

## Constructing the State: Macro Strategies, Micro Incentives, and the Creation of Police Forces in Colonial Namibia

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Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version

Zeitschriftenartikel / journal article

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### Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:

De Juan, A., Krautwald, F., & Pierskalla, J. H. (2017). Constructing the State: Macro Strategies, Micro Incentives, and the Creation of Police Forces in Colonial Namibia. *Politics & Society*, 45(2), 269-299. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0032329217705352>

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# Constructing the State: Macro Strategies, Micro Incentives, and the Creation of Police Forces in Colonial Namibia\*

Politics & Society  
2017, Vol. 45(2) 269–299  
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DOI: 10.1177/0032329217705352  
journals.sagepub.com/home/pas



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## Abstract

How do states build a security apparatus after violent resistance against state rule? This article argues that in early periods of state building two main factors shape the process: the macro-strategic goals of the state and administrative challenges of personnel management. These dynamics are studied in the context of the establishment of police forces in the settler colony of German Southwest Africa, present-day Namibia. The empirical analysis relies on information about the location of police stations and a near full census of police forces, compiled from the German Federal Archives. A mismatch is found between the allocation of police presence and the allocation of police personnel. The first was driven by the strategic value of locations in terms of extractive potential, political importance, and the presence of critical infrastructure, whereas the allocation of individual officers was likely affected by adverse selection, which led to the assignment of low-quality recruits to strategically important locations.

## Keywords

state building, colonial, security forces, personnel, police, Namibia

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\*This special issue of *Politics & Society* titled “The Comparative Politics of Colonialism and Its Legacies” features an introduction and four papers that form part of a special workshop held at The Ohio State University, April 2016, organized by Marcus Kurtz and Jan Henryk Pierskalla.

Enforcing the monopoly of violence is the first and maybe most important step in constructing a state.<sup>1</sup> To achieve that goal, states must establish formal organizations that act as agents of the state and are endowed with its repressive powers.<sup>2</sup> Although numerous studies have investigated the effects of high or low repressive capacities of states<sup>3</sup> we still know very little about how organizations with sufficient repressive capacity are constructed in the first place, how their authority is established and solidified across the territory of a state, and how they are organized internally. The question is particularly relevant for the study of colonial governments that employed large-scale violence to squash local resistance to state rule—in particular, settler colonies with white minorities obsessed with controlling indigenous populations.<sup>4</sup> In these cases colonial governments had to create bureaucratic institutions that could effectively deploy repressive state power against indigenous populations (e.g., to ensure the forced supply of labor), while simultaneously managing regular affairs of colonial life (e.g., adjudicate property disputes, etc.). In this article, we investigate the socioeconomic conditions and administrative dynamics that determine how a colonial government allocates material and human resources to meet this state-building challenge.

We differentiate between two challenges to the construction of a security apparatus. The first is the macro-strategic goal to project state power across territory and people, which is initially expressed via the investment into physical infrastructures, namely, the construction of police stations, and the accompanying assignment of personnel strength. The second and related challenge deals with the management of individual civil servants. We expect the macro-level allocation of material resources and personnel numbers to reflect strategic state priorities, such as the protection of economic extraction sites and of critical infrastructures, or the pacification of restive regions. We also expect the allocation of human resources to deviate from these strategic state priorities because of administrative challenges related to internal personnel management. Scarcity of human capital, the resulting high bargaining power of skilled police officers, and their personal preferences for nonhardship positions forced the state to assign low-quality and inexperienced recruits to the most strategically important locations in the colony, likely undermining the macro-strategic goals that were driving the expansion of the colonial police.

To study these processes, we analyze the security forces of the former colony of German Southwest Africa, present-day Namibia. The colonial police force was established in 1907 in the wake of the Herero and Nama uprising, which was put down in a ruthless counterinsurgency campaign that came to be known as the first genocide of the twentieth century.<sup>5</sup> The establishment of the police was meant to solidify and consolidate the German colonial government's control over territory and indigenous ethnic groups in the aftermath of active resistance. As such, it offers an ideal opportunity to study the dynamics that shape the constitution of a colonial security apparatus, following intense state violence in the presence of a white settler community.

