain groups and their inability to adapt as conditions change.<sup>33</sup>

This will be illustrated in detail by analyzing the experiences of disaster in Haiti, Ethiopia, and Nepal throughout the following chapters. By exploring the historic roots of Haitian vulnerability, it will be shown how the three aforementioned frameworks interact across regional and temporal spheres to generate distinct outcomes of vulnerability and unsafe conditions. By focusing attention on the current famine in Ethiopia, this analysis will highlight the role of international actors, economic interests and repressive regimes in generating disaster outcomes from recurring environmental hazards such as a prolonged drought. Finally, in the case study of Nepal, the tensions between these frameworks will be further addressed within the framework of political economy, illustrating the pivotal role of the state and other political agents in determining the exact manifestation of environmental disasters.

Across the world, the risks faced by communities are becoming increasingly new and uncertain. Populations are migrating from rural to urban centers, while remittances and new components of the international political economy continue to alter the global allocation of resources. At the same time, contemporary geopolitical interactions are shifting the stability of populations everywhere. The current refugee crisis, conflicts currently underway in Central

---

<sup>33</sup> Piers M. Blaikie, Ben Wisner, Terry Cannon, and Ian Davis, *At Risk: Natural Hazards, People's Vulnerability, and Disasters* (London: Routledge, 1994), 21-46.

Africa, as well as the migratory patterns of families across Latin America, provide only a few examples of how socio-political patterns combine with economic factors to help shape the vulnerability of both individuals and entire communities to natural disasters. In order to effectively address these debilitating crises, the international community must begin to take preventative, and not just reactive measures. Such will require that international institutions and governments alike address disasters as a function of the daily risks which people face that heighten their vulnerability. By understanding a population's vulnerability to be a direct result of the social and political context in which a hazard event occurs, one cannot overlook the importance of factors such as class, ethnicity, or regional affiliations in determining the outcome of and international responses to such events. Rules and institutions must be able to adapt over time. By approaching contemporary disaster analysis through a holistic lense, accounting for the inextricable effects of social, political, and economic patterns within a community, the links between the risks people face and the reasons for their vulnerability to disasters will be exposed as deeply embedded within the broader patterns of social interaction. Only with such an understanding of how natural disasters arise can the international community effectively address one of the greatest threats to human security in the twenty-first century.

## **Chapter Two: Assessing the Root Causes of Haiti's Natural Disasters**

As this chapter was being written, Hurricane Matthew tore across Haiti, the death toll climbing from one hundred to well above four hundred victims in a single hour. However, its

island neighbor, the Dominican Republic, reported only four deaths.<sup>34</sup> Haiti is known as the poorest nation in the Western hemisphere. Approximately 60% of the population lives in poverty and 25% in extreme poverty.<sup>35</sup> Throughout history, Haiti has experienced some of the most severe natural disasters in the region while other Caribbean states have suffered very little in comparison. Such trends are a strong indication that there are many significant factors beyond environmental conditions which determine the manifestation of natural disasters within any given nation state. Haiti's experiences of disasters, as will be illustrated in the following discussion, are highly dependent upon the outcomes of socio-political ideology, foreign influences, and economic conditions. Haiti's past defines various elements of its current political, economic, and cultural identity, and these -- not environmental hazards -- are the true root causes of Haiti's repeated experience of natural disasters.

Natural disasters are directly attributable to the material aspects of Haiti's condition. The daily recreation of Haitian vulnerability to natural disasters cannot be fully understood without a comprehensive analysis of the people's history, local ecological interactions, as well as a detailed understanding of Haiti's political economy. With these considerations in mind, the following chapter provides a comprehensive analysis of Haitian history. The purpose of this discussion is to expose how the state's social, economic, and political experiences have destroyed the resilience of civil society against environmental stressors, while also eviscerating the stability of the natural environment. When these dynamic pressures and underlying patterns of oppression come together under the appropriate environmental triggers, crisis-level disasters are inevitable.

---

<sup>34</sup> "Hurricane Matthew: Haiti Storm Kills Hundreds," *BBC News*, October 7, 2016. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-37582009>.

<sup>35</sup> The World Bank Group, *Haiti Overview* (Geneva: The World Bank Group, 2017). <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/haiti/overview>  
Retrieved on: August 20, 2016.

At the center of Haiti's excessive suffering lies the enduring prominence of structural violence: institutionalized processes of exploitation and marginalization rooted in the nation's political and economic experiences. Structural violence in Haiti is a process of exclusion and exploitation that is exerted systematically upon the most marginalized and impoverished groups, being perpetrated by Haitian elites and foreign nation-states alike. Poverty, inequality, racism, and the endurance of patriarchal exploitation are all symptoms of such endemic structural violence. Examples of structural violence abound, whether one looks to the period of French colonization, US occupation, the successive Duvalier regimes, or to any of Haiti's numerous kleptocratic military juntas. The institutionalization of corruption, violence, self-aggrandizement, and racism has become entrenched deep within Haiti's political culture, and have only reinforced the dominance of degenerate social structures and the state's overwhelming lack of political leadership across millennia. These patterns of interaction and exclusion simultaneously uphold the social machinery of oppression while reinforcing the de-socialization of a people from their rights as citizens and human beings.<sup>36</sup>

For Haiti, the influences of structural violence have eviscerated any capacity for the government to enforce the rule of law or provide social goods to its impoverished, highly vulnerable population. In fact, it is often government officials themselves who actively destroy the legal institutions designed to protect civil society, thereby placing government actors and institutions at the center of the issue. The result has been a complete lack of political accountability, rampant human rights violations, and enduring economic insecurities. When combined with the severely destabilizing effects of global warming, as well as Haiti's geographic location, natural disasters are imminent. To explore the historical roots of Haiti's natural disasters requires that one acknowledge how the architects of this structural violence manipulate

---

<sup>36</sup> Paul Farmer, "An Anthropology of Structural Violence," *Current Anthropology* (45)3 (2004): 305-325.

tactics of de-socialization: erasing historical memory and consolidating resources to maintain the balance of power in their favor.<sup>37</sup> Inevitably, this comes at the expense of the human dignity and security of those most oppressed and exploited.

The root causes of structural violence in Haiti can be traced back to the era of French occupation. Between 1681 and 1789 over 450,000 African men and women were imported into colonial Haiti to support a plantation system sustained by a brutal slave labor regime.<sup>38</sup> Throughout the era, Haiti grew sugar cane, coffee, indigo, cotton, tobacco and many exotic spices which were in high demand throughout Europe and Asia. Among all the industries promoted by the French, none was more lucrative than sugar.<sup>39</sup> It was not uncommon for slaves in Haiti to die before the age of twenty-five, it being cheaper for plantation owners to simply import new slaves from Africa and work their men to death than to maintain adequate living conditions in the slave quarters.<sup>40</sup> The purpose of all colonial practices was thus to enrich the French empire irrespective of the human cost.

Due to the excessive growth of the sugar industry in colonial Haiti, economic forms of production across the island shifted from traditional subsistence farming to plantation-based agricultural practices. The transformation in production methods enacted during this time precipitated a decline in crop variety and regional biodiversity, both of which made rural farmers highly vulnerable to famine should a disease or drought wipe out the season's crops.<sup>41</sup> These methods of production also destroyed the resilience of the natural environment against severe weather patterns.

---

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 308-309.

<sup>38</sup> James Ferguson, *Papa Doc, Baby Doc: Haiti and the Duvaliers* (Oxford, UK: B. Blackwell, 1988), 2-3.

<sup>39</sup> Terry F. Buss and Adam Gardner, *Haiti in the Balance: Why Foreign Aid Has Failed and What We Can Do About It* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2008), 21.

<sup>40</sup> Paul Farmer, *The Uses of Haiti* (Monroe: Common Courage Press, 2006), 56.

<sup>41</sup> Nathan McClintock, *Regenerative Agriculture for Haiti's Central Plateau- A Sustainable Foundation for Food and Nutrition Security* (Paris: Zanmi Lasante, 2004), 5.

Ever since the 17th century Haiti's cash crop economy has infinitely magnified the nation's environmental susceptibility to disasters. The expansion of plantation-based monocropping during the colonial era undermined the stability of the natural environment to dangerous levels by damaging biodiversity.<sup>42</sup> Plantation farming also led to rapid deforestation, which intensified when coffee was introduced in 1730. The expansion of export crops into Haiti's forest, fallow lands, and terrain previously devoted to subsistence, caused many local plant varieties and gatherable food products to go extinct.<sup>43</sup> As an ever-increasing amount of the country's arable land was converted into cash crop plots to service European markets, many Haitian farmers lost their livelihood diversity (a common safeguard against famine). Simultaneously, deforestation and reduced biodiversity depleted the quality of soil, leading to erosion and mudslides from severe storms. Combined, these trends made both the environment and the people increasingly vulnerable to natural disasters.

However, beyond the environmental consequences of colonialism in Haiti are the extremely important cultural impacts of French domination. Throughout the colonial era, France's brutal plantations system exploited workers in ways which have scarred the habitus of Haitian politics and civil society to this day. As Paul Farmer noted,

“Colonial realities ... forever [marked] Haitian understanding of social process. Modern-day Haitians are the descendants of kidnapped West Africans, and their collective identity today cannot be fathomed without an understanding of Saint-Domingue. Hailing from scores of tribes, speaking as many mutually unintelligible languages, the Africans of Saint-Domingue had nothing in common but their bondage and their hatred of their oppressors.”

The disunity and cultural isolation of Haitian slaves was thereby instrumental to upholding the machinery of oppression in the colonial era. These conditions are also pivotal to understanding

---

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> D. Ben Swartley Joseph Ronald Toussaint, *Haiti Country Analysis of Tropical Forestry and Biodiversity* (Washington D.C., USAID Forest Service, 2006), 22. [http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf\\_docs/Pnadr459.pdf](http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/Pnadr459.pdf) .



the disenfranchisement, marginalization, and vulnerability faced by a majority of the population today. Under such conditions, colonialism condemned Haitians to work within a political economy of scarcity while also encouraging the persistence of dynamic racially-based hierarchies. Slavery, and the tyrannical mechanisms of plantation-based sugar economies introduced under the French, have fractured the organic unity of the nation, creating sharp divisions based on race and class. Within this system of discrimination and oppression blacks remain at the very bottom of the social hierarchy.

In 1804, Haiti became the first nation in the Americas after the United States to gain its independence. Yet, even as a free republic, the cultural impacts of the colonial era endured. Haiti remained divided by the economic priorities of the wealthy mulattoes against the black masses. While the new elites insisted that the emerging peasantry produce lucrative commodity crops for the global marketplace, Haiti's former slaves desired nothing more than to be left alone to produce for themselves and local markets.<sup>44</sup> Almost immediately after independence, the elites took control and reinstated the plantation systems through contract labor.<sup>45</sup> Thus, the inequalities of the colonial system were revived under a new regime of oppression.

Throughout the 1800s, the pauperization and political marginalization of African Haitians continued en masse, exacerbating people's vulnerability to environmental shocks inordinately. Haitian producers who were not part of the plantation regime did not fare much better, however, as most producers who were linked to the global marketplace did so through intermediaries.<sup>46</sup> Such a system resulted in the spatial isolation of the peasantry, not just from the outside world, but also from other classes within Haiti.<sup>47</sup> This weakened the unity of the masses in the face of

---

<sup>44</sup> Paul Farmer, *The Uses of Haiti* (Monroe: Common Courage Press, 2008), 66.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

impending elite domination while also denying the peasants agency over their own means of production. Time has done little to improve such conditions: the black majority of Haiti's population are still entrenched deep within this a feudal system and the masses are still denied many of their basic rights.

Today, Haiti's barren mountains stand as a physical reminder of the exploitation the nation has faced over the years, and environmental resilience has only worsened. Immediately following independence, land remained unequally distributed amongst the elites of society. Peasants have been granted access exclusively to the marginal slopes above the fertile plains, yet far below the zones of coffee production.<sup>48</sup> These soils are particularly susceptible to erosion when cleared for farming. However, with thousands of poor, displaced Haitians, such lands are the only areas to which families have access and control.<sup>49</sup> The forced resettlement of many communities into the hillsides exposes not only their economically impoverished status, but also highlights their correspondingly marginal political agency.<sup>50</sup> These conditions have meant that such communities lack access to many of the goods and services which would improve their resilience against environmental hazards or provide protection from the crisis-level storms that are now so prevalent.

Unrestrained resource extraction and economic exploitation have plagued Haiti since the eighteenth century. Such processes have eviscerated the resilience of the environment against natural hazards and increased livelihood volatility amongst the poorest and most vulnerable demographics. As USAID reported in 2016,

“Widespread deforestation, particularly in the hillsides, has led to flooding, dramatic rates of soil erosion, and subsequent declines in agricultural productivity. Haiti's valuable

---

<sup>48</sup> Nathan McClintock, *Regenerative Agriculture for Haiti's Central Plateau- A Sustainable Foundation for Food and Nutrition Security* (Paris: Zanmi Lasante, 2004).

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Piers M. Blaikie, *The Political Economy of Soil Erosion in Developing Countries* (London: Longman, 1985), 89.

coastal and marine resources have been degraded by sediment deposition and overfishing, resulting in considerable loss in biodiversity”.<sup>51</sup>

For Haiti, the decay of environmental quality from aggressive farming practices, in conjunction with a long history of colonial exploitation has led to the gradual, yet indisputable rise of socio-economic insecurity and authoritarianism. These are both forces which heighten people’s vulnerability to disaster in complex and mutually reinforcing ways.

Concerns regarding Haiti’s rapid environmental degradation have become increasingly worrisome since independence in 1804. Following the Haitian revolution, the government was forced to export timber throughout the 19th century to pay off a 150 million Franc indemnity to its former oppressor. This debt was justified by France as compensation for the losses incurred to plantation owners during Haiti’s war for independence, as the French elite were deprived of their primary source of wealth (their slaves and sugar plantations) after Haiti won its independence.<sup>52</sup> Meanwhile, Haiti attempted to maintain plantation-style production methods as a means of producing export crops. Yet, with the land destroyed after the civil war and wage labor payments making the endeavor less profitable, Haiti’s economy suffered substantially. This, combined with the outrageous demands which France forced upon Haiti, eviscerated any possibility for Haiti’s new government to develop the domestic infrastructure and welfare programs necessary to secure its vulnerable citizens against natural disasters.

Furthermore, while French slave owners demanded payment of their reparations, the United States and other Western powers imposed a trade embargo against Haiti in an act of solidarity with the island nation’s former oppressor. In 1825, the United States even went so far

---

<sup>51</sup> United States Agency for International Development, *Haiti: The Environment and Climate Change* (Washington D.C.: United States Government, 2016). Available at: <https://www.usaid.gov/haiti/environment>.

<sup>52</sup> Paul Farmer, *The Uses of Haiti* (Monroe: Common Courage Press, 2006), 62-71.

as to block Haiti's invitation to the Western Hemisphere Panama Conference.<sup>53</sup> This effectively placed the nation in a state of diplomatic quarantine. Under such circumstances, Haiti was not recognized as an independent nation by the international community until France acknowledged full payment of Haitian debt in 1893 -- almost ninety years after independence.<sup>54</sup>

However, even during Haiti's period of official 'isolation', the United States maintained a firm hold over all political and economic affairs within the state at the expense of the Haitian government. On numerous occasions U.S. marines would storm into the Banque Nationale d'Haiti and claim large sums of money supposedly owed to the United States.<sup>55</sup> Various military historians have also recalled that, "The United States Navy [was] compelled to send warships into Haitian waters to protect the lives and property of American citizens."<sup>56</sup> This occurred in 1849, 1851, 1857, 1858, 1865, every year from 1866 through 1869, 1876, 1888, 1891, 1892, and again each year between 1902 and 1915.<sup>57</sup> The United States maintained ships in Haiti practically uninterrupted throughout the entire period of 'isolation'. However, the aim of this unofficial US occupation was less to protect American lives or promote stability in Haiti, than it was to enforce the Monroe Doctrine. Throughout the early twentieth century, the United States became increasingly strict in controlling Caribbean commercial traffic and access to the Panama Canal.<sup>58</sup> Therefore, while ostracized, the new nation of Haiti was not 'isolated' as some would claim. Rather, the country was a much-used pariah, manipulated by the United States and European powers for economic or political gains.<sup>59</sup> In a broader context, this history is indicative of the nature of power relations in the post-colonial era, whereby global hegemony have been

---

<sup>53</sup> Paul Farmer, "An Anthropology of Structural Violence," *Current Anthropology*, (45)3 (2004): 312.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Paul Farmer, *The Uses of Haiti* (Monroe: Common Courage Press, 2006), 88.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 78.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

able to collectively alienate underdeveloped prior colonies, assuring the weaker states' subservience to dominant political interests and sustained economic dependency. Since the colonial era, international power hierarchies have generated and reinforced excessive livelihood insecurities, transnational displacement, and greater overall vulnerability to natural disasters amongst the world's most desperate and marginalized societies.

As such, the cultural junctures and ideologies established by Haiti's colonial social hierarchies are a central force behind the state's repeated subjection to despotic regimes and enduring economic underdevelopment. The ideologies promoted throughout colonialism and into the era of US occupation have fostered the state's tendency towards authoritarian militarism in numerous ways. Under the Haitian culture of political degeneracy, people's rights have virtually no legal safeguards; thousands of individuals are thus left abjectly poor and oppressed by the elites and government alike. Deep livelihood insecurity and desperation for a sense of protected humanity against oppression are defining characteristics of the Haitian condition. Such factors are central to understanding Haiti's incapacity to address or prevent natural disasters. It was also a combination of these sentiments which fueled the nationalist rhetoric espoused by those who supported tyrannical dictator, Francois Duvalier throughout his reign from 1957 to 1971.<sup>60</sup>

In the post-independence era, the consequences of commodity crop production in Haiti have not been merely environmental, but also incorporate important socio-political and economic considerations. These secondary dimensions pose direct implications for determining people's vulnerability to, and the likelihood of, disaster under hazardous weather conditions. Such is the case since growing cash crops like coffee or sugar inevitably constrain the production capacity of producers within the fluctuations of global markets, while also altering the ecological conditions

---

<sup>60</sup> Stephan Palmie and Francisco Scarano, *The Caribbean: A History of the Region and Its Peoples* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 560-562.

experienced locally.<sup>61</sup> Throughout the 1900s, the further expansion of monocrop agricultural practices for globalized trade was deeply established within the governing networks of the state, and large US agribusinesses played a central role in shifting agricultural production methods throughout the nation. Even today, USAID continues to implement modernized development projects such as *Feed the Future* or *Climate-Resilient Farming*, which come with many negative economic and environmental consequences for the same Haitians they claim to serve.

In 1970, industrialized sweatshop production began after the United States invested heavily in the growth of assembly line manufacturing. Quickly, factory labor replaced coffee production as the number one source of income.<sup>62</sup> With the subsequent modernization of industry and an exponentially increasing population, charcoal demand in the capital, Port-Au-Prince, increased substantially.<sup>63</sup> This caused even greater deforestation across the country and accelerated the rate of environmental degradation -- something which was already a problem due to unsound commercial agricultural practices and ever-increasing competition over land.

The twentieth century did not fare much better. As globalization furthered Haiti's connections with international markets, industrialization expanded unrestrained. Further deforestation exacerbated tensions between neighboring populations, aggravated soil erosion, and prompted the global media to label Haiti as suffering from an enduring environmental crisis. Meanwhile, foreign direct investment, mostly from the United States, continued to pour into Haiti. Currently, the United States accounts for 85.3% of all Haitian exports.<sup>64</sup>

---

<sup>61</sup> Paul Robbins, *Political Ecology: A Critical Introduction* (Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 2004), 4.

<sup>62</sup> Paul Farmer, *The Uses of Haiti* (Monroe: Common Courage Press, 2006), 99 -100.

<sup>63</sup> Nathan McClintock, *Regenerative Agriculture for Haiti's Central Plateau- A Sustainable Foundation for Food and Nutrition Security* (Paris: Zanmi Lasante, 2004), 5-6.

<sup>64</sup> CIA World Factbook, "Export Partners of Haiti" (2015). Retrieved September 17, 2016. Available at: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ha.html>.

Since independence, the fate of Haiti has been intimately tied to US interests. In the 1980s Haiti was a poor, over-crowded country, ruled by a U.S.-backed, right-wing regime that was highly supportive of increasing US assembly plants, called *maquilas*, across the state.<sup>65</sup> By the end of 1980 Haiti became the world's ninth largest assembler of goods for US consumption.<sup>66</sup> Revenues from international outsourcing constituted over a quarter of the country's annual foreign exchange receipts.<sup>67</sup> US interference in the domestic affairs of Haiti has created some of the most dramatic and enduring forms of structural inefficiencies within the state apparatus, forcing Haiti to become even more susceptible to natural disasters. As Roger Burbach and Mark Herrold described, "Largely because of its cheap labor force, extensive government repression, and denial of even minimal labor rights, Haiti is one of the most attractive countries for both the subcontractors and the *maquilas*."<sup>68</sup> During this period, Haitian exports to the US (which consisted mostly of nuts and fruit) increased by a mere 3500%, indicating the rising levels of Haitian dependence upon its imposing American neighbor.<sup>69</sup> US interference in Haiti thus altered the political and economic agency of local farmers to an increasingly marginal status, forcing their subservience to the demands of Yankee imperialism. Simultaneously, economic intervention caused irreparable damage to the environment and integrity of social unity. Repeatedly, the US has intervened in Haiti to extract what little economic gains the nation can provide, exploiting local Haitian farmers and the environment in the interests of large multinational corporations. Seeking to assuage these conditions, ignorant environmental

---

<sup>65</sup> Norma Chinchilla and Nora Hamilton, "Prelude to Revolution: U.S. Investment in Central America," in *The Politics of Intervention: The United States in Central America*, eds., Roger Burbach and Patricia Flynn (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1984), 213 - 239.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 99.

<sup>67</sup> J. Grunwald, L. Delatour, and K. Voltaire, "Offshore Assembly in Haiti," in *Haiti -- Today and Tomorrow: An Interdisciplinary Study*, eds., Foster, C. and A. Valdman (Lanham: University Press of America, 1984), 232.

<sup>68</sup> Roger Burbach and Marc Herrold, "The U.S. Economic Stake in Central America and the Caribbean," in *The Politics of Intervention: The United States in Central America*, eds., Roger Burbach and Patricia Flynn (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1984), 196.

<sup>69</sup> Paul Farmer, *The Uses of Haiti* (Monroe: Common Courage Press, 2006), 38.

conservation programs and inefficient foreign aid initiatives have flooded into Haiti. Yet, this has only worsened the people's dependency and endemic vulnerability.

Over time, in response to dynamic political constraints or economic desperation, some Haitians have attempted to lease and sharecrop their fields. However, since there remains virtually no space for traditional fallowing practices in such rugged terrain, soil quality has further deteriorated.<sup>70</sup> Likewise, poor economic conditions combined with the human tendency toward risk adversity have dis-incentivized capital investment for fertilizers on these leased lands.<sup>71</sup> While the sharecropping system is still practiced in many regions of rural Haiti, agricultural output remains at levels only sufficient for basic subsistence plus the sale of a minor surplus in local markets.<sup>72</sup> To this day, free market capitalism and neoliberal policies continue to heighten Haitians' vulnerability. Haiti's current economic policies tend to favor the urban over the rural sector, appeasing US interests while directly harming the income security of rural communities.<sup>73</sup> For the average Haitian farmer, the possibility of getting a loan is minimal. Even when an individual is fortunate enough to find a lender, the interest rates are so high that he must relinquish almost all of his profits, or in some cases, face insolvency.<sup>74</sup> Furthermore, small landholdings combined with the high cost of borrowing effectively destroy the growth capacity of rural farming communities, condemning rural farmers to produce foods exclusively for the

---

<sup>70</sup> Nathan McClintock, *Agroforestry and Sustainable Resource Conservation in Haiti: A Case Study* (North Carolina State University, 2010).

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Mats Lundahl, *Peasants and Poverty: A Study of Haiti*, in *The Haitian Economy: Man, Land and Markets* (London: Croom Helm, 1983).

<sup>74</sup> Glenn R. Smucker, "Supplies of Credit among Haitian Peasants," in *Field Report, Development Alternatives, Inc.* ed. Glenn R. Smucker (Washington, D.C.: DAI, 1982).

See also: Glenn R. Smucker, *Peasants and Development Politics: A Study in Haitian Class and Culture* (New York: New School for Social Research, 1982).



local market and domestic consumption.<sup>75</sup> To grow agricultural products on the scale necessary for export is too costly for the Haitian peasant. Beyond this, soil erosion and rampant deforestation have destroyed valuable, arable land beyond repair, worsening the level of economic uncertainty faced by rural peasants.<sup>76</sup> The aforementioned conditions, combined with an ever-increasing population, bring about widespread unemployment across Haiti and present significant, yet not entirely understood cultural, political, and environmental consequences for the security of the nation. Endemic marginalization and pauperization of the Haitian populace has forced a majority of people into risky and unpredictable living situations along Haiti's barren hillsides.

The consequences of these trends are made most explicit by the outcome of Hurricane Jeanne in September 2004. As the storm tore through the nation, approximately 3,000 Haitians were left dead, while in the Dominican Republic, the death toll was in the single digits.<sup>77</sup> Various reports have noted that a majority of the casualties in Haiti were caused by massive landslides, as vast amounts of water fell along the eroded hills. The storm destroyed soil cover and swept through entire communities in a violent "wave of destruction".<sup>78</sup> The devastation suffered by the delicate landscape completely shattered the homes and all material assets of its residents, while in the aftermath many people remained isolated from much needed aid and medical care due to lack of infrastructure. The government's complete incapacity to address the needs of society under such dire conditions meant that many Haitians later perished from disease, malnutrition,

---

<sup>75</sup> Michel S. Laguerre, "Migration and Urbanization in Haiti," *Sociologus*, Neue Folge/New Series, (37)2 (1987), 118-139. Available at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43645261> .

<sup>76</sup> Frederick J. Conway, *A Study of the Fuel-Wood Situation in Haiti* (Port-au-Prince, United States Agency for International Development, 1979).

See also: Gerald F. Murray, *Terraces, Trees and the Haitian Peasant: An Assessment of Twenty-Five Years of Erosion Control in Rural Haiti* (Port-au-Prince: United States Agency for International Development, 1979).

<sup>77</sup> Miles B. Lawrence and Hugh D. Cobb, "Tropical Cyclone Report: Hurricane Jeanne," *National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration: National Hurricane Center* (2005). Available at: [http://www.nhc.noaa.gov/data/tcr/AL112004\\_Jeanne.pdf](http://www.nhc.noaa.gov/data/tcr/AL112004_Jeanne.pdf)

<sup>78</sup> <http://www.geocases2.co.uk/hurricane3.htm>

and poor sanitation.<sup>79</sup> Sadly, Hurricane Jeanne is just one instance among many which exposes how the Haitian people's forced migration into the barren mountains has obliged them to accept everyday situations of greater risk and insecurity to natural disasters.

Collectively, the outcomes of such a history have ensured that the Haitian state is to remain powerless and incapable of providing for its people. According to Transparency International's 2015 report, Haiti ranks 158/168 on the corruption perceptions index.<sup>80</sup> The nation is also one of the most poverty-stricken in the world. To this day, the government lacks the capacity to strengthen infrastructure, mitigate violent crime, improve access to health care, and even to provide basic public goods such as proper roadways and adequate sanitation. According to the UN Human Development Report of 2011, "The poorest 30% of the population has access to less than 6% of the country's income [...] the richest 2% of Haiti's people control 26% of national wealth."<sup>81</sup> Since the report was published, the situation in Haiti has only worsened. Haitians' vulnerability to disasters and disease epidemics is expected to increase as global warming and rising sea levels in the Caribbean region worsen, as the urban population proceeds to grow exponentially, and as the nation continues to suffer debilitating material and social conditions. Together, such processes have amplified inequality and rates of natural resource extraction in Haiti. These factors are the dynamic result of colonially-driven environmental destruction combined with the exploitative mechanisms of a neoliberal world order. Never have the perpetrators of this structural violence considered the consequences of their actions for the local populations most directly affected. The masses are effectively excluded

---

<sup>79</sup> Lesley Hauler, "Today in History: Remembering Hurricane Jeanne," *AOL*, July 14, 2016. Accessed March 05, 2017. Available at: <https://www.aol.com/article/2015/09/23/today-in-history-remembering-hurricane-jeanne/21239632/> .

<sup>80</sup> Transparency International, *Country Report: Haiti 2016* (Berlin: Transparency International, 2016). <https://www.transparency.org/country/#HTI> . Accessed on September 17, 2016.

<sup>81</sup> The United Nations, *Human Development Report 2011* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 126.

from the political and economic life of their society, giving rise to poignant vulnerability to natural disaster.

Migration, both domestic and international, has also been pivotal to creating Haitians' vulnerability to disaster. With the increased strains of rural life under the governments of the 19th and 20th centuries, many rural families left their villages behind in search of higher paying work in Port-Au-Prince or the Dominican Republic. To this day, the vast majority of the Dominican Republic's migrant Haitian laborers are part of the informal economy: undocumented and illegal residents, moving from job to job in search of employment and evading detention or deportation by Dominican authorities.<sup>82</sup> In these instances, not only are Haitian laborers left without the guarantees of citizenship while in the Dominican Republic, but they are also forced into unsafe and unregulated working conditions that magnify their vulnerability to natural disasters in numerous ways. Under the proper environmental circumstances, a natural disaster is the certain outcome of the political and social conditions that these migrant workers have accepted out of pure economic desperation.

Domestic patterns of urban migration also leave many individuals at greater risk and vulnerability to disasters. This is most notably done by increasing people's susceptibility to disease epidemics such as HIV/AIDs and by placing greater strains on the local administration to accommodate such a massive influx of individuals.<sup>83</sup> When a severe storm hits Haiti, the people are physically vulnerable and the state under great stress, lacking roads, communication infrastructure, and even proper urban sanitation or waste removal systems.<sup>84</sup> Combined, such circumstances mean the outbreak of natural disaster is inevitable. Urbanization has also fractured

---

<sup>82</sup> Barbara L. Bernier, "Sugar Cane Slavery: Bateyes in the Dominican Republic," *New England Journal of International and Comparative Law*, (9)1 (2003): 16.

<sup>83</sup> Michel S. Laguerre, "Migration and Urbanization in Haiti," *Sociologus*, Neue Folge/New Series, (37) 2 (1987): 118-39.

<sup>84</sup> Paul Farmer, "An Anthropology of Structural Violence," *Current Anthropology*, (45)3 (2004): 305-325.

community ties within rural locations, as younger populations leave in search of work, and as men depart from their families to improve economic opportunities by sending remittances home.<sup>85</sup> Out of financial necessity, many women also resort to prostitution to supplement their income, placing themselves and their families at greater risk to violence, displacement, and disease epidemics.<sup>86</sup>

Irrespective of the risks, urbanization has increased significantly in the 21st century, and the state continues to face rising pressures in order to accommodate the influx of new residents. Massive shantytown settlements proliferate, and this urban chaos only worsens the effects of a natural hazard, especially since a majority of Haiti's housing remains undocumented by federal agencies.<sup>87</sup> Squatter settlements often lack sewage systems and proper drainage, basic infrastructure, safety standards, and electricity, sprawling for miles in nearly all directions. Even now, the government has yet to construct federally maintained roads or telecommunications.<sup>88</sup> Meanwhile, deforestation and erosion continue on a massive scale in rural regions. Thus, across the state, Haiti's natural environment continues to deteriorate alongside the people's resilience to hazards.

Family ties and the unity of kinship systems have suffered from urbanization in Haiti as well, and this limits people's access to valuable knowledge and coping mechanisms. Kinship ties and strong social capital are central components in determining a people's vulnerability to, and the likelihood of, a disaster outbreak. As the *World Disasters Report* explains, an important element of early hurricane warning systems in the Caribbean are the local organizations and

---

<sup>85</sup> The World Bank Group: Caribbean Country Management Unit, *Haiti Country Social Analysis: Social Resilience and State Fragility in Haiti* (Washington D.C.: The World Bank Group, 2006), 1-36.

<sup>86</sup> US Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report: Haiti* (Washington D.C.: US Department of State – Bureau of Public Affairs, 2016), 190-191. Available at: <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/258879.pdf>.

<sup>87</sup> Paul Farmer, "An Anthropology of Structural Violence," *Current Anthropology*, (45)3 (2004): 313.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

networks of awareness that come “from below”.<sup>89</sup> Such knowledge previously provided rural communities with important tools and networks to cope with hazards. Traditional systems of self-help and social protection at the neighborhood level, as well as training of local activists in rural areas, are pivotal to the survival of high-risk communities in the face of environmental hazards. Valuable kinship networks of reciprocity, as well as a sense of belonging to a community, have gradually eroded within many Haitian villages due to urbanization. Such factors, however, are essential to ensuring the stability and security of marginalized demographics not only in Haiti, but across the globe.

Therefore, the social and cultural degeneration of Haiti is in many regards a symptom of the country’s emergence into the international sphere. With the rise of globalization and the hegemony of neoliberal ideology, the Haitian economy has become part of a new hierarchic chain of exploitation -- within which Haiti again lies at the bottom.<sup>90</sup> Participation in the world’s capitalist system has reinforced patterns of extreme inequality between the regional cores and peripheries of economic interaction. Such trends effectively condemn Haiti to a state of unerring danger to violent outbreak due to uncontrollable social polarization and inequality. By eradicating traditional resource systems and dismantling prior resource allocation patterns between man and nature, Haitian citizens have lost the valuable knowledge base which traditionally provided communities with early warning mechanisms and ways to physically cope with environmental hazards. Furthermore, the modern era has seen Haiti forced into a new system of exploitation whereby the nation is defined as a ‘failed state’ of unerring dependence upon foreign actors and aid for economic survival. When a hazard strikes, these dynamic

---

<sup>89</sup> Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, *World Disasters Report 2005* (Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff Dordrecht, 2005), 48.

<sup>90</sup> Robert Fatton Jr., *Haiti: Trapped in the Outer Periphery* (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2014), 16-17.

pressures and instabilities are compounded to the breaking point, marking the outbreak of disaster.

Haiti's political system and economic structure present serious implications for the vulnerability and coping capacity of various social groups against natural hazards. The outcomes of policies enacted under US-sponsored dictator, Jean-Claude, 'Baby Doc', Duvalier are perhaps the most apparent illustration of this point. During Duvalier's fifteen years in power, tariffs for US goods were virtually eliminated, and domestic rice producers were swamped with imports from American farming operations.<sup>91</sup> This stripped small Haitian producers of their primary source of income and sent hundreds of thousands of bankrupted farmers into the slums of Port-au-Prince or abroad looking for work.<sup>92</sup> In exchange for such amenable trade policies, the United States protected the Duvalier regime against peasant uprisings.<sup>93</sup> Duvalier's policies not only caused widespread displacement, leaving thousands homeless and politically isolated, but also generated enduring socio-economic instability and vulnerability among the urban and rural poor alike.

This was especially the case for women. Being the predominant demographic of the agricultural workforce, women lost access to markets for the cash crops they had grown.<sup>94</sup> Meanwhile, their families survived on meagre levels of food, since their production of subsistence goods had been reduced in order to grow more profitable crops for export.<sup>95</sup> What is more, a woman's agricultural plot was oftentimes not even formally acknowledged by the state as a site of economic production, since the land was documented under her husband's name, he

---

<sup>91</sup> Pedro L. San Miguel, *The Caribbean* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2011), 562-565.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 563.

<sup>93</sup> Paul Farmer, *The Uses of Haiti* (Monroe: Common Courage Press, 2006), 93.

<sup>94</sup> Jennifer Garcon, "Women and the Duvalier Dictatorship, 1957-1986," in *Haiti Island Luminous Database* (Digital Library of the Caribbean, 2014). Available at: <http://islandluminous.fiu.edu/french/part10-slide04.html> .

<sup>95</sup> Richard A. Haggerty, "Growth and Structure of the Economy," in *Haiti: A Country Study*, ed. Richard A. Haggerty (Washington D.C.: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1989).

being the formal proprietor under patriarchal norms.<sup>96</sup> As a result, women were more vulnerable than men to the shifts in economic policies under Duvalier. US imperialism created a situation that further entrenched patriarchal exclusion: not only did women suffer from the loss of resources, capital, and livelihood security, but they were also overlooked by the state as a productive element of national output. The women who became displaced under the Duvalier regime were left with no choice but to go in search of better employment opportunities in the cities. Often times, they became victims of Latin America's lucrative human trafficking rings.<sup>97</sup> In this sense, the consequences of economic openness and free market capitalism in Haiti are twofold: the further destruction of environmental resources, combined with the displacement and rising insecurity of millions of individuals.

The legacy of Duvalier has only aggravated the country's perpetual political instability. Haiti's succeeding Western-imposed dictators have continued Duvalier's legacy by regularly employing violence, corruption, and coercion as a means of maintaining power over all lucrative resources. The repeated imposition of corrupt and violent dictators (all of whom have been backed by the US) has further entrenched domestic inequalities and socio-political tensions across Haiti.

Therefore, one must view the current humanitarian crisis in Haiti, a central force behind the nation's repeated experience of disasters, as a process deeply embedded within the patterns of violence and exploitation that plague the nation. The movement of resources and people from the countryside into urban and global markets, and the consequences of this commercialization for local populations, is central to understanding the deforestation and degradation occurring

---

<sup>96</sup> The Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development, *Social Institutions and Gender Index: Gender Equality in Haiti* (Paris: The Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development, 2016). Accessed March 30, 2017. Available at: <http://www.genderindex.org/country/haiti>.

<sup>97</sup> Alison M. Jaggar, "Is Globalization Good for Women?," *Comparative Literature*, (53)4 (Autumn, 2001): 306.

locally. This is a system of extraction which magnifies Haitians' vulnerability to environmental disasters exponentially. It also undermines the agency of Haitian producers over their own labor. Haiti's complex history highlights the role of foreign political entities and capitalist ideology in augmenting the degeneration of traditional knowledge systems, government agency, and environmental relations amongst local populations. Such conditions cause heightened livelihood insecurity among the landless and marginalized masses, and subsequently, engender greater vulnerability to disaster nationwide. As the case of Haiti indicates, a confluence of dynamic forces: colonialism, neo-imperialism, environmental degradation (aggravated an enduring legacy of exploitation, political corruption, and militant dictatorships) often generate social and economic conditions of deep insecurity.

These concepts illustrate the highly political and economic dimensions of environmental narratives in Haiti and overturn conventional ideas regarding the region's environmental crisis. Common discourse portrays the Haitian condition as the inevitable outcome of natural forces and of the state's backwards, inefficient government. However, this mainstream narrative is flawed, as it disregards the root causes of Haitians' vulnerability. Indeed, when floods or hurricanes hit the region, the resulting environmental destruction is quite substantial. However, this damage is not merely due to the storm alone. Rather, it is the product of over a century of insensitive political and economic processes which have stripped the land of its biological integrity, robbed the people of their livelihood security, and eradicated culturally-shared coping mechanisms. From this standpoint, the root causes behind Haiti's inordinate experiences of natural disasters become quite clear.

With the destruction of the environment and loss of biodiversity that has occurred since the 18th century, the basis of Haitian livelihoods has become increasingly vulnerable to shocks



from dynamic political, social, and economic forces. In reference to the recent 2012 earthquake, the state was labeled by NBC news as a "victim" of one of the "deadliest natural disasters" in history.<sup>98</sup> However, nature does not simply take advantage of humankind in such a malicious way; other factors, of an entirely anthropogenic origin, are equally to blame for Haiti's suffering from one of the "deadliest natural disasters" in history.<sup>99</sup> It is the outcome of multiple factors compounded in a single instant: severe natural hazards as well as the dynamic pressures of political and economic insecurities, which actually cause the disasters so often highlighted by media publications. Only when these elements (of both natural and human origin) are combined can a natural disaster truly take hold.

Therefore, understanding Haiti's experience of natural disasters must be viewed from a framework of political ecology. That is, the traditional relationships which people have with their natural environment, in many ways defines their resilience against, and capacity to adapt under, stressful environmental conditions. When external or state political entities impose land restrictions and enact new policies which do not account for traditional forms of resource use (as was the case under both French and later US occupation) the livelihood of these communities become threatened in dramatic ways. Such trends constrain the people's adaptive capacity against environmental stressors and diminish their physical security in everyday life. For Haiti, the first steps towards stripping rural farming communities of their ability to cope with adversity and sustain themselves began with colonial occupation. Yet, these harmful processes have endured in the modern era too, being marked by Haiti's peripheral economic status and severe state of dependency. Resource-importing countries like the United States and dogmatic structural

---

<sup>98</sup> "The Top 10 Deadliest Earthquakes in History," *MSNBC*, NBC News, 11 Apr. 2012. Accessed on: 25 Aug. 2016. Available at: [http://www.nbcnews.com/id/42029974/ns/world\\_news-asia\\_pacific/t/top-deadliest-earthquakes-history/#.V1V\\_PyMrLZs](http://www.nbcnews.com/id/42029974/ns/world_news-asia_pacific/t/top-deadliest-earthquakes-history/#.V1V_PyMrLZs)

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

adjustment policies only further constrict the state's ability to realize a sense of economic empowerment -- something which would ultimately enhance people's resilience against natural disasters.

Additionally, the impact of international political systems and Western interests upon Haiti's faltering government dictate the gendered allocation of resources, access to capital, and people's overall vulnerability across the region. Beyond the role of economic ideology on the micro level, foreign demands and aid conditionalities reinforce a system of dependence in order for Haiti to achieve economic acceptance on the global stage.<sup>100</sup> Even the most well-intentioned forms of foreign assistance in Haiti will often heighten the insecurity and vulnerability of at-risk communities rather than help.

No event is a better manifestation of this phenomenon than the earthquake of January 12, 2010, which killed more than 220,000 people and nearly demolished Port-Au-Prince. Many would agree that this disaster was predicated upon the dismal social, political, and economic conditions rooted in Haiti's history. However, the nation's recovery from this catastrophe highlights its critical state of dependence upon foreign powers, international finance regimes, and philanthropic assistance in order to survive.<sup>101</sup> Following the quake, Haiti received over \$10 billion in aid, and UN peacekeepers were sent to the region to support the recovery process.<sup>102</sup> However, later that same year one of the worst recorded cholera outbreaks took hold of Haiti, an island which until that time had no history of cholera. Later analyses found that UN peacekeepers were likely carriers of the disease and had brought cholera to Haiti from prior

---

<sup>100</sup> Such demands and conditionalities include policies mandated by the IMF and World Bank through import substitution industrialization and the Washington Consensus principles, encouraging neoliberal restructuring of economic systems so as to dismantle trade barriers.

<sup>101</sup> Robert Fatton, *Haiti: Trapped in the Outer Periphery* (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2014), 13-15.

<sup>102</sup> Gabriel Stargardter and Makini Brice, "Haiti tries to get hurricane aid right, but cholera blamed on U.N. wanes," *Reuters*, October 13, 2016. Accessed March 20, 2017. Available at: <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-storm-matthew-haiti-aid-idUSKCN12D0GP>.

deployment to Nepal.<sup>103</sup> To date, over 470,000 cases of cholera have been reported in Haiti, and approximately 6,631 deaths may be attributed to this single outbreak -- all due to the negligence of the international community.<sup>104</sup>

It has been six years since the quake took place. The immediate effects of the disaster have long since passed, yet NGOs and various humanitarian aid agencies are still delivering free rice to Haiti, harming the country's economy years after the emergency has subsided. Such aid is counterproductive to the realization of economic growth and improved civil resilience against disasters, for it shatters the demand for locally-produced items. Therefore, excessive aid impairs domestic market functions, and in turn endangers the livelihoods of the very same Haitian communities that international aid groups are trying so desperately to assist. In such conditions, the likelihood of repeated disaster outbreaks is infinitely magnified.

What is more, the popularized forms of NGO charity which saturate Haiti's economic structure (all of which are dominated by Western institutions) reinforce a mentality of dependency upon handouts, rather than encourage rapid recovery and economic empowerment within the communities affected by natural disasters. In Haiti, foreign aid has become an industry in itself, and this industry has eviscerated the demand for domestically produced goods and services. With the compounded effects of globalization and neoliberal hegemony continuing to attack the stability of this small state, it is likely that the government will remain incapable of realizing the long-term self-sufficiency needed to effectively prevent, address, and recover from disasters. The prolonged reliance of Haiti, like many developing nations, upon foreign aid disbursements has thus prevented the government from achieving the level of economic

---

<sup>103</sup> Camila Domonoske, "U.N. Admits Role In Haiti Cholera Outbreak That Has Killed Thousands," *NPR*, August 18, 2016. Accessed on: March 05, 2017. Available at: <http://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2016/08/18/490468640/u-n-admits-role-in-haiti-cholera-outbreak-that-has-killed-thousands> .