Our empirical analysis relies on multiple original historical data sources. We draw on detailed colonial maps and annual reports to understand the spatial expansion of the police station network.<sup>6</sup> In addition, a comprehensive dataset of hundreds of personnel files, compiled from the German Federal Archives, allows us to trace the internal challenges of human resource management within the police. The data represent a near full

census of all German rank and file police officers including, for example, information on sociodemographic profiles, professional backgrounds, experience in the military, and professional assessments by superiors. We complement these data with qualitative information from archives in Germany.<sup>7</sup> Our analysis finds consistent evidence that the state's desire for territorial control determined the investment of scarce resources across the colony but also generated real challenges in the management of police officers assigned across the station network.

We make two important contributions to the literature: first, our theoretical argument and empirical results add to general research on early phases of state building. Previous studies have highlighted the role of structural factors in explaining patterns of state presence and penetration.<sup>8</sup> While we can lend some support to these arguments, we also show that principal-agent problems in personnel management can undermine and contradict macro objectives in state-building and produce unintended consequences that limit the effectiveness of state institutions. Second, we contribute to the growing literature on settler colonialism.<sup>9</sup> Historians and anthropologists have identified the divergence of interest between European colonists and colonial home governments as a prime characteristic of settler colonialism. Moreover, settler colonies often featured a strong internal commitment to domination over the indigenous population, expressed in campaigns of intense violence—what has been called a “logic of elimination.”<sup>10</sup> Our study details how a settler colony translated this logic into a repressive bureaucracy intended for subjugation and control of the indigenous population in the aftermath of such a violent campaign.

## **Constructing the State**

Enforcing the monopoly of violence is the key concern of any state administration, particularly in early phases of state building. Processes of state expansion and consolidation almost necessarily lead to conflict between the central state and competing social organizations that aim at defending their authority against the state.<sup>11</sup> Consequently, effective institutions that yield the tools of physical violence are a key ingredient for the state-building project. This entails physical infrastructure, such as police stations, military bases, prisons, and the numbers and quality of manpower.

However, in many cases states are unable to project their repressive capacities equally across all areas falling within their borders. Scarcity forces state administrations to focus repressive resources and to tolerate “blank spots” in state presence, generating opportunities for opposition against state authority.<sup>12</sup> So how do states allocate their scarce repressive resources across their territories to minimize these risks—in particular after they have experienced substantial instances of violent resistance against state rule?

### *Resource Allocation under Conditions of Extreme Scarcity*

Our theoretical argument begins with the recognition of pervasive scarcity constraints in state-building projects. Early state-building efforts are often hampered by a lack of financial resources, human capital, and oversight capacities. These types of scarcity

concerns are particularly pressing when states abruptly try to govern large swathes of territory not previously under their control—for example, in situations of territorial annexation and occupation, after military interventions, or during early colonialization.

Under colonial rule, most administrations had to build their security apparatuses with very limited financial and human resources. Metropolitan states tried to keep funding for colonies as limited as possible and generally expected colonial administrations to meet their own financial needs.<sup>13</sup> The colonial repressive apparatus rested on a small force thinly spread across vast territories.<sup>14</sup> In most colonies, one armed member of the security forces per 1,000 inhabitants was already considered a high number<sup>15</sup> forcing colonial security forces to operate “beyond the space that could be administered.”<sup>16</sup>

Colonies also faced the tremendous problem of attracting qualified men to distant and unhealthy regions that had come to be known as the “white man’s grave.”<sup>17</sup> As Louis Faidherbe, governor of Senegal at the end of the nineteenth century, put it bluntly, “the profession is tough, and hardly attractive.”<sup>18</sup> As a consequence, many individuals entering the colonial civil and military service had questionable pasts and were poorly skilled and inexperienced. In 1837 Sir George Cornwall complained “that the scum of England was being poured into the colonies.”<sup>19</sup> For example, French-administered Chad, consisting mainly of deserts and swampy, inhospitable areas, repeatedly attracted dubious characters and junior staff: deployment into the colony was regarded as a sign of demotion.<sup>20</sup>