<sup>104</sup> Center for Disease Control, "Global Health - Haiti" (Atlanta: United States Government, 2016). Available at: [https://www.cdc.gov/haiticholera/haiti\\_cholera.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/haiticholera/haiti_cholera.htm).

development necessary to adequately support and protect its citizens from disaster. Aid has replaced the foreign direct investment and trade revenues which would sustain a developing economy, instead inhibiting growth by exacerbating the state's reliance upon aid and foreign loans. As previously noted, this ultimately harms the resilience of local populations against disasters by limiting people's access to goods and resources as well as by constricting the diversity of income opportunities available.

With a firm understanding of Haiti's socio-political history sufficiently established, it is also useful to compare experiences of disasters in Haiti to those of neighboring nation-states. Such a comparison further illustrates the highly political, cultural, and economic underpinnings of natural disasters. In the Dominican Republic, Haiti's neighbor on the island of Hispaniola, demographic statistics expose the truly dire and highly vulnerable status of Haitian citizens. According to the World Factbook, both nations have nearly identical populations, yet Haiti has half the territory of the Dominican Republic. When analyzing basic indicators for general health and sanitation levels, Haiti also falls far behind that of its neighbor. In 2012, deaths related to HIV/AIDS in Haiti totaled 7,900 people, while in the Dominican Republic approximately 1,900 deaths were recorded.<sup>105</sup> A comparison of these two nations in the context of a biological hazard like HIV/AIDS provides a strong indicator of how state institutions and the socio-economic conditions of the government generate specific levels of civil vulnerability. With a high degree of migration between the two bordering nations, the spread of disease is not only fast, but also a serious concern for both governments. However, the divergence between each respective government's ability to address the issue is quite staggering. Prior to the earthquake in January

---

<sup>105</sup> CIA World Factbook, "Compare: Haiti vs. Dominican Republic" (2016). Accessed on September 30, 2016. Available at: <http://www.indexmundi.com/factbook/compare/haiti.dominican-republic>

2010, 46% of Haitians did not have access to healthcare.<sup>106</sup> Simultaneously, the Dominican Republic was working to obtain universal access to healthcare for its citizens. Since this time the Dominican Republic has become known as having one of the best healthcare systems in the Caribbean.<sup>107</sup> These facts illustrate an important dissimilarity between Haiti and the Dominican Republic regarding each government's institutional capacity to address the needs of their citizens. It also poses direct implications for people's overall vulnerability to disasters as well as for the nation's capacity to recover from such crises.

Likewise, by comparing the relative ability of Cuba versus Haiti to recover from hurricanes in recent years, the political and economic factors which generate distinct demographic vulnerabilities to natural disasters are more apparently exposed. Both nations are equally at risk to hurricanes, being island nations of close geographic proximity in the Caribbean. For both states the recurrence of extreme weather from climate change has only increased in the twenty-first century. This poses new challenges to the existing governments, both in terms of preemptive measures against disasters and in the recovery process. However, the compounded effects of climate change, as well as each nation's distinct political history, alter many of the factors which determine how affected communities will be able to recover and adapt when hazards strike. To better understand this notion, it is useful once more to refer to the Human Development Index referred to in Chapter One. On the HDI scale, Cuba currently scores .769 while Haiti scores .483, ranking 67th and 163rd respectively.<sup>108</sup> The stark differences between Cuba and Haiti's levels of development according to the HDI (especially regarding each

---

<sup>106</sup> The World Health Organization, *Haitian health care: a follow-up* (Geneva: The World Health Organization, 2011). Available at: <http://www.who.int/features/2011/haiti/en/> .

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> United Nations Development Program, *Haiti* (2016). Accessed on 16 September, 2016.

<http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/HTI>  
Ibid.

government's ability to provide adequate education, infrastructure, and social services to their citizens) highlights the poignant contrast in civilian vulnerability to disaster resulting from each country's political institutions and state-led social welfare provisions -- or lack thereof.

Specifically in the case of Cuba and Haiti, several factors have been found to strongly influence each state's capacity to recover from disaster. In a study conducted by Pichler and Striessnig, higher levels of general education and training-enhanced social networks in Cuba, factors which created a social culture of support and reciprocity, were of great importance in augmenting local forms of resilience to disasters and reducing vulnerability.<sup>109</sup> Such is the case since, as noted in the study, "Education predisposes popular understanding and action, making it a vital link in the early warning chain that makes the difference between life and death in the face of some of the planet's most ferocious storms".<sup>110</sup> Since the beginning of Cuba's Socialist Revolution in 1959, the clear commitment of the Cuban government to developing a legal framework for disaster management, as well as implementing universal education and health care systems, has meant that the public is comparatively better prepared to adapt to hazards and overcome risk than the powerless citizens of Haiti.

In 2005, Hurricane Georges hit both Haiti and Cuba, and the effects of the storm upon each nation individually are indeed quite different. Irrespective of the fact that the storm was weakened by the time it reached Haiti, the impact was overwhelming. Many people lost their homes and livelihoods due to heavy mudslides along the deforested hillsides and mountains, leaving approximately 167,322 individuals homeless and without any access to clean drinking

---

<sup>109</sup> A. Pichler and E. Striessnig, "Differential vulnerability to hurricanes in Cuba, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic: the contribution of education," *Ecology and Society*, (18)3 (2013): 31. Available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5751/ES-05774-180331>

<sup>110</sup> Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters and International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, *World disasters report 2005* (Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff, Dordrecht, 2005). See also: Pichler, A., and E. Striessnig, "Differential vulnerability to hurricanes in Cuba, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic: the contribution of education," *Ecology and Society*, (18)3 (2013): 31. Available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5751/ES-05774-180331>

water.<sup>111</sup> In total 209 Haitians perished as a result of the 2005 hurricane.<sup>112</sup> Contrastingly, in Cuba, a well-executed evacuation plan and state-directed warning system limited the death toll to only six individuals, while superior medical institutions insured a speedy recovery.<sup>113</sup> Thus it becomes apparent that, relative to other nations, the Haitian government significantly lacks the institutional capacity required to address the needs of its citizens and protect against natural disasters, especially in terms of education, infrastructure, and healthcare provisions.

The historical overview presented in this chapter has exposed the apparent role of political forces in generating the risks and vulnerabilities of certain populations to disaster. By analyzing the outcomes of Haiti's exploitative institutions over time, it has also become evident that Haiti's environmental conditions are in many ways the outcome of distinct political, economic, and cultural practices. The nation has suffered from repeated forms of structural violence and dependency: colonialism, imperialism, and later foreign aid efforts have each played a significant role in generating a culture of poverty and lack of security surrounding basic human rights. A government endowed with the financial and political resources necessary to provide its citizens with proper goods and services, especially early-warning mechanisms and emergency response units, significantly diminishes its citizen's vulnerability to natural disasters. Such is done by enhancing people's overall capacity to adapt and respond appropriately in adverse conditions. However, in Haiti this has not been the case. Instead, the nation has experienced a long history of colonial occupation and economic exploitation that has negatively impacted the nature of power relations within the state. Combined with the destabilizing effects of globalization, this history has led to greater inequality, poverty, and marginality amongst the

---

<sup>111</sup> Michael Norton, "Haiti Hurricane Death Toll Hits 147," *Associated Press*. Archived from the original on October 11, 2007. Available at: <http://faculty.webster.edu/corbetre/haiti/misc/topic/disaster/death toll.htm> .

<sup>112</sup> John L. Guiney, *Preliminary Report on Hurricane Georges: 15 September - 01 October 1998* (Silver Spring: National Hurricane Center - NOAA, 1999). Updated September 2014.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*

majority of Haitian citizens. The state's enduring incapacity to uphold human rights, as well as its perpetually handicapped economy, have only exacerbated people's insecurities while simultaneously destroying environmental resilience to severe weather. With the aforementioned considerations in mind, it becomes apparent that in Haiti, the outbreak of disaster is intimately linked to the legacies of colonialism and the exploitative mechanisms of dependency relations embedded within the current international system.

### **Chapter 3: Addressing the Root Causes of Famine in Ethiopia**

Upon examining Ethiopia's recurring experiences of famine, it is tempting to relate the cause of these natural disasters to the most visible characteristics. These include: the country's dependence upon traditional agriculture and pastoral farming, recurring droughts, rapid population growth, and agricultural market dysfunctions. However, to accept such a rationale would be to overlook the most important component in understanding how natural disasters, especially famines, develop into recurring crises. Ethiopia's enduring history of human rights abuses and inter-ethnic violence, accentuated by an unaccountable, self-interested government, are among the most important, yet often overlooked factors which both create and prolong famine in the state.

People's vulnerability to natural disasters is indeed heightened when they are forced to cope with both poor environmental conditions and the defective governance of various regimes. Such circumstances have been instrumental to generating the unsafe conditions faced by a majority of the Ethiopia's farming communities. This is the case whether government influence over people's vulnerability manifests itself through policies of resource allocation, by limiting



public access to various goods and services, through civil-military relations, or within the nature of contemporary trade policies and economic goals. In Ethiopia, history exposes that when the underlying political structures of society are impounded by rapid population growth, environmental degradation, and a citizenry deeply dependent upon agriculturally-based livelihoods, famines can easily become recurring crises. Thus, drought in Ethiopia is merely the catalyst of famine, whereby more complex and enduring power relations are what truly determine how people will either cope with drought or potentially how these hazards could escalate to disastrous famine conditions. With the aforementioned considerations in mind, the following discussion will analyze various elements of contemporary Ethiopian famines. Such will expose the central role which government actions and decisions, as well as cultural perceptions can play, not only in prolonging a famine, but also in directly generating the natural disaster itself.

To begin, however, one must take into account the complex manner whereby power relations alter the distribution of assets and resources within society. This concept is instrumental to understanding the causal chain of events preceding famine, for it determines whether people will be forced into the unsafe and hazardous living arrangements that exacerbate vulnerability to natural disasters.<sup>114</sup> The underlying socio-political processes inherent to a community directly affect the distribution of resources and assets across a region and are concerns which could mean life or death in times of drought.<sup>115</sup> In Ethiopia, land and freedom movement are by far the two most valuable assets possessed by any individual. From the Oromo and Afar pastoral communities of the highlands, to the Amhara and Somali agriculturalists, land has always been pivotal to the survival of Ethiopia's residents. Land provides the material basis for livelihood

---

<sup>114</sup> Piers Blaikie, Ben Wisner, Terry Cannon, and Ian Davis, *At Risk: Natural Hazards, People's Vulnerability, and Disasters* (London: Routledge, 1994), 78.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

security, while the people's freedom of movement ensures access to markets for the sale of surplus goods, as well as to reserve grazing lands in times of drought.<sup>116</sup>

In this case study, vulnerability to famine will be addressed through two prominent frameworks: the food availability decline (FAD) and food entitlements decline models (FED).<sup>117</sup> The former argues that disruption to food production below a certain level, being triggered by a natural hazard, is what causes famine. The latter focuses on how shifts in people's ability to acquire food through a variety of means (whether this be personal production, trade, state provisioning, or otherwise) creates a decline in people's purchasing power and precipitates the outbreak of famine.<sup>118</sup> The FED approach provides an important means of understanding how relations of power have changed throughout Ethiopia's various regimes, determining the distribution of assets and income across the rural regions most vulnerable to drought. Central to the arguments put forth in the following analysis is an understanding that any adequate explanation of famine requires that both root causes and underlying socio-political pressures be linked together in a causal chain of explanation. Doing so defines the various access and entitlement mechanisms which have given rise to Ethiopia's numerous famines. One prominent example of why such a detailed distinction is necessary may be found in the famine of 1973-1977. Many scholars have attributed this incident to a severe drought. However, such an assertion begs the question as to why, then there have been droughts without famine and famines without drought, something which will be addressed further in later discussion.<sup>119</sup>

---

<sup>116</sup> Alexander De Waal, *Evil Days: 30 Years of War and Famine in Ethiopia* (New York, NY: Human Rights Watch, 1991), 10-11. Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/Ethiopia919.pdf>

<sup>117</sup> Dersseh Endale, "The Ethiopian Famines Entitlements and Governance" (Working Papers 102, World Institute for Development and Economics Research - United Nations University, 1993), 2.

<sup>118</sup> Amartya Sen, *Poverty and Famines: An essay on Entitlement and Deprivation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), 45.

<sup>119</sup> Piers Blaikie, Ben Wisner, Terry Cannon, and Ian Davis, *At Risk: Natural Hazards, People's Vulnerability, and Disasters* (London: Routledge, 1994), 78.

Prior analyses have also exposed how livelihood insecurity figures centrally within the root causes of natural disasters like famine. Yet, livelihood insecurities are themselves determined by complex forces: seasonal fluctuations in weather patterns as well as important variations to political and economic conditions over extended periods of time. Each of these forces alters a population's entitlements and access to vital resources in distinct ways. Social and political processes are thus pivotal to conceptualizing the dynamic pressures that precipitate famines in Ethiopia. While it is true that the recurrence of flood and drought can be anticipated with relative certainty, it is much more difficult to anticipate how changes to political or social relations may shock people's ability to acquire different essential resources in times of scarcity. In Ethiopia, demographic trends can change quite rapidly, while other factors such as moral values and cultural knowledge change relatively little over time. Oftentimes, the impact of such fluctuations in one sphere of life, intensified by corresponding changes to environmental, economic, or political circumstances, can engender instability and unsafe conditions for those concerned. As a result, cyclical patterns of drought and flood in Ethiopia do not necessarily indicate the outbreak of famine. Rather, we must understand the significance of a flood or drought as it exists along a continuum of temporal events. Indeed, natural hazards are often the trigger of famine. However, the essential components of creating a disaster from a hazard are the social processes and economic conditions which mature over time and define the political context in which hazards erupt. In Ethiopia, there is perhaps no single factor which determines the orientation of socio-political relations to a greater degree than ethnicity.

Ethnic ties have continuously played a pivotal role in shaping the ideological preconceptions of Ethiopia's political economy, and in turn, upon the outbreak of famine. Across the country there are over eighty different ethnic groups, and while some represent over a million

individuals, others represent fewer than ten thousand.<sup>120</sup> The result is a system of highly fragmented political representation. Sometimes these divisions even become so entrenched in ethnic concerns that it is difficult to distinguish between identity and ideology.<sup>121</sup> The dominant ethnic minority of Tigray, who make up approximately 6% of the population, currently maintain autocratic control over the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) government. Meanwhile, the two largest ethnic denominations, the Oromo and Amhara, representing 34% and 27% respectively, continue to be persecuted by the ruling elites.<sup>122</sup> Increasingly, the Tigrayan-led government has used ethnicity as a basis for political organization; the Ethiopian state is ethnically divided into regional federations. Initially, the purpose of this federal system was to help the EPRDF government maintain control over the country's myriad ethnic factions.<sup>123</sup> However, these divisions, compounded by recent government policies that unequivocally marginalize the political demands of other ethnicities in Ethiopia, have exacerbated linguistic and cultural differences while also highlighting the confluence of competing historical narratives in Ethiopia. This makes for a volatile political environment indeed. In recent decades, ethnic mobilization against the tyranny of the Tigrayan government has increased, and the EPRDF has responded with swift, and increasingly violent, tactics of repression against such protest movements.<sup>124</sup>

---

<sup>120</sup> CIA World Factbook, *Country Report: Ethiopia* (Washington D.C.: CIA, 2016). Available at: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/et.html>.

<sup>121</sup> Beza Tesfaye, "Let's talk about ethnicity and nationalism in Ethiopia," *Africa is a Country*, October 07, 2014. Available at: <http://africasacountry.com/2014/10/lets-talk-about-ethnicity-and-nationalism-in-ethiopia/>.

<sup>122</sup> CIA World Factbook, *Country Report: Ethiopia* (Washington D.C.: CIA, 2016). Available at: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/et.html>.

<sup>123</sup> Sarah Vaughan, "Revolutionary democratic state-building: party, state and people in the EPRDF's Ethiopia," *Journal of Eastern Africa Studies*, (5) (2011): 619-640.

<sup>124</sup> Alexander De Waal, *Evil Days: 30 Years of War and Famine in Ethiopia* (New York, NY: Human Rights Watch, 1991), 3-5.

In these instances, the ability for persecuted or marginalized communities to access resources, mobilize community support systems, and even to implement traditional coping mechanisms in times of environmental stress are substantially reduced. Since the most recent outbreak of protests in 2015, millions of the poorest, most vulnerable people in Ethiopia have been persecuted by police forces, systematically displaced, and once again face grave risk of starvation. In Ethiopia, as is the case more generally, the economic interests of the ruling minority are repeatedly promoted by the state at the expense of those most vulnerable to disaster. In such instances, state economic policies generate greater wealth amongst those in power and their bases of support, while forcing the pauperization of marginalized ethnic groups. In cases of drought in Ethiopia, there is often a strong correlation between the heightened exclusion of these communities from political and economic life and their susceptibility to famine.

To further understand the intricacies of this correlation, a more detailed analysis of the links between people's natural environment, cultural or political trends, and the outbreak of disaster is necessary. By deconstructing prior notions of what constitutes natural from anthropogenic events, desegregating people's agency over reality, it becomes evident that the conditions whereby 'exceptional' natural events trigger full-blown disasters are less clear than once thought.<sup>125</sup> Famines are a manifestation of the distresses induced by drought, combined with the gradual pauperization of vulnerable communities, rather than the outbreak of a sudden, natural occurrence. For example, analyses conducted by Goyder and Goyder on the Ethiopian famine of 1972-1973 (during which time Ethiopia was ruled by an autocratic monarch) found that the sustained and excessive taxation of rural sectors by the Ethiopian government repeatedly pushed these marginal peasant producers into famine conditions when such forms of taxation

---

<sup>125</sup> K. Hewitt, *The Idea of Calamity in a Technocratic Age*, in: *Interpretations of Calamity*, ed. K. Hewitt (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1983), 9-24.

were compounded by natural hazards or other environmental strains.<sup>126</sup> Eventually, the suffering endured by the peasant masses during the famine of 1973-1977 led to the demise of Emperor Haile Selassie and the rise of a socialist military takeover.

During the war and famine of 1983-1985, the Marxist government of Ethiopia instituted a widespread resettlement program. The implementation of these mass peasant organizations, or “Kebele Farmers Associations”, sought to redistribute land among the masses and enhance agricultural output.<sup>127</sup> However, governance under the Marxist regime was entirely inadequate and corrupt. Instead of investing in social goods, the government implemented nation-state building projects to bolster their power base. Kebele Associations thus became satellites of the central government and dropped all pretenses of enhancing agricultural output. The principal tasks of Kebele Associations quickly became apparent: the surveillance of communities for government purposes, the dissemination of propaganda, and the enforcement of government policies.<sup>128</sup> As a result, the potential economic value of the program accorded little importance, and actually retarded agricultural production, while its greatest achievement was keeping an illegitimate regime in power.<sup>129</sup>

This socialist regime marked a period of stagnation and lack of progress in the agricultural sector. Government policies throughout the era caused a noticeable drop in food entitlements as well as the real purchasing capacity of rural households, infinitely magnifying people’s risk to famine. The reasons behind these severe agricultural failures can be attributed most directly to poor policy implementation and the dominance of a highly defective, self-

---

<sup>126</sup> H. Goyder, C. Goyder, D. Curtis, M. Hubbard, and A. Shepherd, “Case Studies of Famine: Ethiopia,” in *Preventing Famine: Policies and Prospects for Africa*, ed. H. Goyder et. al. (London: Routledge, 1988), 78–110.

<sup>127</sup> Human Rights Watch, *Mechanisms Used by the Ethiopian Government to Control Rural Communities in Oromia* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2005).

<sup>128</sup> John Young, *Peasant Revolution in Ethiopia: The Tigray People’s Liberation Front, 1975-1991* (Cambridge: University Press, 1997).

<sup>129</sup> Derseh Endale, “The Ethiopian Famines Entitlements and Governance” (Working Papers 102, World Institute for Development and Economics Research - United Nations University, 1993).

interested government. Among some of the most destructive policies enacted by the state were: the outlawing of hired labor on farmland, the fixing of official crop prices at artificially low levels, the high cost of fertilizers, and the forced requisition of a portion of agricultural output by government agencies.<sup>130</sup> Combined, the productivity of Ethiopia's agricultural sector plummeted in the early 1980s. Simultaneously, the state's usurpation of a large portion of annual yields generated widespread resentment and mistrust towards government amongst farming communities. Ultimately, these policies destroyed livelihood security and placed farmers at much greater risk to famine.

The socialist regime in Ethiopia also faced significant resource constraints, as the Cold War was in full swing. This stalled the efficacy of state-led famine mitigation projects. The Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (RRC) was established immediately following the famines of the 1970s in an effort to provide safeguards and early warning mechanisms against famine. However, demographic factors made it difficult for the government to collect accurate data regarding which regions were at-risk and undernourished. Furthermore, it also became quickly apparent that the RRC failed to garner much attention from neither the international community nor from the Ethiopian government -- even when it sounded famine warnings to mobilize assistance.<sup>131</sup> As the United Nations reported, the RRC Commission had been, "In fact very vocal in its warnings regarding the increasing incidence of food shortages [...] However, evidence is available that the regime, in its effort to legitimize its hold on power, had suppressed the magnitude of the 1984 famine".<sup>132</sup>

---

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>131</sup> Derseh Endale, "The Ethiopian Famines Entitlements and Governance" (Working Papers 102, World Institute for Development and Economics Research - United Nations University, 1993), 21-25.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 37.

Ethiopia's socialist government also devised a famine prevention resettlement scheme in the early 1980s with the ambitious objective of relocating approximately 2.5 million rural civilians from the drought-stricken regions of northern Ethiopia into the more fertile areas of the south. However, all this was done within the poor organizational and logistical capacity of the unpopular military regime. In almost every case, the northern populations were coerced and tricked into relocation by government forces, being tempted by the promise of food aid at certain locations.<sup>133</sup> Yet, upon arrival they were loaded into trucks and sent to state-regulated settlements against their will.<sup>134</sup> Never was there any sort of government assistance or compensation for their lost property and psychological trauma, nor was there help to establish new livelihoods.<sup>135</sup> Furthermore, the project inadvertently moved nearly a million families into the most malaria infested regions of the country.<sup>136</sup> As Human Rights Watch noted, the program was a "disaster [...] and resulted in the deaths of a minimum of 50,000 people".<sup>137</sup> The project was part of a larger state-led process which regularized the use of counter-insurgency strategies by government forces. Such actions directly restricted the population's access to critical resources (such as food and economic markets) and effectively destroyed the livelihood security of hundreds of thousands of Ethiopian citizens. Some of the most devastating of these counter-insurgency tactics included: the forced relocation and control of the rural population, as well as the closure and military regulation of marketplaces, key roads, and transport links.<sup>138</sup> These strategies not only prolonged the brutal government-led violence of the civil war, but also forced

---

<sup>133</sup> Alexander De Waal, *Evil Days: 30 Years of War and Famine in Ethiopia* (New York, NY: Human Rights Watch, 1991), 5.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, 217.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, 217-218.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, 218.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 3-5.



millions into a state of severe vulnerability. Ultimately, such actions led to the famine of 1982-1985 which is today responsible for the death of over one million people.

Beyond resettlement, the government also impeded the transport of grains and cereals throughout the 1980s. Whether domestically produced or foreign disaster relief donations, the government blocked the delivery of foodstuffs to the most desperately ravaged regions of Ethiopia.<sup>139</sup> These deprived areas were not only subject to severe drought, but they were also the stronghold of EPRDF resistance, and thus a primary target of military raids.<sup>140</sup> To cut off their supplies, the government required that all foreign food aid donations were channeled through official state agencies.<sup>141</sup> It is also important to note that widespread drought occurred in the regions worst hit by famine *months* after a humanitarian emergency was already declared in Ethiopia.<sup>142</sup> By placing restrictions as well as various economic and social burdens upon Ethiopia's displaced rural individuals, the state played an instrumental role in creating the infamous famine of 1984. It is estimated that this famine killed a minimum 400,000 people, while military casualties and deaths associated with forced relocations bring that number up to over a million.<sup>143</sup>

As has been indicated, one of the greatest factors contributing to a population's susceptibility to famine is the volatility of income and livelihood security. Government policies and military actions conducted throughout the 1980s highlight the fragility of Ethiopia's rural economy. Even the slightest deviation from normal income for rural sector households in Ethiopia could mean destitution. The highly political roots of Ethiopia's 1983 famine are further

---

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 219.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>142</sup> Ellen Viste, Diriba Korecha, and Asgeir Sorteberg, "Recent Drought and Precipitation Tendencies in Ethiopia," *Theoretical and Applied Climatology*, (112)3-4 (2013): 535-551.

<sup>143</sup> Alexander De Waal, *Evil Days, 30 Years of War and Famine in Ethiopia* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1991), 5.

reinforced by economic data which exposes the perceived government priorities at the time -- priorities which, it should be noted, do not acknowledge the needs of the people. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s GNP per capita was declining across Ethiopia, averaging \$190 USD in 1985 (compared to \$18,279 in the United States).<sup>144</sup> The decline of GNP per capita which occurred across the twentieth century is indicative of the worsening poverty throughout the region. However, this also highlights another serious concern: self-sufficiency in food production has only decreased over the years.

These are factors whose causes are not attributable to the severity of drought conditions. Rather, they are symptoms of the severe economic mismanagement and deficiencies in governance which took place under both the autocratic monarchy of the 1970s and the later socialist military regime of the 1980s. According to data collected by T.M. Vestal, only about 19% of Ethiopia's potentially cultivable land had been brought under production by 1985.<sup>145</sup> By the end of the 1983 famine, Ethiopia was importing 70% more foodstuffs than had been brought in during the 1970s. Compare these facts to the level of Ethiopian food production immediately following World War II, whereby the nation -- using only traditional agricultural methods -- had enough surplus production to export food aid to the Middle East.<sup>146</sup> With such considerations in mind one begins to appreciate that only by delineating a causal chain of historic events, developing a detailed understanding of the political economy within which Ethiopia's famines emerge, can the underlying pressures that destroy livelihood security and inhibit people's adaptive capacity be revealed as crucial mechanisms in driving the outbreak of famine.

---

<sup>144</sup> See World Bank data available at:

<http://databank.worldbank.org/data/reports.aspx?source=2&series=NY.GDP.PCAP.CD&country=ETH>

<sup>145</sup> T.M. Vestal, "Ethiopia's Famine: A Many Dimensioned Crisis," *World Today*, (41)7 (1985): 125-128.

<sup>146</sup> S. G. Zekaria, Maxwell, Lambert, *Cereals, Pulse and Oilseed Balance Sheet Analysis for Ethiopia 1979-1989* (Sussex: IDS, 1990).

As part of its cultural identity, Ethiopia is a state founded upon the principles of conquest. War between neighboring regions has always played a central role in characterizing traditional socio-political relations. The unremitting brutality of Ethiopia's armed forces is a dominant element in its history of invasion, rebellion, and counter-insurgency campaigns.<sup>147</sup> The significance of this in relation to natural disasters lies within the fact that, as a general rule, all politically motivated events have a direct influence upon the socio-economic position which citizens are forced to accept in the political fabric of the nation, as we saw in the case of Haiti. A person's ethnicity, class orientation, gender, and racial identity each figure prominently in determining their respective entitlement to the resources essential for survival during times of environmental strain.<sup>148</sup> As referenced in the opening pages of this chapter, the causal connection between decreased aggregate food supply (from failed crops and drought) and famine outbreak, while correct, avoids the larger array of forces behind famines. To merely attribute famine to a decline in food availability is to make the erroneous assumption that food availability is shared equally among the population and also that the people of Ethiopia have no sources of income beyond food production.<sup>149</sup> Famines are a manifestation of changes to people's access and entitlements to the foodstuffs of society, these being outcomes determined by a complex puzzle of cultural, political, and economic trends. Dynamic pressures such as warfare are prominent examples of the highly political forces behind famines, for such events have the capacity to destroy local economic systems and infrastructure across vast regions while also affecting production and trade capacity. As was addressed chapter one, warfare displaces immense numbers of people. It destroys people's sources of income, homes, sense of security, and causes

---

<sup>147</sup> Alexander De Waal, *Evil Days, 30 Years of War and Famine in Ethiopia* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1991), 22.

<sup>148</sup> Piers M. Blaikie, Ben Wisner, Terry Cannon, and Ian Davis, *At Risk: Natural Hazards, People's Vulnerability, and Disasters* (London: Routledge, 1994), 78.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

overall levels of sanitation to decline. Combined, these conditions cause a greater number of people to become highly vulnerable to severe famine or to biological epidemics such as HIV/AIDs, malaria, and Ebola. Warfare itself thus creates a self-reinforcing cycle of heightened insecurity.

Throughout Africa, the violence associated warfare destabilizes affected communities physically and economically. Armed conflict, whether perpetrated by government forces or paramilitary organizations, forces widespread migration and the displacement of innumerable civilians. This has been the case for Ethiopia's famines between 1972-1973 and 1983-1984, throughout Sudan and South Sudan in recent decades, as well as in the conflict minerals regions of central Africa and Congo -- to name a few. A number of scholars have even gone so far as to highlight the strong correlation between high state military expenditures, exploitation of peasants (by limiting access to markets and outright coercion), and the rise of famine in the Horn of Africa.<sup>150</sup> These characteristics are typical of Ethiopia's ethnically-based wars of conquest as well. Even so, it is important to note that the consequences of violent conflict among vulnerable populations are not contained by political borders. Violence in one area often tends to generate regional instability and enduring humanitarian crises by increasing the number of stateless migrants in dire need of economic support and livelihood stability. Such facts highlight why research has increasingly indicated that the greatest cause of death from conflict in low income countries is not direct violence, but is actually the secondary impacts of war: disease, hunger, the

---

<sup>150</sup> E. Shindo, "Hunger and Weapons: The Entropy of Militarism," *Review of African Political Economy*, 33 (1985): 6-22.

destruction of markets and infrastructure, and the massive disruption to livelihoods caused by people fleeing from the conflict.<sup>151</sup>

These are among the most common ‘unsafe conditions’ and ‘dynamic pressures’ which increase people’s vulnerability to famine during a drought. Under such circumstances vast numbers of people lack assistance from the kind of stable, transparent, and responsive government which would provide the resources necessary to help them survive and cope with natural disasters. As Piers Blaikie et. al. elaborates within his analysis on the politics of famine, in agriculturally-based economies such as Ethiopia, war tends to reduce both the quantity of land that is planted in a season, as well as the amount of labor that is available to conduct such tasks, thus reducing the supply of food without even taking into account the shocks of potential environmental hazards.<sup>152</sup> Warfare of all types can also play a more direct role in the creation of famine conditions, as testimony from survivors of the 1984-85 famine in Ethiopia highlights in vivid detail,

“The army took 500 cows and oxen from my village, they burned people’s houses and took honey, butter and anything made of leather. They even took old clothes. They didn’t bother to carry the grain; they just burned it. The militia, they’re farmers from the area, they take our tools so that they can use them. They all take salt and coffee [...] They eat as much as they can and then sell what’s left. In 1982 the army came through our village and forced me to pay E\$400. I had to borrow the money from a neighbor. Because of the money that I had to pay the army, and the grain that they burned, I had to sell all my animals in 1984. Now I have nothing”.<sup>153</sup>

---

<sup>151</sup> Rao Chalapati, Alan D. Lopez, and Yusuf Hemed, “Causes of Death,” in *Disease and Mortality in Sub-Saharan Africa*, ed. Jamison DT, Feachem RG, Makgoba MW, et al. (Washington D.C.: The World Bank Group, 2006). Available at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK2298/> .

<sup>152</sup> Piers Blaikie, Ben Wisner, Terry Cannon, and Ian Davis, *At Risk: Natural Hazards, People's Vulnerability, and Disasters* (London: Routledge, 1994), 92.

<sup>153</sup> Bonnie Holcomb and Jason Clay, *Politics and the Ethiopian Famine: 1984-1985* (Peterborough: Transcript Printing Company, 1986), 62.

Such testimony reinforces that it is not necessarily a decline in food production or availability which precedes the outbreak of famine. Rather, it is the possibility of a decline in entitlements and access to foodstuffs as a result of violence, coercion, or otherwise. These acts may be conducted by armed rebel forces, or in some cases, by the state itself, as occurred in Ethiopia from 1972 to 1973 and again a decade later.

Yet, warfare is not the only political pressure which generates widespread vulnerability to famine. Subtler socio-political trends also highlight the important role of ideological preconceptions in influencing policy decisions, in turn determining the manifestation of disaster. By looking at the government's expenditures from 1979 to 1984, it becomes clear that the most significant sectors of the economy relating to food production only received 4.8% of the national budget, while 58.6% was allocated for "general services" (this included defense, public order and security).<sup>154</sup> In a more contemporary context, the case of the marginalized Oromo ethnic majority in Ethiopia under the current government's Anti-Terror Proclamation and Addis Ababa Master Expansion Plan, is a paralleling expression of how ethnic biases can lead to the targeted and state-directed marginalization of a people, forcing them into famine conditions. It is to this issue which the discussion will now turn.

The Oromo are Ethiopia's biggest ethnic group, accounting for about a third of the state's 95 million people. However, the major political party of the Oromo people, the Oromo Federalist Congress (OFC), does not hold even a single seat in parliament. Ethnic Oromo are traditionally pastoral farming communities, yet government plans for economic development threaten this population's way of life. The current Tigrayan minority regime has been able to maintain a monopoly over political expression in Ethiopia through corrupt and coercive means. This has

---

<sup>154</sup> The World Bank Group, *Recent Economic Developments and Prospects for Recovery and Growth* (Washington D.C.: The World Bank, 1985).

resulted in state perpetration of grave human rights violations against many of the nation's ethnic groups, including the Oromo. The Tigrayan government is known for their long history of violent repression against independent media, civil society organizations, and political opposition. Repeatedly, the administration has enacted draconian laws that reinforce the gradual breakdown of civil society. By manipulating the jurisdiction of federal counter-terrorism legislation, the current regime has stifled the voices of Oromo protesters who attempt to peacefully express their concerns about the federal government's approach to development.<sup>155</sup> More specifically, protesters have indicated great discontent with the Addis Ababa Integrated Development Master Plan (AAIDMP) which will expand the capital city into the communally held territory of Oromo farmers, displacing tens of thousands of people and destroying their livelihoods.<sup>156</sup> The aims of the AAIDMP are further reinforced by recent economic development policies supported by the IMF and World Bank. Again, the result will be to eradicate the means of subsistence for thousands of Ethiopian families.

The second dominant catalyst of protest in Ethiopia results from enduring ethnic discontent and a deeper crisis of representation that has marginalized the Oromo and Amhara populations both politically and economically. Since 2014, the government has been operating under a newly-formulated, long-term economic development strategy of "Agriculture Development Led Industrialization" (ADLI). This policy is geared towards the transformation of the nation's previously 'backward economic structure' of communal landholdings in the

---

<sup>155</sup> Amnesty International, *Ethiopia: Civil society groups urge the international community to address killing of Oromo protesters* (Washington D.C.: Amnesty International, 2016). Available at: <http://www.amnestyusa.org/news/press-releases/ethiopia-civil-society-groups-urge-the-international-community-to-address-killing-of-oromo-protester>.

<sup>156</sup> Felix Horne, *Such a Brutal Crackdown: Killings and Arrests in Response to Ethiopia's Oromo Protests* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2016), 1-3.

agricultural sector, towards privately owned, industrialized production.<sup>157</sup> This new development plan is two-pronged, incorporating export led economic growth with the domestic expansion of agriculture and industry into corporate holdings. The Ethiopian government has repeatedly emphasized the importance of widespread privatization as part of their goal: a real GDP growth rate of 11% and meeting the Millennium Development goals.<sup>158</sup> Combined with its efforts to expand agricultural production, the government has encouraged the construction of industrial factories and the sale of lands (including water rights) to Chinese hydropower companies to expand the economy.<sup>159</sup> Such large-scale alterations to land tenure practices, combined with the build-up of previously unregulated territory throughout Ethiopia, have had a major impact upon the ability for low-income and agriculturally-based populations to access the resources essential to their survival.

The current government in Ethiopia has a persistent history of violent suppression of independent media, civil society organizations, and political opposition. The government has enacted many restrictive laws that enfeeble civil society and, in conjunction with the misuse of the counter-terrorism law, stifle peaceful dissent. Since the AAIDMP was first published in 2010, Oromos have faced a brutal crackdown by government forces following what were initially peaceful protests. Numerous human rights organizations have documented the arbitrary arrests, torture, and injuries suffered by thousands of individuals residing in Oromia since the regime first came to power in the 1990s. Between 2011 and 2014 alone, at least 5,000 Oromos

---

<sup>157</sup> UN Economic and Social Council, *The Agricultural Development Led Industrialization (ADLI) strategy* (Geneva: The United Nations, 2016). Available at: <https://webapps01.un.org/nvp/indpolicy.action?id=124> . Accessed on November 12, 2016.

<sup>158</sup> The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia: Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, “The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Growth and Transformation Plan,” September 4, 2010. Available at: [http://www.ica.org/media/pams/ethiopia/Ethiopia\\_GTP\\_2010to2015.pdf](http://www.ica.org/media/pams/ethiopia/Ethiopia_GTP_2010to2015.pdf).

<sup>159</sup> International Rivers, *Chinese Dams in Africa* (Berkeley: International Rivers, 2016). Available at: <https://www.internationalrivers.org/campaigns/chinese-dams-in-africa>



were arrested based on their actual or suspected opposition to the government.<sup>160</sup> The individuals targeted by the government include thousands of peaceful protesters and hundreds of political opposition members. Some estimates place the number of persons killed by government forces at the beginning of 2016 at over 400.<sup>161</sup> However, the exact numbers remain unclear, as the bodies of thousands of disappeared individuals have not been found, and many remains are yet to be identified.<sup>162</sup> Exact data regarding the nature and regularity of these government attacks is also vague, as independent media and human rights organizations are banned from entry into the country. The only information available to the global audience is the testimony of survivors and those lucky enough to escape.

Famine in Ethiopia was announced by the United Nations on July 20, 2011. However, drought was declared about six months after the government-led attacks began, with the most severely drought-affected regions being in the eastern parts of Ethiopia. Further analysis of the graphs provided below demonstrate a clear difference between territories under severe drought conditions (located further east of Oromia) and other areas of severe famine conditions which are, surprisingly, not suffering from a dramatic drought.

---

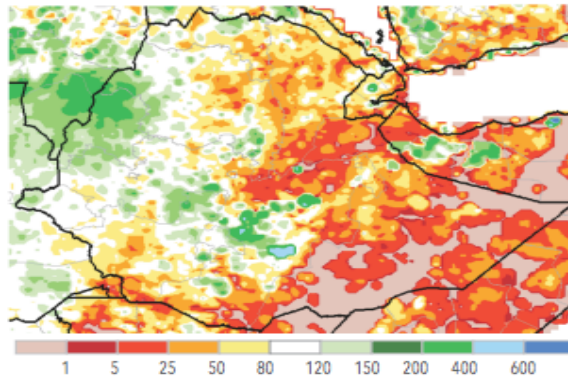
<sup>160</sup> Amnesty International, *Ethiopia: Ethnic Oromos arrested, tortured and killed by the state in relentless repression of dissent* (Washington D.C.: Amnesty International, 2014). Available at: <http://www.amnestyusa.org/news/news-item/ethiopia-ethnic-oromos-arrested-tortured-and-killed-by-the-state-in-relentless-repression-of-dissent>

<sup>161</sup> Felix Horne, *Such a Brutal Crackdown: Killings and Arrests in Response to Ethiopia's Oromo Protests* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2016), 1-3.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*

The following National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration/Climate Prediction Center (NOAA/CPC) map shows that the current rainfall performance is 25 per cent or more below average in most of the southern and southeastern pastoral areas.

#### Current rainfall performance



The consequence of the below-average rainfall performance is that some of the same areas in the South that were in need of water trucking earlier in the year, due to the El-Niño induced drought, and which were also affected by La Niña in 2011, are now already in need of water trucking.

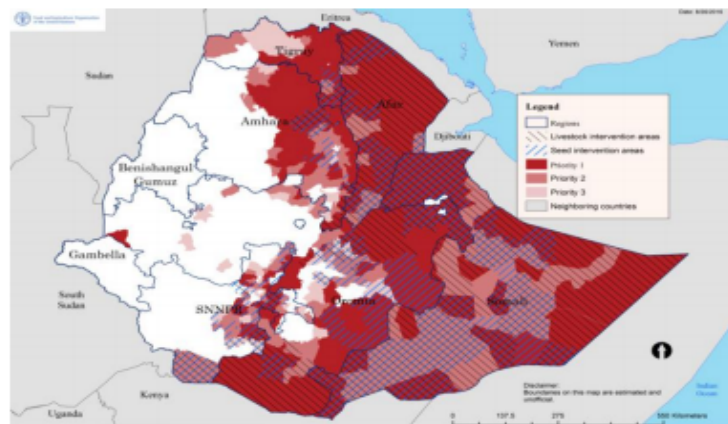
United Nations, "Ethiopia: Humanitarian Snapshot" (Geneva: United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2016). Available at: <http://reliefweb.int/report/ethiopia/ethiopia-humanitarian-snapshot-28-november-2016>.

#### MAP

Hotspot *woredas* classification has been derived using six multisector indicators, including agriculture and nutrition, agreed at zonal, regional and federal levels. A hotspot matrix is often used as a proxy for the Integrated Phase Food Security Classification (IPC).

#### HOTSPOT CLASSIFICATION AND TOTAL AGRICULTURE SECTOR INTERVENTION

(Source: Government of Ethiopia and humanitarian partners, July 2016)



United Nations, *Ethiopia: Situation Report November 2016* (Emergency and Rehabilitation Center Rome, Italy: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2016). Available at: <http://www.fao.org/emergencies/resources/documents/resources-detail/en/c/456019/>.

What these figures indicate is a high discrepancy between areas of severe drought (mostly in the south-east of Ethiopia) and regions of high food insecurity and famine across the nation. Therefore, while there is famine in the regions suffering from severe drought, the lack of such dire environmental conditions in and around, especially to the north of, Addis Ababa (where there also exists severe famine) would imply that other factors beyond environmental stressors are indeed central to creating the famine currently underway in the Horn of Africa.

Since the Oromo crackdown began, Ethiopian politics has undergone an important transformation to how relations of power are understood and assets are distributed. In regards to agriculture, the fundamentals of Ethiopia's development strategy include,

“The shift to produce high value crops, with a special focus on high-potential areas, facilitating the commercialization of agriculture, supporting the development of large-scale commercial agriculture where it is feasible. The commercialization of smallholder farming will continue to be the major source of agricultural growth. To complement this concerted support will be an increase to private investment in large commercial farms.”<sup>163</sup>

In effect, these policies redefine Ethiopia's political economy. The current development strategy has already created consequential shifts in how societal pressures interact to affect the outbreak of disaster. The combined effects of Ethiopia's fragile ecosystem, deforestation, chronic uncertainties over land tenure, lack of rural credit, and the monopolistic power of certain ethnic groups over markets, have serious implications for understanding the roots of the current famine in Ethiopia. Since 2015 alone, thousands of individuals have been detained while hundreds of homes and businesses have been destroyed by government security forces in an effort to stifle

---

<sup>163</sup> The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia: Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, “The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Growth and Transformation Plan,” September 8, 2010. Available at: [http://www.iaa.org/media/pams/ethiopia/Ethiopia\\_GTP\\_2010to2015.pdf](http://www.iaa.org/media/pams/ethiopia/Ethiopia_GTP_2010to2015.pdf).

voices of dissent.<sup>164</sup> These acts effectively destroy fragile livelihoods beyond repair, while also weakening the resilience of the environment against hazards such as drought or flood. The threat of state-sanctioned violence against those who speak out in protest of government policies, combined with the usurpation of traditionally pastoral farmlands by government and multinational corporations, forces Ethiopian pastoralists into an even more severe state of vulnerability.

In recent years Addis Ababa has experienced significant growth. Yet, as noted, Ethiopia's development policies have destabilized the livelihood security of many families due to forced and widespread land privatization, especially amongst the farming communities that account for approximately 75% of the population.<sup>165</sup> Rarely have authorities provided compensation for the confiscation and sale of people's territory; when restitutions are provided they do not come close to covering the loss of livelihoods incurred.<sup>166</sup> Farmers rarely if ever receive alternate land, and the courts (which are effectively under the control of the government) provide no recourse for these losses.<sup>167</sup> As a result, ADLI and the AAIDMP have increased the vulnerability of marginalized communities to disaster by severely restricting people's entitlements to even the most basic goods and services, by routinely violating people's human rights, and by simultaneously destroying the income security of millions.

Meanwhile, Ethiopia's rapid economic expansion has allowed the state to become a prominent 'success story' for transformational development in the eyes of the West. However, in Ethiopia, like China, economic development has come at the expense of human rights and the

---

<sup>164</sup> Felix Horne, *Such a Brutal Crackdown: Killings and Arrests in Response to Ethiopia's Oromo Protests* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2016), 1-3.

<sup>165</sup> Employment in Agriculture (Percentage of total employment) available at World Bank Group database: <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.AGR.EMPL.ZS?locations=ET> .

<sup>166</sup> Hilary Matfess, "Ethiopian Activists Fight U.S.-Backed Land Seizures," *Foreign Policy in Focus*, September 9, 2014. Available at: <http://fpif.org/ethiopian-activists-fight-u-s-funded-land-seizures/> .