Finally, colonial states faced tremendous challenges to effective oversight and control. State agents were scattered across wide territories with very limited infrastructural penetration. Lack of modern means of communication prevented regular and timely exchange over long distances. Heliographs and telegraphs were limited to primary administrative and economic hubs, while communication to other areas had to rely on letters and messengers that could take weeks to transmit messages. Because of the limited availability of resources, actual oversight and control by high-level administrators took place only on rare occasions—mostly as reaction to transgressions rather than as effective means of prevention. Consequently, personnel allocated to remote areas were vested with tremendous discretion in performing its assigned tasks.<sup>21</sup>

We argue that these constraints severely affected the state’s allocation of repressive resources at the macro and micro levels in two interconnected ways. First, the colonial state often prioritized the macro-strategic goal of state survival, which required the concentration of infrastructural resources in important but also remote locations. Second, the lack of qualified personnel generates administrative challenges in the assignment of state agents to remote locations. The next two subsections elaborate on this argument in greater detail.

### *Strategic Priorities: Protection and Pacification*

The scarcity of resources forces states to prioritize essential goals in the state-building project. States must align the allocation of repressive resources to their most important priorities: securing economic assets, guarding critical infrastructures, and preventing open rebellion.

Research on the emergence of the modern state in Western Europe has emphasized opportunities for extraction as a key driver of state building.<sup>22</sup> The state's survival depends on its ability to extract resources from its land and its population. This is particularly true after existential threats to state survival have been minimized and the state can focus its attention on consolidating power and extracting tax resources from the population.<sup>23</sup> Given the high priority of economic extraction, we should expect repressive resources to be allocated to areas that provide or promise high levels of economic rents to the nascent state: population centers with high levels of economic activity, particularly fertile land, and areas abundant with mineral resources. Such areas are associated not only with high value to the state but also with high risk of violent opposition against the state. Extractive activities strongly influence interactions between the state and the population. They constitute a fundamental intervention into social life.<sup>24</sup> Revolts against state extraction were frequent in the early phases of European<sup>25</sup> and colonial state building.<sup>26</sup> The high potential for local resistance against extraction motivates investments into repressive state capacity, while increased state capacity supports effective extraction and may thereby lead to renewed violent resistance.<sup>27</sup> This extraction-coercion cycle should lead to a high concentration of state security resources in resource abundant regions of the state:

Hypothesis 1: Extractive potential leads to stronger state presence.

Functioning states require not only financial resources: their ability to exercise control and regulate social relations depends on their physical penetration of territory. Transportation and communication infrastructures are essential in this respect. Roads, railways, and postal services play a key role as "agencies of change."<sup>28</sup> They help to bridge distances, connecting far-away places to political and administrative centers of power and thereby supporting the process of state building. In nineteenth-century Europe, roads acted as "administrative highways,"<sup>29</sup> facilitating the movement of troops, tax collectors, and other state agents. In colonial states, infrastructures such as post offices or telegraph lines were essential for the central administration to project power, control local personnel, and to acquire timely information on peripheral regions.<sup>30</sup> Such infrastructures also made the state more visible and tangible in peripheral areas, thereby increasing the risk of violent resistance against state penetration. Consequently, we expect states to invest security resources into the effective protection of these critical infrastructures:

Hypothesis 2: Transport infrastructure leads to stronger state presence.

The weaker a state, the more its stability depends on the capacity to constantly demonstrate its resolve and to swiftly quell resistance in any form. Acts of opposition can showcase the state's actual weakness and motivate further rebellion, threatening the state-building project.<sup>31</sup> Such feelings of insecurity were pronounced in settler colonies. White settlers' keen awareness of the precariousness of their status often propelled them to extreme solutions to assure their long-term dominance, even if those solutions put them in conflict with their metropolitan governments.<sup>32</sup>

Reliable assessments of risks of violent opposition are difficult though and often precluded by a lack of information about the sociopolitical conditions in peripheral regions. Thus, although states can hardly allocate repressive resources according to unforeseeable future rebellion, they can aim to prevent the reemergence of previous instances of violent opposition.<sup>33</sup> Prioritizing areas that have experienced rebellion before is strategically sensible from at least two perspectives: first, previous instances of violent opposition attest to the willingness and ability of the local population to stage effective resistance against the state. Moreover, local grievances and combat experience both increase as a consequence of the previous violent encounters with the state. Second, from a purely symbolical viewpoint the state cannot accept renewed challenges to its authority. Thus, for example, Killingray highlights that in the Sudan and the Gold Coast “military headquarters stood in strategic centers at the heart of newly conquered territories, the forts and barracks intended to overawe recently rebellious Mahdists and Asantes.”<sup>34</sup> Similarly, we expect that states invest their repressive resources into regions that have experienced uprisings by the local population in the past:

Hypothesis 3: Prior violent resistance leads to stronger state presence.