<sup>167</sup> Felix Horne, *Such a Brutal Crackdown: Killings and Arrests in Response to Ethiopia's Oromo Protests* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2016), 20.

strength of civil society. Ethiopia is seen as a reliable police officer in the region: hosting a US military base and sending troops to fight the Islamist militant group, Al-Shabaab in neighboring Somalia. However, the Western support currently enjoyed by the regime has meant that the international community will continue to turn a blind eye to the perilous displacement of thousands of the individuals affected by national development projects. The stateless and marginal status of the farming villages impacted by state policies forces them into severe insecurity. Access to land continues to be restricted and entitlement to traditional resources forcibly revoked.

The country's current development strategy is supported by an economic reform program developed in cooperation with the World Bank and the IMF, focusing on a series of structural adjustment programs which have been implemented since 1992. In order to support economic growth in Ethiopia and other African states, dominant Western nations and multilateral institutions (including USAID and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation) have drifted away from the food security strategies devised in the 2009 G8 L'Aquila Summit. These strategic food security plans called for \$20 billion to support state-owned agricultural production in Africa, yet they have been pushed aside in favor of widespread privatization campaigns.<sup>168</sup> This shift represents an unprecedented push to favor private sector and market-driven food systems through aid programs, such as that embodied by Ethiopia's current Growth and Transformation Plan. The 2012 G8 initiative, called the New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition, launched in partnership with various agribusinesses, seeks to increase private investment in African agriculture. Private sector companies have collectively committed more than \$3 billion to increase investments, while donor partners have pledged to support Africa's potential for rapid

---

<sup>168</sup> The White House Press Secretary, "Fact Sheet: G-8 Action on Food Security and Nutrition," *The White House Office of the Press Secretary*, May 18, 2012. Available at: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2012/05/18/fact-sheet-g-8-action-food-security-and-nutrition> .

and sustained agricultural growth.<sup>169</sup> These projects have already begun in Ethiopia, figuring centrally in the outline of ADLI.

However, the imposition of this agenda comes with new aid conditionality. In order to receive aid through the New Alliance, African partner countries have to commit to structural and economic reforms that facilitate business in agriculture, part of which includes the privatization of industries for economic output.<sup>170</sup> It is this internationally mandated land privatization, however, which is generating a great deal of displacement, diminished livelihood opportunities, and increased economic insecurity throughout Ethiopia. As noted previously, for the pastoral communities of Ethiopia, access to wide swaths of arable land and freedom of movement are vital concerns when resources become scarce during a drought. The usurpation of grazing lands by various interest groups has caused the displacement, suffering, and even death of many Ethiopians from famines directly attributable to a decline in popular land entitlements.

The new economic policies promoted by multilateral institutions and the Ethiopian government also call for the use of hybrid and GMO seeds, pesticides, and synthetic fertilizers, as well as a shift towards monocrop and cash-crop production systems.<sup>171</sup> The implementation of these agricultural practices, however, will not only destroy traditional, collectivized forms of pastoral farming (which preserve biodiversity and soil integrity through crop rotation), but will also further diminish the capacity for farming communities to adapt to adverse environmental hazards and control their economic opportunities. Many people will be forced into unsafe living spaces or relegated economic conditions, while biodiversity will continue to deteriorate and

---

<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

<sup>170</sup> Oliver De Shutter, "The New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition in Africa," in *European Union Policy Department: Directorate-General for External Policies*, ed. Oliver De Shutter (Brussels: European Parliament, 2015), 15.

<sup>171</sup> The United States Government, *G8 Cooperation framework to support the New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition in Ethiopia* (Washington D.C.: United States Government, 2014), 4-5. Available at: [https://feedthefuture.gov/sites/default/files/resource/files/Ethiopia\\_web.pdf](https://feedthefuture.gov/sites/default/files/resource/files/Ethiopia_web.pdf)

agricultural production become increasingly industrialized. Prior experiences have exposed the unsustainability of a food system based on intensive use of petrol products and chemical inputs, many of which are heightened by climate change and the global energy crisis. The conventional agricultural model that prevails in the global food chain accounts for at least 14% of total annual greenhouse gas emissions, mostly due to the use of nitrogen fertilizers.<sup>172</sup> The African region is already highly vulnerable to environmental hazards. The political situation within many nations creates great risk and instability for the local people. Meanwhile, the land faces a tenuous existence under mono-cropping, GMO production, and synthetic fertilizer use. The rise of industrialized and privatized agricultural production in Ethiopia will only exacerbate the vulnerability of farming communities throughout the region -- with likely consequences for the populations of neighboring states as well.

Already, Ethiopia's development policies have stripped many farmers of the little political and economic power they once held. Instead, the state is concentrating corporate control over seeds, land, and water to promote rapid economic expansion. Many communities are being forced to accept poorly paid and insecure wage work, while important historical and cultural connections to the land are being severed by commodification and commercialization. The result is the promotion of self-interest by a few rich nations, and greater livelihood insecurity amongst thousands of individuals, such as the Oromo of Ethiopia. As policy analyst, Anuradha Mittal noted,

“In order to foster private investments, governments are being forced to open their agricultural sector to seed, pesticide and fertilizer corporations, release land for commercial agriculture, and reduce taxes and tariffs for agribusinesses. In short, facilitate

---

<sup>172</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, "The New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition," *News on Food and Agriculture*, April 14, 2014. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/216137/icode/>

the destruction of family farming and natural resources for the sake of corporate profit.”<sup>173</sup>

The resulting pollution of water resources from excessive chemical pesticides and fertilizers will also exacerbate soil degradation. Ecological imbalances will continue to worsen due to rising deforestation for agribusiness projects. Ultimately, the privatization and consolidation of agricultural production across Ethiopia (and Africa generally) can be anticipated to increase corruption and conflicts of interest. What the current African development paradigm represents is a future of frequent social upheaval by the landless and marginalized pastoral communities, the rising impoverishment of rural households, and a reduction in the number of alternatives for income security amongst these at-risk populations.

Combine these factors with the cyclically recurring droughts experienced throughout the West African region, and the famine currently underway in Ethiopia becomes a disaster of deeply political, social, and economic roots which was merely triggered by the el Niño drought. Droughts have been a normal element of Ethiopia’s climate for centuries, and the recurrence of dry spells periodically do not typically lead to such disastrous outcomes for the populations who depend upon the rains for food security. Current political unrest in the Ethiopia, compounded by the government’s unwillingness to allow outside humanitarian organizations inside the country for fear that they may document current human rights violations (as well as institutional insecurities resulting from the violence) make getting emergency aid to these farming communities very difficult. Currently over 10.2 million people are affected by the famine in

---

<sup>173</sup> Anuradha Mittal, *Five Western Donors Shape a Corporate Agenda for African Agriculture* (Oakland, Oakland Institute: 2016). Available at: <https://www.oaklandinstitute.org/five-western-donors-shape-corporate-agenda-african-agriculture>



Ethiopia.<sup>174</sup> In February 2016 the Secretary General of Ethiopia stressed that a crisis of this scale, “Was too much for any Government [...] The international community must stand with people of Ethiopia. Immediate support for Ethiopia will save lives and avoid preventable suffering. Immediate support will also safeguard the impressive development gains that Ethiopia has made over the past years and decades”.<sup>175</sup> Still, however, international aid agencies are not permitted within the state by government forces, and aid must be channeled through the distribution mechanisms directed by the regime. Government restrictions upon the flow of people, information, and goods across Ethiopia’s borders have made it increasingly difficult to collect definitive data regarding the severity of the current famine as well as to catalogue the number victims from state-led violence. Only time will tell as to how the international community may choose to respond to this disaster, but with the Ethiopian Government’s recent ascent to the UN Security Council and seat at the UN Human Rights Commission, it seems unlikely that conditions will change in the foreseeable future.

Ultimately what we must take away from this historical exploration is the central role which government and civil society alike play in precipitating the outbreak of famine in the modern era. While true that environmental processes are often the catalyst behind natural disasters, it is important to understand that anthropogenic pressures and the socio-political trends of these regions are what ultimately give rise to famine conditions. Such is done by altering peoples’ access and entitlements to the resources needed to survive in the face of drought. The chain of events preceding famine shows that the state plays a direct role in either the prevention of or creation of famine conditions within their borders. The outcome of a natural hazard is

---

<sup>174</sup> World Food Program, *Drought in Ethiopia: 10 Million People in Need* (Geneva, World Food Program: 2016). Available at: <https://www.wfp.org/stories/drought-ethiopia-10-million-people-need>.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

entirely dependent upon the ideological preconceptions held by the government, for these ideologies direct the policy decisions and priorities governments may choose to emphasize. In the case of Ethiopia, this is made evident by the regime's support of economic development through neoliberal mechanisms, rather than promoting social justice by supporting the needs of civilians and upholding the rule of law. The political and economic decisions made as a result of such a policy orientation is the predominant cause of the famine in Ethiopia we see today.

## **Chapter 4: The Political Economy of Disaster Relief**

### **– A Case Study of Earthquakes in Nepal**

April 25, 2015 was a calm, sunny day in the Himalayas along the Nepal-Tibet border. Gore Ghale had just recently arrived in Malaysia to begin work as a construction assistant. He was constantly thinking of his beloved wife and five children back home in Nepal, whom he had left for a better paying job overseas. At this same moment, his wife, Niru, was with two of their children in Trizuli Bazaar, a rudimentary town approximately four-hours driving (plus a three-hour trek) from their family village of Thangdor. She had just gone for the day to look for work, leaving their eldest three children home to attend to the goats and crops, as planting season was just a few weeks away. However, Trizuli Bazaar was not the place to be on April 25, 2015. The site was only 40 miles from the epicenter of an impending 7.8 magnitude earthquake.

It was midday, children were outside playing along the terraced hillsides of Thangdor, and women were collecting water to carry on their backs up the steep cliff sides towards their hut-like dwellings. "My children and I were inside when the walls began to sway, and the world

came crashing down around us,” one woman recalled.<sup>176</sup> Screaming in Trizuli Bazaar, Niru and her children ran outside where tall trees quivered like blades of grass. “It was utter chaos,” she sobbed. “People were screaming and buildings crumpled like matchboxes, burying many alive.” Sleeping outside in the freezing cold that night, Niru had little idea that it would be an entire month before she could return to Thangdor. Niru had to wait nearly thirty days to find out that the bodies of her three eldest children were never found in the rubble that remained of their home. Meanwhile, Gore was on a two-year contract in Malaysia, unable to return to Thangdor until January 2017, and this left Niru with her two surviving children alone in a heap of destruction and isolation. “We huddled together outside our destroyed homes,” Niru recalled once she made it back to Thangdor. “My two children were badly injured, but I had no means or money to go to the hospital in Kathmandu. We did what we could for food. So many animals crushed to death -- including mine. We waited for months before any government help came. My neighbor has donated her cowshed for us to live in until we build a new home,” She said, pointing to a straw shelter in the distance, covered with tarp as a shield against the cold Himalayan wind. The story of Niru and her family is unfortunately one which is not unique amongst those who live in rural Nepal, yet it is a story which presents great insight into the role of political incentives, from both domestic and international actors, in affecting the outcome of natural hazards upon demographic regions of high risk and vulnerability. By tracing the political history of Nepal over the past century, and later analyzing earthquake mitigation efforts through a political economy framework, this case study will expose the highly political dimensions of creating natural disasters in Nepal.

---

<sup>176</sup> All testimony provided throughout this chapter was recorded during various informal interviews with survivors residing in Thangdor, Nepal from January 1 – 13, 2017. Surnames and ages of these individuals are not available due to lack of village records.

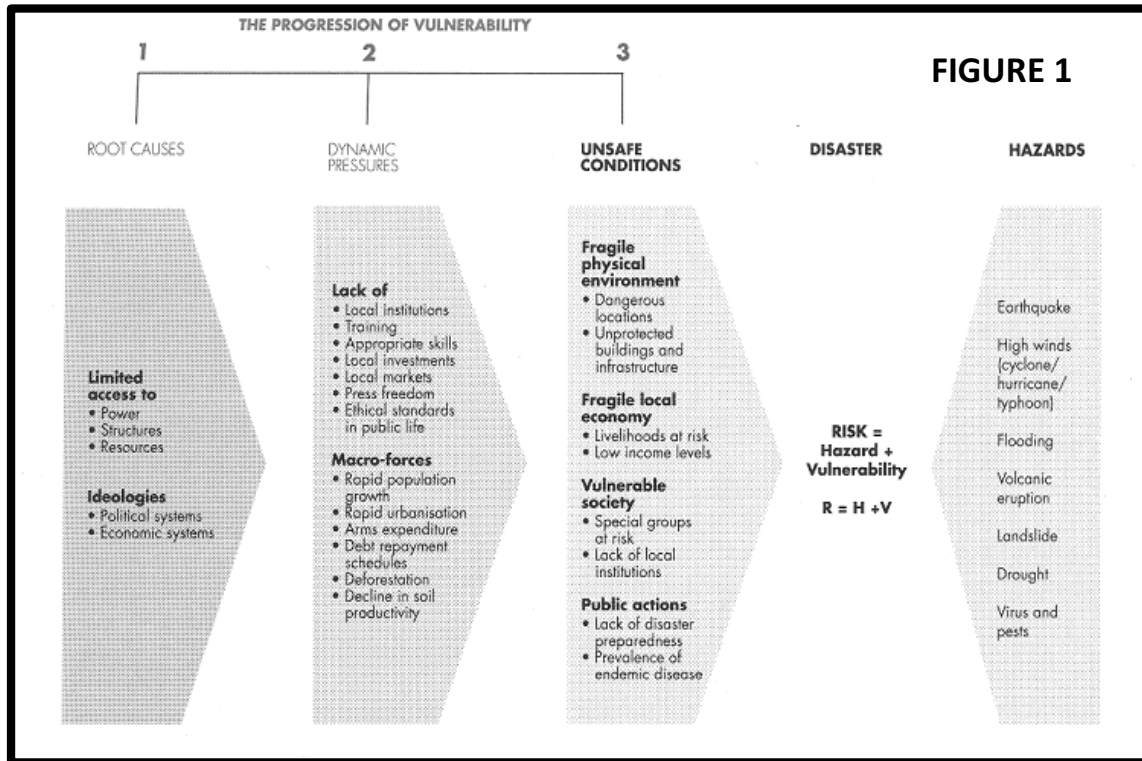
Two years have passed since the 7.8 magnitude earthquake shook the earth, yet still the villagers of Thangdor and the surrounding rural communities have not seen any government assistance or significant international aid. Simultaneously, environmental conditions continue to exacerbate people's suffering: the river which this community used to depend upon for all means of subsistence has been submerged somewhere under the rocky mountainside after the earthquake shifted the terrain indefinitely. Each day, women and children carry approximately 100 kilograms of water on their backs over the cliffs towards Thangdor, transporting this basic necessity from the next closest aquifer nearly a thirteen-hour trek away. No road connects these two locations so as to expedite the process. While local leaders have issued reports of emergency need to the Regional Administration Office (beginning as early as July 2015), the villagers are still awaiting any form of acknowledgement by the local government. In Nepal, where approximately 80% of the population relies on subsistence agriculture for livelihood security, the loss of water resources has caused immense suffering and exacerbated the effects of the recent disaster amongst those already most vulnerable.<sup>177</sup> What is of even greater concern, however, is the fact that the government has yet to address the complete lack of basic human necessities in these regions, prolonging the period of disaster recovery and crisis indefinitely. Even two years after the quake, people still lack access to sufficient and clean water, sanitation, health care, adequate nutrition, and proper shelter.

For centuries, Nepal has been widely accepted as one of the most at-risk locations on earth for earthquakes, yet this common fact has done nothing to alter the country's level of disaster preparedness. The reasons behind Nepal's excessive risk and vulnerability to natural

---

<sup>177</sup> Over 80 percent of the population is involved in agriculture as of 2016, and this constitutes approximately 41 percent of GDP according to World Bank national accounts data and OECD National Accounts data files. Likewise, as of 2015 the value added in the agricultural sector as a percentage of GDP valued approximately 30%. <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NV.AGR.TOTL.ZS> . Accessed on 28 January, 2017.

disasters are dynamic and complex, originating in the nation's political history, economic status, and cultural orientation. In order to better understand this phenomenon, it is useful to review the pressure and release model devised by Blaikie et al. (see Figure 1 below)



Source: Piers M. Blaikie, Ben Wisner, Terry Cannon, and Ian Davis. *At Risk: Natural Hazards, People's Vulnerability, and Disasters* (London: Routledge, 1994).

Looking at this model, it is apparent that political and economic systems are essential to understanding how the evolution of policies, widespread access to information, and the allocation of public goods can engender the outcome of hazards upon a demographic of high vulnerability. Bodies with the capacity to alter these dynamic pressures, such as government officials, NGOs, and foreign aid donors, all act within a highly political space, and in many ways disasters are an outcome of these political networks. In the case of Nepal, the government is still woefully in-equipped to address the impacts of such hazards, largely due to the nation's shaky

political history over the past century and current economic situation. However, by understanding the roots of the current conditions in Nepal, the reasons behind such poor preparation and response on the part of government becomes quite clear, and the outcomes of hazards such as the 2015 earthquake become almost predictable.

Modern day Nepal came into being in the second half of the 18th Century when the Shah monarchy unified fifty small states through military force, thus creating a highly fragmented multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, multi-religious, and multi-lingual nation-state landlocked between India and China. This new state was organized along the rules of traditional Hindu law, with a small number of men from the high Hindu castes dominating all public spheres at the exclusion of women and untouchable castes.<sup>178</sup> Such trends of exclusion are still prevalent today; the dominant order is confined to male Brahmans and Kshatriyas (of the rural Hill Hindu groups) and the urban Newars.<sup>179</sup> Prolonged forms of exclusion, even under the newly 'democratic' government of Nepal give reason to much of the growing political unrest in the country. Central to the organization of the Nepalese state has been the dominance of Hindu law and a caste-based hierarchical system that prioritizes high-caste male elites. Within this system of caste organization also exist multiple ethnic identities and religious orientations, with approximately 10% of the population identifying as Buddhist and 5% as Muslim.<sup>180</sup> The distinguishing features of Nepalese caste and ethnic identity are complex and often overlapping. Therefore, it is very difficult to accurately delineate such kinship systems in this brief discussion. However, what must be understood is that all rights, duties, and forms of punishment in Nepal are traditionally

---

<sup>178</sup> Karl-Heinz Kramer, Bhattarai Keshav, Conway Dennis, and Hari Bansha Dulal, "Political Evolution of Modern Nepal," In *Nepal in the 21st Century*, ed. Kramer, Karl-Heinz, Bhattarai Keshav et. al. (Hauppauge: US Nova Science Publishers, 2010), 44.

<sup>179</sup> The World Bank, *Unequal Citizens: Gender, Caste and Ethnic Exclusion in Nepal* (Kathmandu: The World Bank Group, 2006), 3.

<sup>180</sup> Index Mundi, "Nepal Demographics Profile: 2016" (Index Mundi, 2017). Available at: [http://www.indexmundi.com/nepal/demographics\\_profile.html](http://www.indexmundi.com/nepal/demographics_profile.html)

determined by an individual's specific caste and ethnic orientation -- thus further complicating our understanding of how prior Nepalese political structures have helped to effectuate the biases and ideologies inherent to the current system.<sup>181</sup>

From 1846 until 1951, the Hindu Rana oligarchy dominated the Kingdom of Nepal, bringing important changes to the central state structure while also perpetuating the non-inclusive social system of caste and gender discrimination. All actions under the Rana administration were directed by three basic practices: *chakari* (sycophancy), *chaplusy* (flattery), and *chukli* (intelligence work conducted in exchange for political favors).<sup>182</sup> Each of these traditions reinforced the dominance of a corrupt, autocratic, and unaccountable system of governance. Throughout the era, Nepal was also under the influence British colonial powers from India, and thus maintained a very secluded position on the international stage. Economic isolation would continue up until the abolition of the Rana oligarchy, marked by the passage of the Interim Government of Nepal Act in 1951. At this time, various underrepresented groups began to form a distinct political consciousness, each striving for personal power and privileges within government – a stark contrast from the Rana period whereby minimum attention was given to improving the lives of the people or broadening political freedoms.<sup>183</sup>

The 1950s marked an opening of political space promoted by efforts to frame a new Nepalese constitution that would establish a republican, representative government based on the British model. The development of young political groups in the late 20th century also fostered the emergence of civil society, something which has since grown as a force of political influence,

---

<sup>181</sup> Karl-Heinz Kramer, Bhattarai Keshav, Conway Dennis, and Hari Bansha Dulal, "Political Evolution of Modern Nepal," in *Nepal in the 21st Century*, ed. Kramer, Karl-Heinz, Bhattarai Keshav et. al. (Hauppauge: US Nova Science Publishers, 2010), 45.

<sup>182</sup> Asia Foundation, *A guide to government in Nepal: structures, functions, and practices* (Kathmandu: Asia Foundation, 2012), 2.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

albeit a hesitant one. However, even with greater socio-economic liberties, many of the new political leaders of the 1950s and 60s were of the same high Hindu castes from the Rana period (known as Tagadhari), and political leadership remained exclusive to men of this caste.<sup>184</sup> The politics of these groups also highlights an important and enduring mentality characteristic of Nepalese political leaders: that one's own people await and demand certain personal advantages and privileges from 'their' leaders in government.<sup>185</sup> This mentality has proven to be a prominent force behind government policy formulation even in the modern era, as rural areas which lack representation in Parliament receive few if any public services or political attention.

Nepal has seen significant political upheaval over the last century, and this has contributed enormously to the current failure of government to mitigate the effects of recent earthquakes and other natural hazards. With the anti-Rana Revolution of 1951, autocratic monarchy was effectively abolished in Nepal thanks to the efforts of student protestors, military groups, and the support of many elite Nepalese Hindus residing in India.<sup>186</sup> Following the Revolution, a period of quasi-constitutional rule dominated under the 1959 Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal. At this time the monarch, assisted by the leaders of fledgling political parties, governed the country. However, in 1960 King Mahendra attempted a coup and promulgated a new constitution, endowing himself with the powers of executive, legislative, and judicial authority combined.<sup>187</sup> In the months that followed, the elected Prime Minister, members of Parliament and hundreds of democratic activists were arrested -- a trend which would continue

---

<sup>184</sup> Karl-Heinz Kramer, Bhattarai Keshav, Conway Dennis, and Hari Bansha Dulal, "Political Evolution of Modern Nepal," in *Nepal in the 21st Century*, ed. Kramer, Karl-Heinz, Bhattarai Keshav et. al. (Hauppauge: US Nova Science Publishers, 2010), 44.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, 45-46.

<sup>187</sup> Asia Foundation, *A guide to government in Nepal: structures, functions, and practices* (Kathmandu: Asia Foundation, 2012), 3.



over the next thirty years of rule under King Mahendra and later his son, Birendra.<sup>188</sup> In 1979 student demonstrations and opposition groups grew increasingly vocal in their dissatisfaction with government, at times even violent. This prompted King Birendra to call for a national referendum on May 24, thereby deciding whether Nepal should transition to a multiparty system so as to quell the unrest and protect the monarchy.<sup>189</sup> The efforts made to resolve disputes over government were tumultuous, however, as the leaders of the numerous political parties were neither able nor willing to cooperate with one another.<sup>190</sup> Civil unrest and political upheaval continued.

Things shifted in 1990 when Nepal made the formal transition towards a parliamentary democracy. Often referred to as a ‘people’s movement’, this democratic transition marks the first time in Nepali history that the two primary democratic forces, the Nepalese Congress and allied communist groups known as the United Left Front, were able to join together towards a common goal.<sup>191</sup> While successful in forcing King Birendra to renounce his absolutist claim to power (becoming instead a constitutional monarch) there was limited success in actually implementing the necessary changes to institutionalize a democratic system. As before, the various parties involved in the democratic transition were unable to reach an agreement as to how constitutional changes should be made and to what extent democratic principles should be applied.<sup>192</sup> The resulting Constitution thus retained many ambiguities that perpetuated the exclusion of lower

---

<sup>188</sup> Aruna R Mital, “Political Turmoil in Nepal: Monarchy to Democracy,” *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Research*, 2 (2016): 2.

<sup>189</sup> Karl-Heinz Kramer, Bhattarai Keshav, Conway Dennis, and Hari Bansha Dulal, “Political Evolution of Modern Nepal,” in *Nepal in the 21st Century*, ed. Kramer, Karl-Heinz, Bhattarai Keshav et. al. (Hauppauge: US Nova Science Publishers, 2010), 47.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid.

<sup>191</sup> Aruna R Mital, “Political Turmoil in Nepal: Monarchy to Democracy,” *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Research*, 2 (2016), 2.

Karl-Heinz Kramer, Bhattarai Keshav, Conway Dennis, and Hari Bansha Dulal, “Political Evolution of Modern Nepal,” in *Nepal in the 21st Century*, ed. Kramer, Karl-Heinz, Bhattarai Keshav et. al. (Hauppauge: US Nova Science Publishers, 2010), 48.

caste groups, women, and marginalized ethnic identities from participation in political life -- such as denying women the right to pass their citizenship to their children or explicitly protecting 'traditional' Nepalese practices that necessitate caste discrimination.<sup>193</sup> This administration was also highly centralized; efficiency was often constrained by time and inadequate resources, making it difficult for the executive to respond to any of the myriad issues faced by the young and impoverished government.<sup>194</sup> The result was a state of general neglect for many of the nation's most pressing concerns, thereby preventing the development of the inclusive state and Constitution which so many social groups across the country desired. Furthermore, it turns out that the party elites of this new democratic order were the same high Hindu castes whose ideologies had dominated prior regimes, leaving little room for greater inclusion of marginalized ethnic and religious groups in the process of creating a Constitution. People who had been instrumental to the politics of suppression under the Rana regime once more came to rule under the 'democratic' government of this new Nepalese system.<sup>195</sup>

Therefore, the 1990 Constitution which arose from this transition was equally exclusionary. Political opposition was given little space to voice opinions and no ability to influence policy decisions, leaving informal methods, such as strikes and protests (which often became violent), as the only means of articulating opposition party demands.<sup>196</sup> After 1990, Nepal remained a Hindu state and its foundations embedded in the culture and values of the ruling elite. Many hierarchical institutions, especially powerful informal networks of inter-caste behavior, remained unchanged, even with the formal declarations of equality made by the 1990

---

<sup>193</sup> The World Bank, *Unequal Citizens: Gender, Caste and Ethnic Exclusion in Nepal* (Kathmandu: The World Bank Group, 2006), 7.

<sup>194</sup> Karl-Heinz Kramer, Bhattarai Keshav, Conway Dennis, and Hari Bansha Dulal, "Political Evolution of Modern Nepal," in *Nepal in the 21st Century*, ed. Kramer, Karl-Heinz, Bhattarai Keshav et. al. (Hauppauge: US Nova Science Publishers, 2010), 50-51.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

Constitution.<sup>197</sup> As before, the needs and views of rural peasants were repeatedly pushed to the margins of political discussions. This left the impoverished masses (nearly all of whom were of the ‘untouchable’ Dalits caste, ethnic Janajatis, or Muslims) economically isolated and effectively disenfranchised. The ultimate result was to exacerbate the vulnerability of these rural, underrepresented sectors of society in ways which are still obvious to this day. In a society characterized by abject poverty and socio-religious inequalities, the Nepalese people were desperate for the kind of political representation which would introduce new opportunities for changing their fate.<sup>198</sup> It was this general sentiment which gave the late 20th Century Maoist insurgency such strong support, especially from the rural sectors.<sup>199</sup>

In February 1996, the Communist Party of Nepal took steps to replace the parliamentary monarchy with a people's democratic republic. The events that followed quickly spiraled into what has become known as the Nepalese Civil War. The Maoists constantly attacked the stability of the Nepalese Congress that came from the 1990 Constitution.<sup>200</sup> On June 1, 2001, the royal line of Nepal began to unravel: Prince Dipendra assassinated nine members of the royal family, including King Birendra and Queen Aishwarya, before shooting himself.<sup>201</sup> Meanwhile, the civil war raged on, and in October 2002 the government decided it was impossible to hold new elections. When the term of office for local bodies elected in 1998 expired, the government was temporarily deposed by executive order.<sup>202</sup> This left King Gyanendra in complete control until a week later when he reappointed another government. On February 1, 2005, Gyanendra again

---

<sup>197</sup> The World Bank, *Unequal Citizens: Gender, Caste and Ethnic Exclusion in Nepal* (Kathmandu: The World Bank Group, 2006), 7.

<sup>198</sup> Karl-Heinz Kramer, Bhattarai Keshav, Conway Dennis, and Hari Bansha Dulal, “Political Evolution of Modern Nepal,” in *Nepal in the 21st Century*, ed. Kramer, Karl-Heinz, Bhattarai Keshav et. al. (Hauppauge: US Nova Science Publishers, 2010), 50.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*, 52-56.

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

dismissed the entire government and assumed full executive powers, declaring a state of emergency in an attempt to destroy the people's revolution.<sup>203</sup> Taking desperate measures, Gyanendra put politicians under house arrest, cut phone and internet lines across the country, and severely curtailed freedom of the press.<sup>204</sup> In November of that year, leaders of various political parties in Parliament responded by signing a 12-point agreement and collectively led the mass protest that forced the king to step down.<sup>205</sup> Beginning January 17, 2007, Nepal was governed by a unicameral legislature under an interim constitution drafted by the Nepalese parliament of 1998 and the Maoist groups. Since 2008, however, the government of Nepal has again changed eight times.<sup>206</sup>

Over the years, these frequent upheavals of government have badly hampered the country's development and economic growth. Since 1990 the Nepalese constitution has been revised and rewritten numerous times and even now, with the most recent constitution's promulgation, there is no sign of political stability in Nepal. The game of incessant government toppling and subsequent formation still dominates the national political arena. Many castes and ethnic groups, as well as women, continue to face severe political repression and lack of constitutional rights. As a World Bank report published in 2006 found, caste and gender together account for a third of national variation in empowerment and inclusion levels; the aforementioned lower castes are not only subject to severe political exclusion, but also show significantly higher rates of poverty, infant mortality, illiteracy, and dramatically lower life

---

<sup>203</sup> Aruna R Mital, "Political Turmoil in Nepal: Monarchy to Democracy," *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Research*, 2 (2016): 3.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>206</sup> Kapil Dev Regmi, "The political economy of 2015 Nepal earthquake: some critical reflections," *Asian Geographer*, (33)2 (2016): 77-96. doi:10.1080/10225706.2016.1235053.

expectancies.<sup>207</sup> Democracy is still a long way off in Nepal, for with the latest constitution that came into effect on September 20, 2015, protests have once more broken out into violence in demand of ethnic equality before the law. Such rampant instability has made earthquake relief aid unreliable in many crucial areas of Nepal, especially along the Indian border. Furthermore, with corruption levels at an all-time high (Nepal scores a 29/100 on Transparency International's CPI), much of the aid coming in merely lines the pockets of officials who view their time in government as a tenuous arrangement.<sup>208</sup>

The impact of the 2015 earthquake itself is not what has created a natural disaster in Nepal. Rather, this natural shock was merely the catalyst behind a chain of politically-based events, precipitating disaster only through the combined effects of natural and anthropogenic forces. With this in mind, it is useful to once more review the definition of natural disasters. These are crises which happen suddenly, being defined as hazards which have reached one or more acute stages of damage to the populations affected. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, a disaster is defined as a "Natural event, such as a flood, earthquake, or hurricane that *causes great damage or loss of life*".<sup>209</sup> The term 'natural disaster' thus refers to the net impact of a natural hazard upon a population where there is substantial suffering. Most important in this definition of natural disasters, however, is the understanding that disasters are a phenomenon whereby something can be done to mitigate their effects, either before or after they occur. It is the damage incurred by a hazard which defines the disaster.<sup>210</sup> Therefore, in line with the framework of analysis developed thus far, the study of natural disasters in Nepal must be

---

<sup>207</sup> The World Bank, *Unequal Citizens: Gender, Caste and Ethnic Exclusion in Nepal* (Kathmandu: The World Bank Group, 2006).

<sup>208</sup> "Nepal to Conduct Transit Rights: Ban," *CNN*, November 11, 2015. Accessed January 23, 2017. [http://www.bbc.com/nepali/news/2015/11/151111\\_free\\_transit\\_unsg](http://www.bbc.com/nepali/news/2015/11/151111_free_transit_unsg).

<sup>209</sup> Oxford English Dictionary. Italics by the author.

<sup>210</sup> Gary A. Kreps, "Disasters as systemic event and social catalyst," in: *What is a disaster? Perspectives on the question*, ed. Quarantelli, E.L. (New York: Routledge, 1998), 31 -55.

analyzed in a manner which views these crises as the intersection of two opposing forces: the social, political, and economic trends which generate vulnerability on the one hand, and the physical exposure to hazards on the other.

Natural disasters occur in a highly political space, and while the exact moment that a hazard strikes is not explicitly a political event, the environment in which it strikes is absolutely political. Policy decisions, especially those regarding public goods and service provisions, have the greatest potential to mitigate and even prevent the escalation of hazards into disasters.<sup>211</sup> Public goods and policies can assuage the effects of poverty, poor health, and low levels of education. They can also improve quality of services, enhance access to communication networks, and alter other factors which shape a people's vulnerability to disasters. The incentives faced by political actors to favor certain regions over others directly effects the adaptive capacity and vulnerability of certain demographic regions in the face of hazards. The cost-benefit analyses inherent to resource distribution decisions can even be so strong as to determine whether a disaster may arise at all.<sup>212</sup> In Nepal, as with all other nations, the political decisions and incentives made in regard to disaster mitigation and recovery are part of a larger function of resource allocation based on notions of utility.

Governments derive utility from social welfare, political power, and financial capital, determining the level of investment towards each respective policy option depending upon the potential gains associated with these choices. Investment in public goods can effectively reduce mortality from all types of hazards, as such investments improve people's ability to adapt and cope in the face of adverse environmental situations. For example, when allocated properly,

---

<sup>211</sup> Philip Keefer, *Disastrous Consequences: The Political Economy of Disaster Risk Reduction* (Washington D.C.: The World Bank Group, 2009).

<sup>212</sup> Charles Cohen, Eric. Werker and Inter-University Committee on International Migration, *Towards an Understanding of the Root Causes of Forced Migration: The Political Economy of "natural" Disasters* (Cambridge: Inter-University Committee on International Migration, 2004), 3.

public expenditures on health and education can overcome market failures that exacerbate poverty and also those which diminish government credibility.<sup>213</sup> Especially in wealthy democracies where political decision makers are typically held accountable to the public for re-election, there is a stronger incentive to provide public goods proven to diminish incidences of disaster, and oftentimes correspondingly lower disaster mortality rates.<sup>214</sup> One possible reason for this is the strong tendency amongst citizens to vote against politicians from the incumbent ruling party following a disaster, irrespective of relief spending (although relief spending does have the potential to offset the entire political cost of presiding over a disaster in its own right).<sup>215</sup> As a result, there is a strong incentive amongst truly democratic governments to reduce the incidence of disasters through preventative policies and public expenditures so as to preserve their political reputation.<sup>216</sup> However, regardless of regime type, cross-country analyses from Asia, Europe, and the Americas all find that relief spending provides the greatest utility for governments, as it is most visible to the public and therefore the government can take greater credit.<sup>217</sup> A report by Kahn et. al. even found data supporting the claim that democracies suffer fewer deaths from natural disasters than non-democracies. Since 1975, 244 earthquakes (five or greater on the Richter scale) resulting in at least one death have occurred, and of these the average death in countries with competitive elections is 629 while in non-democracies the death toll is approximately 3,737.<sup>218</sup>

---

<sup>213</sup> Philip Keefer and Stuti Khemani, *Democracy, Public Expenditures, and the Poor: Understanding Political Incentives for Providing Public Services* (Washington D.C.: The World Bank Group, 2005), 1-2.

<sup>214</sup> Philip Keefer, *Disastrous Consequences: The Political Economy of Disaster Risk Reduction* (Washington D.C.: The World Bank Group, 2009), 13.

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*: 8.

<sup>216</sup> Shawn Cole, Andrew Healy and Eric Werker, "Do Voters Appreciate Responsive Governments? Evidence from Indian Disaster Relief" (Working Paper No. 09-050, Harvard Business School, Cambridge, 2008).

<sup>217</sup> Philip Keefer, *Disastrous Consequences: The Political Economy of Disaster Risk Reduction* (Washington D.C.: The World Bank Group, 2009): 8.

<sup>218</sup> Matthew E. Kahn, "The Death Toll From Natural Disasters: The Role of Income, Geography, and Institution," *The Review of Economics and Statistics*, (87)2 (2009): 271-284.

In regards to income, current data also highlights an interesting trend. In 1999 a 7.6 magnitude earthquake killed more than 17,000 in Turkey, while a magnitude 7.7 earthquake in densely populated Taiwan killed merely 2,300 in the same year. In Taiwan, per capita income was three times greater than in Turkey, and deaths in Turkey were seven times higher. Placing Nepal within this comparison further reinforces the trend: per capita income is approximately six times greater in Taiwan than Nepal, and in Taiwan a similar magnitude earthquake resulted in five times fewer casualties.<sup>219</sup> This indicates an important question regarding the correlation between natural disaster outbreaks and national wealth: why would the impact of hazards in richer countries differ from those of poorer countries? Earthquakes are not more likely to strike in poor than in rich countries. Data actually points to the contrary.<sup>220</sup> From 1960 to 2005, 759 destructive earthquakes hit the richer half of the world's countries while only 502 struck the poorer.<sup>221</sup> Poverty can provide only a partial explanation as to why certain countries and demographics experience disaster while others who experience a similar hazard do not. It is not merely poverty which acts as an indicator of disaster mortality, although this is one strong marker.<sup>222</sup> Rather, there are also numerous institutional and political factors at play in the generation of natural disasters.

---

<sup>219</sup> Data on disaster mortality from Turkey, Nepal, and Taiwan were collected from the World Bank Database. Accessed on February 2, 2017.

<sup>220</sup> Philip Keefer, *Disastrous Consequences: The Political Economy of Disaster Risk Reduction* (Washington D.C.: The World Bank Group, 2009), 12.

<sup>221</sup> Destructive earthquakes are considered those of a magnitude greater than or equal to a five on the Richter scale and with more than zero population density within 15km of the epicenter.

<sup>222</sup> Research conducted by Kenny (2008) regarding the most-deadly disasters between 1970-2005 found that the twenty most-deadly events occurred exclusively in poor countries. Characteristic of these countries was also a tendency by government to avoid implementing inexpensive risk-reduction policies such as zoning codes as well as poor support for private responses to disaster risk. Furthermore, while this study did indeed find that income per capita is negatively related to earthquake mortality in the 1525 more severe earthquakes occurring in richer countries, it is not at all associated with mortality rates in the 1504 episodes surveyed in poor countries. For more information, please refer to:

Charles Kenny, *Why do People Die in Natural Disasters? The Costs, Benefits and Institutions of Disaster Risk Reduction in Developing Countries* (Washington D.C.: Mimeo, Finance, Economics and Urban Department of the World Bank Group, 2008).



Differing political incentives to mitigate disaster risk interact with intrinsic differences between nations. Such differences may include (but are not limited to): economic stability, the strength of civil society, imperfect citizen information, corruption, the institutionalization of government performance and democracy, ethnic polarization, as well as international pressures. These differences each alter the incentives politicians face when choosing where and how to enact either preventative or reactive policy measures with respect to natural hazards. Where government accountability to the people is relatively high and democratic institutions are strong, there will be a higher utility derived from investments in social welfare projects aimed at mitigating the effects of a hazard event.<sup>223</sup> However, where the rule of law and democratic institutions are weak, and therefore governments less accountable to the people, greater utility would be derived from consolidating political power and financial resources for self-enrichment. Looking at the political history of Nepal, the latter is clearly the scenario faced by the current government.

In Nepal, the relative strength of political institutions and the presence of competitive elections are as important in understanding the potential impact of hazards as poverty levels. Both competitive elections and strong institutions are important proxies used to gauge political market imperfections, which in turn provide a great deal of information regarding peoples' ability to command from government the public goods and services that will enhance social welfare to mitigate disaster risk.<sup>224</sup> Imperfections such as lack of citizen information and awareness, poor political credibility, as well as low levels of intra-government cooperation all hinder the efficient allocation of public expenditures towards services. As Keefer and Khemani

---

<sup>223</sup> Philip Keefer, *Disastrous Consequences: The Political Economy of Disaster Risk Reduction* (Washington D.C.: The World Bank Group, 2009), 18-20.

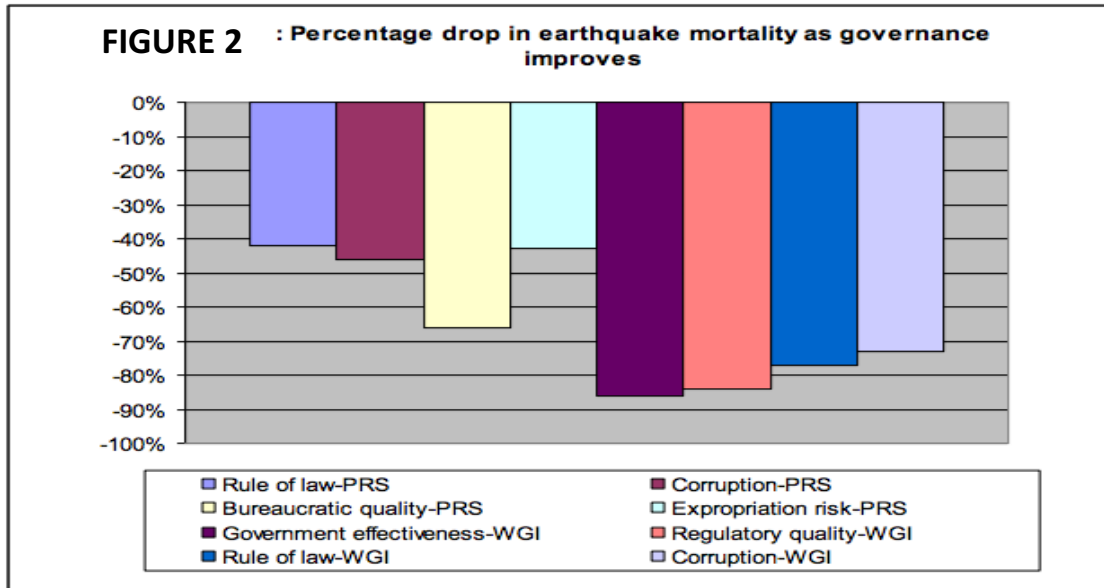
<sup>224</sup> Philip Keefer and Stuti Khemani. *Democracy, Public Expenditures, and the Poor: Understanding Political Incentives for Providing Public Services* (Washington D.C.: The World Bank Group, 2005).

argue, market imperfections disrupt citizens' ability to hold government officials accountable, even when democratic institutions exist, as is the case in Nepal. Each form of market imperfection acts as a strong indicator of how the strength of government may escalate the effects of hazards into disasters.

Employing a variety of governance indicators, the posited inverse correlation between governance and natural disasters continues to hold. According to data collected by the World Bank, government policy stances alter both private and public disaster preparedness levels, such that countries with weak governments (like Nepal) experience higher disaster mortality rates (see Figure 2). In Nepal, weak governance also undermines private incentives to implement disaster risk reduction measures (such as constructing earthquake-reinforced buildings or purchasing disaster insurance), for property rights and contractual obligations are more ambiguous under such a weak rule of law. Therefore, private entities are not inclined to invest in these goods.<sup>225</sup> Even the poverty-disaster link is influenced by political incentives to some degree, seeing as governments with few incentives to mitigate disaster mortality also tend to have low incentive to work towards poverty alleviation; doing so would endanger the ruling regime's monopoly over power and lucrative resources.

---

<sup>225</sup> Philip Keefer, *Disastrous Consequences: The Political Economy of Disaster Risk Reduction* (Washington D.C.: The World Bank Group, 2009), 6.



Note: Estimates from regressions of earthquake mortality on the different governance variables, controlling for earthquake magnitude, the log of population, population density, and the share of people residing in urban areas. Income is causally related to and highly correlated (on the order of .65 - .75) with governance and is excluded. Rule of law and corruption effects are not robust to inclusion of income/capita; the remainder are. PRS variables are from the International Country Risk Guide, Political Risk Services; WGI variables are from the Worldwide Governance Indicators.

Source: Philip Keefer, "Disastrous Consequences: The Political Economy of Disaster Risk Reduction" (Washington D.C.: The World Bank Group, 2009), 7.

Yet beyond this, ethnic fragmentation in political systems is the greatest obstacle to improving Nepal's resilience against disasters. Studies conducted by Weiner and Field regarding electoral politics in Southeast Asia found that identity characteristics along ethnic, linguistic, and religious lines overwhelmingly dominate political behavior.<sup>226</sup> Important differences in health and education outcomes between regions existing within the same nation state are evident in countries across the Asian continent: Nepal, Pakistan, India and Thailand to name a few.<sup>227</sup>

<sup>226</sup> M. Weiner and J.O. Field, *Studies in Electoral Politics in the Indian States* (Delhi: Manohar Book Service, 1974).

<sup>227</sup> Philip Keefer and Stuti Khemani, *Democracy, Public Expenditures, and the Poor: Understanding Political Incentives for Providing Public Services* (Washington D.C.: The World Bank Group, 2005).

While data regarding government expenditures on public goods from an ethnic-regional breakdown is difficult to compile for Nepal, it is useful to look towards neighboring India to reinforce the potency of ethnic identity politics in creating a people's vulnerability.<sup>228</sup> There are numerous similarities between the two nations, especially regarding difficulties of caste marginalization and political exclusion, making them comparable case studies for the purposes of this discussion.

The Indian states of Uttar Pradesh and Kerala have nearly identical per capita incomes and poverty rates. However, divergences in health and education outcomes are staggering. In Kerala, human development indicators are comparable to those of some of the richest nations in the world, while in Uttar Pradesh, conditions reflect those of the poorest.<sup>229</sup> Research conducted by Dreze and Sen is able to shed some light on this puzzle: their analysis found that these stark differences in outcomes are attributable to equally disparate per capita public expenditures by government.<sup>230</sup> Spending in Kerala was more than double that in Uttar Pradesh between 1960 and 1995. Both states are in the same sovereign nation, adhering to the same formal political and legal institutions. Yet, the most significant underlying difference between these regions is the dynamics of political competition. In Kerala, citizens' voter access to information, literacy rates, and the credibility of political promises are greater, while ethnic polarization is relatively low.<sup>231</sup> However, Uttar Pradesh is at the opposite end of the spectrum. The region has a literacy rate of approximately 18%, limited access to media, and active institutions of social discrimination – all of which effectively prevent the stigmatized 'untouchable' castes from accessing public services

---

<sup>228</sup> Government census data for ethnic and caste groups has only been collected in Nepal since 1990, while high levels migration continue to make these numbers difficult to verify

<sup>229</sup> Ibid.

<sup>230</sup> Jean Dreze and Amartya Sen, *India: Economic Development and Social Opportunity* (Delhi: Oxford University Press: 1995).

<sup>231</sup> Ibid.

or participating in the political process.<sup>232</sup> Kerala's political parties have been able to compete on credible platforms for delivering broad social services (diminishing the importance of patron-client relationships). Contrastingly, elections in Uttar Pradesh are dominated by clientelist platforms, and therefore competitive elections have not developed.<sup>233</sup> In Nepal, like in Uttar Pradesh, genuinely competitive elections are blocked by the contradicting demands being made by various independent political groups, each seeking to represent a marginalized ethnic or caste identity.<sup>234</sup> Literacy rates and access to media in rural Nepal (regions inhabited by a majority of the Dalit, Janajati, and Muslim populations) reflect conditions very similar to those found in Uttar Pradesh, and both regions suffer from similarly dismal health and education outcomes. A lack of consensus and open dialogue between marginalized groups in both Uttar Pradesh and Nepal only further perpetuate the strength of clientelistic platforms to reinforce political exclusion.

Many of the socio-political characteristics inherent to Nepal, like Uttar Pradesh, shed light on the important correlation between inequality, social exclusion, political inefficiency and the rise of rural peoples' vulnerability to disasters. Both Nepal and Uttar Pradesh are populated by highly illiterate voters (suggesting poor voter information regarding the link between social welfare and political decision-making) and are characterized by severe ethnic/caste fragmentation. Instances of visible and often coercive social discrimination by government and the community are rampant in Uttar Pradesh. Recent reports collected by the World Bank find very similar patterns of caste and ethnic discrimination across Nepal, acting most directly against

---

<sup>232</sup> Ibid.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid.

<sup>234</sup> The World Bank, *Unequal Citizens: Gender, Caste and Ethnic Exclusion in Nepal* (Kathmandu: The World Bank Group, 2006).

women, Dalit, Janajati and Muslim groups.<sup>235</sup> Such active institutions of social discrimination effectively prevent ‘backward’ castes from accessing public services or participating in political processes.<sup>236</sup> Clearly, a single, formalized democratic system can sustain very different types of electoral competition and produce starkly different social welfare outcomes. The sheer endurance of democracy cannot guarantee that political market imperfections will disappear. The resulting policy outcomes have direct implications for the vulnerability of the most marginalized demographics in regards to hazard recovery. With this in mind it is clear that in order for the Nepalese government to successfully address disaster risk, the state must dramatically improve political inclusion and the provision of public goods. However, such measures require that the general public are able to force accountability through greater political participation, and at the moment the rule of law remains inadequate. At the same time, many of the most disaster-prone regions consist of excluded mountain castes with many more pressing, immediate concerns of daily subsistence.

It is currently estimated that 25% of Nepal’s population lives in extreme poverty, and this shows little sign of improving in the near future.<sup>237</sup> The country’s GDP growth rate has dropped from 6% in 2014 down to .6% by the end of 2016, and of this GDP, approximately 32% is in the form of remittances.<sup>238</sup> Nepal is one of the most impoverished countries in the world. A majority of Nepalese citizens lack basic health services, quality education, shelter, and nutrition on a daily basis -- not just in the face of extreme crisis. Perpetuating this situation are numerous economic and political problems: poor GDP measures, an ever-increasing trade deficit, and a high external

---

<sup>235</sup> The World Bank, *Unequal Citizens: Gender, Caste and Ethnic Exclusion in Nepal* (Kathmandu: The World Bank Group, 2006).

<sup>236</sup> Philip Keefer and Stuti Khemani, *Democracy, Public Expenditures, and the Poor: Understanding Political Incentives for Providing Public Services* (Washington D.C.: The World Bank Group, 2005), 21.

<sup>237</sup> The World Bank Group, *Nepal Profile* (Washington D.C.: The World Bank Group, 2016). Available at: <http://data.worldbank.org/country/nepal> .

<sup>238</sup> Ibid.

debt stock under a political system of utter chaos. All of this is compounded by the recent political unrest. Meanwhile, inequality in terms of class, gender, and geography only further aggravate the challenges faced by the modern Nepalese state. Approximately 120 ethnic groups populate the small landlocked nation, each with a unique religious affiliation, cultural heritage, language, and political identity.<sup>239</sup>

Geopolitical interests have also severely handicapped the government's ability to establish substantive democratic institutions -- something which would mitigate disaster vulnerability for the most at-risk demographics. India and China each have their own political incentives for seeking dominance over Nepal. The prominent role which both states have played in the earthquake recovery process is best understood as a continuation of increasing competition in the region's geopolitics. While India looks to keep a Hindu Nepal aligned with their interests as a buffer between China, the Chinese government hopes to expand its influence in Nepal as a way of constraining the border with Tibet. In the immediate aftermath of the quake, India pledged \$1 billion USD and China just over \$500 million USD.<sup>240</sup> Especially in the case of India, aid donations are being re-routed from the government towards NGOs which are quite likely aligned with Indian foreign policy interests.<sup>241</sup> Many of these organizations are led by individuals with major government positions, yet because a great deal of this incoming aid is not directed towards the government itself, a staggering portion of aid money is pocketed.<sup>242</sup>

Since the earthquake struck in 2015, a total of \$4.4 billion has been pledged by various international agencies and foreign governments. Foreign aid has come pouring into Nepal to fund

---

<sup>239</sup> Rajib Shaw and Takako Izumi, *Civil Society Organization and Disaster Risk Reduction: The Asian Dilemma* (Tokyo: Springer, 2014), 80.

<sup>240</sup> "Nepal earthquake: India and China pledge millions in aid," *BBC News*, June 25, 2015. Accessed January 25, 2017. Available at: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-33266422>.

<sup>241</sup> Charles Cohen and Eric Werker, "The Political Economy of 'Natural' Disasters" (Working Papers 8040., Harvard University, Cambridge, 2008), 85-86.

<sup>242</sup> Kapil Dev Regmi. "The political economy of 2015 Nepal earthquake: some critical reflections," *Asian Geographer*, (33)2 (2016): 77-96. doi:10.1080/10225706.2016.1235053.

reconstruction efforts, yet only half of the total amount was pledged as grants -- the other half is completely loan money. Seeing as substantive democratic practices as well as a corruption-free government bureaucracy are not in place, it is likely that the loans pledged by the international community may not ever reach the earthquake affected communities. In fact, this money may only exacerbate the underlying issues precipitating disaster in the first place. Approximately \$2.2 billion is now in the hands of a weak, corrupt and un-coordinated Nepalese government. This increases the incidence of appropriation of funds, while also increasing the national debt. With very few substantial sources of income, the current recovery process in Nepal is dominated by the *racket effect*; not only has the government chosen to under-invest in disaster prevention (knowing that the international community will come to assist), but has also deliberately avoided implementing disaster prevention measures in the most vulnerable areas so as to attract aid money as a way of supplementing national income.<sup>243</sup>

Such trends can only force the country into a state of greater debt and economic vulnerability. In Nepal, the government uses past aid donations as a signal for the amount that they can expect during the current earthquake recovery period, thus substituting post-disaster relief from the international community for pre-disaster risk reduction measures.<sup>244</sup> This fact provides very few incentives for the state to invest in disaster risk-reduction measures, for not only are the benefits of such investments hard for citizens to perceive, but they also provide little return for a government whose source of political power lies not in authentic democratic institutions, but rather in the hands of an elite few. Thus, the economic insecurity which comes from aid dumping works to the detriment of the most marginal and excluded populations in Nepal. Aid continues to dissuade the government from making important investments in social

---

<sup>243</sup> Charles Cohen and Eric Werker, "The Political Economy of 'Natural' Disasters" (Working Papers 8040., Harvard University, Cambridge, 2008), 4.

<sup>244</sup> Ibid.



goods such as early warning systems and enforced building code measures. By loosening the budget constraints placed upon government, aid investments should theoretically decrease disaster mortality. However, Nepalese households and the government alike, expecting external aid after a disaster, often reduce efforts to mitigate disaster outcomes *ex-ante* and are likewise insufficiently vigilant about disaster vulnerability. Data collected by Raschky and Schwindt reinforces this point: foreign aid is associated with a lower likelihood that countries will experience any deaths from disasters, but if any deaths do occur, foreign aid is associated with a stark increase in disaster mortality – especially in the case of floods and earthquakes.<sup>245</sup>

In Nepal, foreign aid has, however, made some marginal improvements to disaster reduction measures. It has promoted the development of proper building code standards and greater safety awareness, especially for hospitals and schools. The World Bank, USAID, and the Asian Urban Disaster Preparedness Center have all been instrumental in the creation of these safety plans. However, surveys are now finding that these new building codes are failing largely due to the incompetency of government regulation and oversight.<sup>246</sup> Earthquake-proof buildings have been constructed (mostly isolated to Kathmandu), yet failure to supervise the quality of building-reinforcement and corner-cutting to save money have counteracted any potential gains which these codes could provide.

The potential safety of proper building code enforcement is immense, and must be considered as a central force in Nepal's excessive disaster risk. According to Alexander et. al., over 95% of all deaths in earthquakes result from building failures.<sup>247</sup> There is also a strong link to be drawn between variations in mortality among different countries and differences in

---

<sup>245</sup> P.A Raschky and M. Schwindt, "Aid, Catastrophes and the Samaritan's Dilemma" (Working Papers in Economics and Statistics., University of Innsbruck, 2008).

<sup>246</sup> Asian Disaster Preparedness Center, *Project Completion Report of the Kathmandu Valley Earthquake Risk Management Project* (Bangkok: Asian Disaster Preparedness Center, 2000).

<sup>247</sup> D. Alexander, "Death and Injury in Earthquakes," *Disasters*, (9)1 (1985): 57-60.

building styles, densities of settlements, as well as enforcement of proper building codes.<sup>248</sup> Understanding the critical role which structural variations play in Nepal's seismic earthquake risk requires that one consider where buildings are likely to fail and also to dissect the root causes behind this situation (here it is useful to once more refer to the Pressure and Release model by Blaikie et. al.). The earthquake reinforced buildings which now exist in Kathmandu are actually very faulty in design and structure in comparison to what is envisioned by the Kathmandu Valley Earthquake Risk Management Project.<sup>249</sup> Though less likely to collapse in an earthquake, if these buildings do collapse one can expect an even higher mortality rate amongst inhabitants.<sup>250</sup> Improper building codes and lack of enforcement is due largely to the instability of the government apparatus yet is compounded by unregulated and rampant urbanization amongst the poorest sectors of society.

The history of Nepal is one of enduring political unrest, inequality, and poor rule of law. Political and economic power in the region continues to be consolidated by the Hindu caste system at the expense of the lower caste and ethnic majorities – especially in rural areas. Therefore, when these conditions come into contact with a natural shock, like that of the earthquake in 2015, natural disasters are imminent. The vulnerability and physical insecurities of the rural majorities and urban poor are reproduced through daily acts of exclusion and through persisting, institutionalized systems of marginalization against those outside the high-caste structure. The next step in creating a more secure Nepal will be to address the root causes of disasters. This requires that government and civil society collectively draft a plan of action that enhances civilian safety across all regions and which also incorporates all sectors in democratic

---

<sup>248</sup> J. Seaman, S. Leivesley and C. Hogg, *Epidemiology of Natural Disasters* (Basle: Karger, 1984), 10-11.

<sup>249</sup> Asian Disaster Preparedness Center, *Project Completion Report of the Kathmandu Valley Earthquake Risk Management Project* (Bangkok: Asian Disaster Preparedness Center, 2000).

<sup>250</sup> Philip Keefer, *Disastrous Consequences: The Political Economy of Disaster Risk Reduction* (Washington D.C.: The World Bank Group, 2009), 21.

governance. Perhaps most importantly, governance in Nepal must work to reduce the underlying pressures of economic stagnation, inequality, and excessive poverty by restructuring the distribution of wealth and enhancing political participation. The state must address both the physical hazards of poor building construction alongside the socio-political conditions of inequality and political inefficiency, otherwise earthquake mitigation measures cannot be successfully realized in Nepal. Without a serious reformation to the governing apparatus, the Nepalese people will remain embroiled in a situation of high risk and vulnerability to disaster for years to come.

### **Conclusion:**

Disasters are highly complex material events inextricably linked to the social perceptions of a community; they are not products of natural phenomena under the pressures of climate change. Rather, natural disasters are a manifestation of the deeply-rooted inequalities and social vulnerabilities felt by any given demographic when a hazard strikes. Therefore, unless one is capable of understanding the historically-embedded root causes and broader social patterns that precipitate people's vulnerability to disaster (these include: economic inequality, unsafe living conditions, and poignant political marginalization, among many others which have been addressed throughout this text), it will be impossible to effectively develop a means of addressing natural disasters in the twenty-first century. International disaster mitigation efforts must analyze not only disasters in general, but rather go a step further and dissect the underlying forces that make people and their environment vulnerable to such crises in the first place.

Each case study analyzed here, Haiti, Ethiopia, and Nepal, all experience natural disasters in a unique context, yet there are indeed some overlapping trends. In weak, underdeveloped

states such as Nepal or Haiti, disaster prevention and response units are either non-existent or ill equipped to address the needs and demands of its citizens. In such instances, it is not uncommon for the corrupt incentives of government officials to also precipitate widespread abuse of hazard relief aid, exacerbating the outbreak of disaster. Similarly, this analysis has shown that a poor history of upholding human rights causes many citizens to accept unsafe living conditions and insecure livelihoods. As a direct consequence, people's access to the resources necessary for effective hazard adaptation are often withheld and essential coping mechanisms obstructed. Likewise, under conditions where resource extraction and excessive industrial development have degraded the natural environment to a point of severe instability, as is the case in Haiti and Nepal, hazards such as a monsoon or hurricane can create catastrophic flooding or landslides. In Ethiopia, the ill-conceived, top-down reconfiguration of land tenure practices compounded by a long history of ethnic conflict, has meant that droughts can easily escalate into full-blown disasters. Such patterns are common across the developing world.

As has been shown, historic processes of isolation, oppression, and exploitation, combined with contemporary international power systems, interact in complex ways to affect different socioeconomic classes distinctly. The outbreak of disaster thus exposes the moment when these instabilities come into contact with an environmental hazard. In order to effectively address such debilitating crises, the international community must begin to take preventative, and not just reactive measures. Effective action will require that both international institutions and governments collectively address disasters as a function of the daily risks which people face that heighten their vulnerability.

In 1990 the United Nations announced the beginning of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (IDNDR). The focus of this sponsored decade was to create and

maintain a safer environment by encouraging nation states to share and pool resources, thereby enhancing access to information, technological expertise, and resilience against severe weather. One major objective of the IDNDR has been to improve hazard prediction methods, yet this methodology merely pits attention towards the hazards themselves, rather than towards the forces which give rise to disasters. While enhanced scientific and financial resources are always useful in mitigating risks, this limited approach runs the danger of encouraging top-down development efforts that allow empirical data and science to overshadow the needs and vulnerabilities of those at greatest risk to disaster.

Many of the current disaster risk reduction measures adopted by the UN, World Bank, and other multilateral stakeholders are not only expensive, but also entirely overlook the root causes of disasters themselves. As we have seen in Haiti, it is not merely the hurricane which gives rise to a natural disaster. Rather, it is Haiti's entrenched patterns of authoritarian militarism, severe inequality, and the marginalization of the most vulnerable demographics which ultimately generate natural disasters from a hazard. If the hazard itself were the root cause of disaster, Hurricane Matthew and other similar Caribbean storms would have created much more tragic outcomes in the Dominican Republic and neighboring Cuba. These politically and economically based patterns of suffering are yet to be effectively acknowledged by the international community.

However, some progress has indeed been made. Since the 1990s, international efforts at natural disaster mitigation have been further codified. In 1999 the United Nations drafted a new mandate to address the impending threat of natural disasters entitled, *The International Strategy for Disaster Reduction*. In 2001 this mandate was expanded to serve as the focal point in the UN system, guaranteeing coordination and synergies among disaster risk reduction activities

throughout the UN, as well as with regional humanitarian organizations. To quote the Secretary General, this era marked a newfound focus on disaster risk reduction: "We must, above all, shift from a culture of reaction to a culture of prevention. Prevention is not only more humane than cure; it is also much cheaper... Above all, let us not forget that disaster prevention is a moral imperative, no less than reducing the risks of war".<sup>251</sup> In 2015 the Sendai Framework for disaster reduction was adopted by the third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction. This framework is a fifteen-year voluntary, non-binding agreement that delineates a broad, people-centered approach to disaster risk reduction. The Sendai Framework marks monumental step towards alleviating the stresses and strains of people's vulnerability around the world. The core focus of this recent mandate includes ensuring that disaster risk reduction (DRR) is applied to climate change adaptation while also increasing key investments in mitigation efforts such as building disaster resilient cities, schools, and hospitals, while also strengthening collaboration throughout the international system and enhancing coordination.<sup>252</sup>

While the Sendai Framework and other UN mandates are indeed steps in the right direction, such international developments should be taken with great caution. It is commendable and certainly a great achievement that the international community is recognizing the socio-political roots of natural disasters in the 21st-century, especially as they pertain to economic inequalities and cultural biases against vulnerable communities. Yet these institutions must be wary of perpetuating the top-down, developmentalist and aid-centric approach to disaster risk reduction which has thus far failed to address many of the afflictions underlying people's

---

<sup>251</sup> Kofi Annan, "International Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction - A Safer World in the 21st Century: Disaster and Risk Reduction" (Geneva: United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, 1999). Available at: [http://www.eird.org/eng/revista/No15\\_99/pagina2.htm](http://www.eird.org/eng/revista/No15_99/pagina2.htm).

<sup>252</sup> The United Nations, *The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030* (New York: The United Nations, 2015). Available at: [https://www.unisdr.org/files/43291\\_sendaiframeworkfordrren.pdf](https://www.unisdr.org/files/43291_sendaiframeworkfordrren.pdf)

vulnerability. By keeping DRR policies and discourse isolated amongst the institutions directing the international policy arena, it is unlikely that people's vulnerability to disaster will be reduced in any substantive manner. To effectively address the root causes of natural disasters requires that vulnerable people's access to resources are enhanced through changes in the power relations of society. Currently, those who created this global system of inequality and injustice are devising the very mechanisms which will supposedly relieve the suffering that their system not only created, but which they themselves have never experienced. Such an approach isolates the source of solutions to those at the top of the global power hierarchy. Moving forward, the international community must recognize that the primary forces behind active relief consist of grass-roots mobilization. Affected communities must work collectively towards their empowerment, supporting each other when coping and adapting to environmental changes. Under the current IDNDR framework, the impacts of disasters can indeed be diminished to a limited extent. However, as previously noted, by addressing disasters through scientific modelling and technological adaptations, international DRR agencies focus their efforts exclusively on the environmental aspects of the problem and isolate solutions.

The case studies developed throughout this discussion have made clear the severe need for a vulnerability-focused analysis within current international discourses on disaster risk reduction. The pivotal role which socio-political instabilities and economic inequalities play in generating the preconditions for disaster cannot be overlooked if the international community is to reduce the devastating effects of natural disasters in the era of climate change. To address the anthropogenic roots of natural disasters will require that those involved in disaster mitigation efforts actively seek to diminish people's vulnerability through collaborative, cross-sector engagement from the bottom-up. Domestic and international actors alike must be open to

changing the processes that put people at risk. This means that the environment cannot be made safer by technical developments alone. As the perspective put forth in this analysis contends, it is indeed possible to make the human environment safer. However, this is only achievable when concrete efforts are made to reduce economic and social inequalities, cultural biases, and political injustice. The people at risk must be incorporated into the political and economic life of their nations and encouraged to participate in substantive democratic processes --such is a right afforded to all humans, not a privilege.

The internationally financed development projects described throughout the case studies of this discussion, such as USAID agricultural projects in Haiti, economic development programs in Ethiopia, or earthquake relief efforts in Nepal, are designed and directed by large international organizations. Inevitably, this means that such projects lack any clear accountability mechanisms for human rights and environmental standards. These projects, such as dams, mines, and oil pipelines, are notorious for their environmental and human rights impacts, including the forced displacement of indigenous people, the poisoning of rivers used for drinking water, the exacerbation of corruption, and the perpetuation of sexual abuse against women and children by foreign workers. Thus, the very projects meant to lift people out of poverty often have the opposite impact. This must change.

Such is not to say that efforts at global development, poverty alleviation, and disaster risk reduction are futile. Vulnerability can indeed be reduced, but only if aid programs are properly conceived and implemented so as to actually address the needs of society rather than to preserve the industry of NGOs and global development agencies. What is needed is substantive engagement of the masses towards their own empowerment. The social, economic, and political mechanisms that translate global pressures and unsafe conditions into disasters can be changed



and even reversed if the people become active participants in the development of their own societies. Like all aspects of the human condition, the transnational pressures which create vulnerability should be viewed as flexible concepts, not as immutable and inevitable elements of society. Ideally, society will work to enhance the links between popular culture and bureaucracy, strengthening the management of high-risk regions so as to incorporate structural as well as nonstructural measures for disaster risk reduction.

Effective disaster management efforts will be pointless if projects continue to be based on a hierarchical model that overlooks the needs of the communities they seek to serve. Disasters can be reduced only by freeing people from the socio-political and economic constraints they face in everyday life. These root causes must be given the same priority as more technical and scientific approaches to disaster risk management. Therefore, substantive disaster risk reduction measures are only obtainable if the implementation of DRR policies are balanced in a participatory system that fully acknowledges the diversity of state and non-state actors concerned, working to empower local communities and strengthen democratic institutions across the world. Progress has indeed been made, yet still the international community overlooks the important implications which political and economic forces play in the overall resilience of a population. Natural disasters are indeed one of the greatest threats to human security in the modern era. If the global community is to effectively address this imminent threat, a more holistic, human rights-focused, and inclusive approach to disaster risk management is necessary.

## Bibliography

- Alexander, D. "Death and Injury in Earthquakes," *Disasters*, (9)1 (1985).
- Amnesty International. *Ethiopia: Civil society groups urge the international community to address killing of Oromo protesters* (Washington D.C.: Amnesty International, 2016).  
<http://www.amnestyusa.org/news/press-releases/ethiopia-civil-society-groups-urge-the-international-community-to-address-killing-of-oromo-protester>.
- Amnesty International. *Ethiopia: Ethnic Oromos arrested, tortured and killed by the state in relentless repression of dissent* (Washington D.C.: Amnesty International, 2014).  
<http://www.amnestyusa.org/news/news-item/ethiopia-ethnic-oromos-arrested-tortured-and-killed-by-the-state-in-relentless-repression-of-dissent>.
- Annan, Kofi. "International Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction – A Safer World in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Disaster and Risk Reduction" (Geneva: United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, 1999). [http://www.eird.org/eng/revista/No15\\_99/pagina2.htm](http://www.eird.org/eng/revista/No15_99/pagina2.htm).
- Arloc, Sherman and Shapiro, Isaac. *Essential Facts About the Victims of Hurricane Katrina* (New York: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 2005).
- Asia Foundation. *A guide to government in Nepal: structures, functions, and practices* (Kathmandu: Asia Foundation, 2012).
- Asian Disaster Preparedness Center. *Project Completion Report of the Kathmandu Valley Earthquake Risk Management Project* (Bangkok: Asian Disaster Preparedness Center, 2000).
- Bankoff, Greg, Georg Frerks, and Dorothea Hilhorst. *Mapping Vulnerability: Disasters, Development, and People* (London: Earthscan, 2004).
- BBC News. "Hurricane Matthew: Haiti Storm Kills Hundreds," *BBC News*, October 7, 2016.  
<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-37582009>.
- BBC News. "Nepal earthquake: India and China pledge millions in aid," *BBC News*, June 25, 2015.  
 Accessed January 25, 2017. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-33266422>.
- Bernier, Barbara. "Sugar Cane Slavery: Bateyes in the Dominican Republic," *New England Journal of International and Comparative Law*, (9)1, (2003).
- Blaikie, Piers M., Ben Wisner, Terry Cannon, and Ian Davis. *At Risk: Natural Hazards, People's Vulnerability, and Disasters* (London: Routledge, 1994).
- Blaikie, Piers. *The Political Economy of Soil Erosion in Developing Countries* (London: Longman, 1985).
- Burbach, Roger and Marc Herold. "The U.S. Economic Stake in Central America and the Caribbean," in *The Politics of Intervention: The United States in Central America*, eds., Roger Burbach and Patricia Flynn (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1984).
- Burbach, Roger and Patricia Flynn. *The Politics of Intervention: The United States in Central America* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1984).
- Buss, Terry F. and Adam Gardner. *Haiti in the Balance: Why Foreign Aid Has Failed and What We Can Do About It* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2008).
- Carter, Joseph. *Residents of Rio's Favelas Face Diverse Risks* (Washington D.C.: World Watch Institute, 2016). <http://www.worldwatch.org/node/4756>.
- Center for Disease Control, *Global Health - Haiti* (Atlanta: United States Government, 2016).  
[https://www.cdc.gov/haiticholera/haiti\\_cholera.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/haiticholera/haiti_cholera.htm).

- Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters and International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. *World Disasters Report 2005* (Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff, Dordrecht, 2005).
- Cesar Pino, Julio. "Sources on the History of Favelas in Rio de Janeiro", *Latin American Research Review*, (32)3, (1997).
- Chalapati, Rao, Alan D. Lopez, and Yusuf Hemed. "Causes of Death," in *Disease and Mortality in Sub-Saharan Africa*, eds. Jamison DT, Feachem RG, Makgoba MW, et al. (Washington D.C.: The World Bank Group, 2006).
- Chinchilla, Norma and Nora Hamilton. "Prelude to Revolution: U.S. Investment in Central America," in *The Politics of Intervention: The United States in Central America*, eds., Roger Burbach and Patricia Flynn (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1984).
- CIA World Factbook. "Export Partners of Haiti" (2015). Available at: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ha.html>.
- CIA Worldfactbook, "Country Report: Ethiopia" (2016). Available at: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/et.html>.
- CIA World Factbook, "Compare: Haiti vs. Dominican Republic" (2016). Accessed on September 30, 2016. Available at: <http://www.indexmundi.com/factbook/compare/haiti.dominican-republic>
- CNN. "Nepal to Conduct Transit Rights: Ban," *CNN*, November 11, 2015. Accessed January 23, 2017. Available at: [http://www.bbc.com/nepali/news/2015/11/151111\\_free\\_transit\\_unsg](http://www.bbc.com/nepali/news/2015/11/151111_free_transit_unsg).
- Cohen, Charles, Eric Werker, and Inter-University Committee on International Migration. *Towards an Understanding of the Root Causes of Forced Migration: The Political Economy of "natural" Disasters* (Cambridge: Inter-University Committee on International Migration, 2004).
- Cole, Shawn, Andrew Healy and Eric Werker. "Do Voters Appreciate Responsive Governments? Evidence from Indian Disaster Relief" (Working Papers No. 09-050, Harvard Business School, 2008).
- Constitution of Brazil, October, 5 1988.
- Conway, Frederick. *A Study of the Fuel-Wood Situation in Haiti* (Port-au-Prince, United States Agency for International Development, 1979).
- de Castro, Josue. *The Geopolitics of Hunger* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1977).
- De Shutter, Oliver. *The New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition in Africa* (Brussels: European Union Policy Department; Directorate-General for External Policies, 2015).
- De Waal, Alexander. *Evil Days: 30 Years of War and Famine in Ethiopia* (New York, NY: Human Rights Watch, 1991).
- Domonoske, Camila. "U.N. Admits Role In Haiti Cholera Outbreak That Has Killed Thousands," *NPR*, August 18, 2016. Accessed on: March 05, 2017.
- Dreze, Jean and Amartya Sen. *India: Economic Development and Social Opportunity* (Delhi: Oxford University Press: 1995).
- Edwards, Adrian. "Global Forced Displacement Hits Record High", *UNHCR News*, June 20 2016. Accessed on: 09 September 2016. <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/news/latest/2016/6/5763b65a4/global-forced-displacement-hits-record-high.html>
- Endale, Derseh. "The Ethiopian Famines Entitlements and Governance," (Working Papers 102, World Institute for Development and Economics Research, United Nations University, 1992).
- Farmer, Paul. "An Anthropology of Structural Violence," *Current Anthropology*, (45)3 (2004): 305-325.
- Farmer, Paul. *The Uses of Haiti* (Monroe: Common Courage Press, 2006).

- Fatton, Robert. *Haiti: Trapped in the Outer Periphery* (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2014).
- Ferguson, James. *Papa Doc, Baby Doc: Haiti and the Duvaliers* (Oxford: B. Blackwell, 1988).
- Fischer, Brodwyn. *Cities From Scratch: Poverty and Informality in Urban Latin America* (London: Duke University Press, 2014).
- Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, "The New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition," *News on Food and Agriculture*, 2014.
- Foster, C and A. Valdman. *Haiti -- Today and Tomorrow: An Interdisciplinary Study* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1984).
- Garcon, Jennifer. "Women and the Duvalier Dictatorship, 1957-1986," in *Haiti Island Luminous Database* (Digital Library of the Caribbean, 2014).  
<http://islandluminous.fiu.edu/french/part10-slide04.html>.
- Goyder, H., C. Goyder, D. Curtis, M. Hubbard, and A. Shepherd. "Case Studies of Famine: Ethiopia," in *Preventing Famine: Policies and Prospects for Africa*, ed. H. Goyder et. al. (London: Routledge, 1988).
- Goyder, H. et. al. *Preventing Famine: Policies and Prospects for Africa* (London: Routledge, 1988).
- Grunwald, J., L. Delatour, and K. Voltaire. "Offshore Assembly in Haiti," in *Haiti -- Today and Tomorrow: An Interdisciplinary Study*, eds., Foster, C. and A. Valdman (Lanham: University Press of America, 1984).
- Guiney, John. *Preliminary Report on Hurricane Georges: 15 September - 01 October 1998* (Silver Spring: National Hurricane Center - NOAA, 1999).
- Haggerty, Richard. "Growth and Structure of the Economy," in *Haiti: A Country Study*, ed. Richard A. Haggerty (Washington D.C.: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1989).  
<http://countrystudies.us/haiti/45.htm>.
- Haggerty, Richard. *Haiti: A Country Study* (Washington D.C.: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1989).
- Hauler, Lesley. "Today in History: Remembering Hurricane Jeanne," *AOL*, July 14, 2016. Accessed March 05, 2017.
- Hewett, Kenneth. *Interpretations of Calamity from the Viewpoint of Human Ecology* (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1983).
- Hewitt, K. "The Idea of Calamity in a Technocratic Age," In: *Interpretations of Calamity*, ed. K. Hewitt (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1983).
- Holcomb, Bonnie and Jason Clay. *Politics and the Ethiopian Famine: 1984-1985* (Peterborough: Transcript Printing Company, 1986).
- Horne, Felix. *Such a Brutal Crackdown -- Killings and Arrests in Response to Ethiopia's Oromo Protests* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2016).
- Horne, Felix. *Such a Brutal Crackdown: Killings and Arrests in Response to Ethiopia's Oromo Protests* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2016).
- Human Rights Watch. *Mechanisms Used by the Ethiopian Government to Control Rural Communities in Oromia* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2005).  
<https://www.hrw.org/reports/2005/ethiopia0505/6.htm>.
- Index Mundi, "Nepal Demographics Profile: 2016" (Index Mundi, 2017). Available at:  
[http://www.indexmundi.com/nepal/demographics\\_profile.html](http://www.indexmundi.com/nepal/demographics_profile.html)
- International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. *World Disasters Report* (Geneva: International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 2001).
- International Rivers, *Chinese Dams in Africa* (Berkeley: International Rivers, 2016). Available at:  
<https://www.internationalrivers.org/campaigns/chinese-dams-in-africa>.

- Jaggar, Alison. "Is Globalization Good for Women?," *Comparative Literature* 53(4), (Autumn, 2001): 298-314.
- Kahn, Matthew. "The Death Toll From Natural Disasters: The Role of Income, Geography, and Institution," *The Review of Economics and Statistics* 87(2), (2009): 271-284.
- Keefer, Phillip and Stuti Khemani. *Democracy, Public Expenditures, and the Poor: Understanding Political Incentives for Providing Public Services* (Washington D.C.: The World Bank Group, 2005).
- Keefer, Philip. *Disastrous Consequences: The Political Economy of Disaster Risk Reduction* (Washington D.C.: The World Bank Group, 2009).
- Kenny, Charles. *Why do People Die in Natural Disasters? The Costs, Benefits and Institutions of Disaster Risk Reduction in Developing Countries* (Washington D.C.: Mimeo, Finance, Economics and Urban Department of The World Bank Group, 2008).
- Kramer, Karl-Heinz, Bhattarai Keshav, Conway Dennis, and Hari Bansha Dulal. "Political Evolution of Modern Nepal," In *Nepal in the 21st Century*, eds. Kramer, Karl-Heinz, Bhattarai Keshav et. al. (Hauppauge: U.S. Nova Science Publishers, 2010).
- Kramer, Karl-Heinz, et. al. *Nepal in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Hauppauge: U.S. Nova Science Publishers, 2010).
- Kreps, Gary. "Disasters as systemic event and social catalyst," in *What is a disaster? Perspectives on the question*, ed. E.L. Quarantelli (New York: Routledge, 1998).
- Laguerre, Michel S. "Migration and Urbanization in Haiti," *Sociologus, Neue Folge/New Series* (37)2 (1987): 118-139.
- Lawrence, Miles B. and Hugh D. Cobb. *Tropical Cyclone Report: Hurricane Jeanne* (Miami: National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration - National Hurricane Center, 2005).
- Lundahl, Mats. "Peasants and Poverty: A Study of Haiti," in *The Haitian Economy: Man, Land and Markets*, ed. Mats Lundahl (London: Croom Helm, 1983).
- Matfess, Hilary. "Ethiopian Activists Fight U.S.-Backed Land Seizures," *Foreign Policy in Focus*, September 9, 2014. Accessed on November 2, 2016.
- McClintock, Nathan. *Agroforestry and Sustainable Resource Conservation in Haiti: A Case Study* (North Carolina State University, 2010).
- McClintock, Nathan. *Regenerative Agriculture for Haiti's Central Plateau- A Sustainable Foundation for Food and Nutrition Security* (Paris: Zanmi Lasante, 2004).
- Mital, Aruna. "Political Turmoil in Nepal: Monarchy to Democracy," *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Research* (2)9 (2016): 1-7.
- Mitchell, Timothy. *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).
- Mittal, Anuradha. *Five Western Donors Shape a Corporate Agenda for African Agriculture* (Oakland, Oakland Institute: 2016).
- Murray, Gerald. *Terraces, Trees and the Haitian Peasant: An Assessment of Twenty-Five Years of Erosion Control in Rural Haiti* (Port-au-Prince: United States Agency for International Development, 1979).
- NBC News. "The Top 10 Deadliest Earthquakes in History," *MSNBC, NBC News*, 11 Apr. 2012. Accessed on 25 Aug. 2016. [http://www.nbcnews.com/id/42029974/ns/world\\_news-asia\\_pacific/t/top-deadliest-earthquakes-history/#.V1V\\_PyMrLZs](http://www.nbcnews.com/id/42029974/ns/world_news-asia_pacific/t/top-deadliest-earthquakes-history/#.V1V_PyMrLZs).
- Nega, B., B. Adenew and S. Gebre Sellasie. *Current Land Policy Issues in Ethiopia* (Addis Ababa: Ethiopian Economic Policy Research Institute, 2003).

- Norton, Michael. "Haiti Hurricane Death Toll Hits 147," *Associated Press*, October 11, 2007. Accessed on October 25, 2016. <http://faculty.webster.edu/corbetre/haiti/miscopic/disaster/death toll.htm> .
- Oxford English Dictionary. (2005).
- Palmie, Stephan and Francisco Scarano. *The Caribbean: A History of the Region and Its Peoples* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).
- Pichler, A. and E. Striessnig. "Differential vulnerability to hurricanes in Cuba, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic: the contribution of education," *Ecology and Society* (18)3 (2013): 31.
- Quarantelli, E.L. *What is a disaster? Perspectives on the question* (New York: Routledge, 1998).
- Raschky, P.A. and M. Schwindt. "Aid, Catastrophes and the Samaritan's Dilemma," (Working Papers in Economics and Statistics., University of Innsbruck, 2008).
- Regmi, Kapil Dev. "The political economy of 2015 Nepal earthquake: some critical reflections," *Asian Geographer* (33)2 (2016): 77-96. doi:10.1080/10225706.2016.1235053.
- Robbins, Paul. *Political Ecology: A Critical Introduction* (Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 2004).
- Seaman, J., S. Leivesley and C. Hogg. *Epidemiology of Natural Disasters* (Basle: Karger, 1984).
- Sen, Amartya. *Poverty and Famines: An essay on Entitlement and Deprivation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981).
- Shaw, Rajib and Takako Izumi. *Civil Society Organization and Disaster Risk Reduction: The Asian Dilemma* (Tokyo: Springer, 2014), 80.
- Shindo, E. "Hunger and Weapons: The Entropy of Militarism," *Review of African Political Economy* (33)1 (1985): 6-22.
- Smucker, Glenn. "Peasants and Development Politics: A Study in Haitian Class and Culture." (Ph.D. Dissertation, University Microfilms, 1983).
- Smucker, Glenn. *Field Report: Supplies of Credit among Haitian Peasants* (Washington, D.C.: DAI, 1982).
- Stargardter, Gabriel and Makini Brice. "Haiti tries to get hurricane aid right, but cholera blamed on U.N. wanes," *Reuters*, October 13, 2016. Accessed on September 30, 2017.
- Sudhir, K., Jain et. al. *Report: The Republic Day Earthquake in the land of M. K. Gandhi, The Father of the Nation* (Kanpur: Department of Civil Engineering Indian Institute of Technology, 2001).
- Susman, P., P. O'Keefe, and B. Wisner. "Global disasters, a radical interpretation," in *Interpretations of Calamity from the Viewpoint of Human Ecology*, ed. K. Hewitt (Boston: Allen and Unwin, 1983), 263-283.
- Swartley, D. Ben and Joseph Ronald Toussaint. *Haiti Country Analysis of Tropical Forestry and Biodiversity* (Washington D.C., USAID Forest Service, 2006).
- Tesfaye, Beza. "Let's talk about ethnicity and nationalism in Ethiopia," *Africa is a Country*, October 07, 2014. Accessed on November 4, 2017. <http://africasacountry.com/2014/10/lets-talk-about-ethnicity-and-nationalism-in-ethiopia/> .
- The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia: Ministry of Finance and Economic Development. "The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Growth and Transformation Plan." September 2010.
- The Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development. *Social Institutions and Gender Index: Gender Equality in Haiti* (Paris: The Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development, 2016). <http://www.genderindex.org/country/haiti>.
- The United Nations. *Human Development Report 2011* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

- The United States Government, *G8 Cooperation framework to support The “New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition” in Ethiopia* (Washington D.C.: United States Government, 2014).
- The United Nations, *The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030* (New York: The United Nations, 2015). Available at:  
[https://www.unisdr.org/files/43291\\_sendaiframeworkfordren.pdf](https://www.unisdr.org/files/43291_sendaiframeworkfordren.pdf)
- The White House Office of the Press Secretary. “Fact Sheet: G-8 Action on Food Security and Nutrition”, *White House Press Secretary*, May 18, 2012. Accessed on December 4, 2016.  
<https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2012/05/18/fact-sheet-g-8-action-food-security-and-nutrition> ."
- The World Bank Group. *Recent Economic Developments and Prospects for Recovery and Growth* (Washington D.C.: The World Bank, 1985).
- The World Bank Group. *Haiti Overview* (Washington D.C.: The World Bank Group, 2017).  
<http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/haiti/overview>.
- The World Bank Group. *Inequity Report on China* (Washington D.C.: The World Bank Group, 2016).  
<http://povertydata.worldbank.org/poverty/country/CHN>
- The World Bank Group. *Unequal Citizens: Gender, Caste and Ethnic Exclusion in Nepal* (Kathmandu: The World Bank Group, 2006).
- The World Bank Group. *Inequity Report on India* (Washington D.C.: The World Bank Group, 2016)  
<http://povertydata.worldbank.org/poverty/country/IND> .
- The World Bank Group. *Nepal Profile* (Washington D.C.: The World Bank Group, 2016). Available at: <http://data.worldbank.org/country/nepal> .
- The World Bank Group, Caribbean Country Management Unit. *Haiti Country Social Analysis: Social Resilience and State Fragility in Haiti* (Washington D.C.:The World Bank Group, 2006).
- The World Health Organization. *Haitian health care: a follow-up* (Geneva: The World Health Organization, 2011).
- Thornton, Mark. “What Caused the Irish Potato Famine?,” *The Free Market*, May 20, 2008. Accessed on December 20, 2016.
- Transparency International. *Country Report: Haiti 2016* (Berlin: Transparency International, 2016). Accessed on December 11, 2016. <https://www.transparency.org/country/#HTI>.
- UN Economic and Social Council. *The Agricultural Development Led Industrialization (ADLI) strategy* (Geneva: The United Nations, 2016). Available at:  
<https://webapps01.un.org/nvp/indpolicy.action?id=124> .
- United Nations, “Ethiopia: Humanitarian Snapshot” (Geneva: United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2016). Available at:  
<http://reliefweb.int/report/ethiopia/ethiopia-humanitarian-snapshot-28-november-2016>.
- United Nations, *Ethiopia: Situation Report November 2016* (Emergency and Rehabilitation Center Rome, Italy: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2016). Available at:  
<http://www.fao.org/emergencies/resources/documents/resources-detail/en/c/456019/>.
- United States Agency for International Development. *Haiti: The Environment and Climate Change* (Washington D.C.: United States Government, 2016).
- US Census Bureau. *Federal Emergency Management Assistance in 2000* (Washington D.C.: GPO, 2000). [www.censtats.census.gov/data/LA/04022.pdf](http://www.censtats.census.gov/data/LA/04022.pdf) .
- US Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report: Haiti* (Washington D.C.: US Department of State - Bureau of Public Affairs, 2016).  
<https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/258879.pdf> .

- Vaughan, Sarah. "Revolutionary democratic state-building: party, state and people in the EPRDF's Ethiopia", *Journal of Eastern Africa Studies* (5)1 (2011).
- Vestal, T.M. "Ethiopia's Famine: A Many Dimensioned Crisis," *World Today* (41)7 (1985).
- Viste, Ellen, Diriba Korecha, and Asgeir Sorteberg. "Recent Drought and Precipitation Tendencies in Ethiopia," *Theoretical and Applied Climatology* (112)3-4 (2013).
- Weiner, M. and J.O. Field. *Studies in Electoral Politics in the Indian States* (Delhi: Manohar Book Service, 1974).
- Walter, Jonathan. *World Disasters Report 2001* (Geneva: International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 2001).
- World Food Program. *Drought In Ethiopia: 10 Million People In Need* (Geneva, World Food Program: 2016).
- Young, John. *Peasant Revolution in Ethiopia: The Tigray People's Liberation Front, 1975-1991* (Cambridge: University Press, 1997).
- Zekaria, S.G. and Maxwell Lambert. *Cereals, Pulse and Oilseed Balance Sheet Analysis for Ethiopia 1979-1989* (Sussex: IDS, 1990).