### *The Lack of Personnel*

Macro-strategic concerns shape the allocation of state resources across the territory of the colony; creating an effective police apparatus, however, also requires qualified staff, especially given the role the police are meant to play for colonial governance. On the one hand the colonial police force is meant to be an effective instrument of violence and control. Police officers’ role typically included the suppression of political opposition by the indigenous population and the enforcement of labor recruitment. On the other hand, the police are also an explicitly civilian bureaucracy, meant to normalize the enforcement of the state’s monopoly of violence and to facilitate economic and social exchange in colonial life. They must, for example, adjudicate property disputes between settlers, deal with petty crime, and act as go-betweens for the colonial government and the colonized.

Thus is it important that political leaders can trust the police not only to use force effectively, to minimize possible challenges to the authority of the state and facilitate the extraction of economic resources, but also to show restraint, so as not to unduly antagonize the local population. A large body of literature on government repression has highlighted the potential dangers in aggravating civilians for generating mass opposition and violence against incumbent regimes.<sup>35</sup> This risk was particularly pronounced in the context of colonial state building, where administrators had the task of upholding stability with very limited resources. Colonial states had to keep a fragile balance by signaling resolve and capacity to punish any recalcitrant behavior and at the same time preventing any unnecessary “excess” repression that might foment grievances and rebellion.

Recruiting and managing personnel in this context is challenging because of well-known principal-agent problems.<sup>36</sup> Since the state cannot perfectly observe applicants’

quality during recruitment, or sufficiently monitor its agents' effort in the fulfillment of their assigned tasks, adverse selection in the recruitment of personnel and moral hazard during the implementation of tasks is likely to arise.<sup>37</sup> Modern bureaucracies have developed a number of mechanisms to limit these problems,<sup>38</sup> but we believe that colonial governments struggled in this regard. Finding highly skilled, disciplined, and loyal recruits who could be sent to challenging and remote locations was a formidable challenge for colonial governments.

The macro-strategic imperative of early state building itself might have generated three interrelated dynamics that exacerbate personnel management problems. The objective of penetrating peripheral regions of the state's territory: (1) increases the demand for high-quality staff and thereby increases the bargaining power of individual recruits; (2) creates a need for effective monitoring capacity in the administrative centers, which absorbs qualified recruits needed in the peripheral priority; and (3) creates opportunities for rent seeking.

A high demand for and scarcity of high-quality personnel increases the value of each professional and increases his or her leverage over his or her own assignment. Most recruits have little desire to be assigned to remote hardship posts. High-quality recruits can use their bargaining power to avoid such assignments. Eventually, the state administration faces the hard choices of either accepting the preferences for non-hardship/low-priority stations or losing valuable resources altogether. This general dilemma is well known from personnel allocation in modern administrations: the most valuable human resources—the best-qualified teachers or health professionals, for example—tend to be allocated to posts that promise the best working conditions rather than to those with the highest need.<sup>39</sup> This situation is likely to extend to repressive agents of the state. As a consequence, actual allocation patterns deviate from objective requirements and political prioritization: high-quality recruits tend to be assigned to nonhardship positions rather than to high-priority areas.

This dynamic is exacerbated by an increasing need for monitoring capacity within the security organization itself. In general, supervisors have little ability to control the actions of local agents. This restraint proved to be grave in German Southwest Africa. Police leadership might receive only monthly written reports from outlying stations and could send inspectors only once a year to influence local police behavior directly. These constraints increase the need for highly qualified personnel in the administrative center who can maximize effective supervision under adverse conditions. The need may then counteract the primary objective of securing the economic and political goals of the state via deploying high-quality personnel to peripheral regions.

Finally, recruits who lack high levels of intrinsic motivation, discipline, and relevant skills may also have a desire for personal rent seeking and may therefore actively pursue assignments to strategically important but remote locations. Since the state's macro strategy focuses on extractive activity and the use of violence against the indigenous population, individuals with an interest in rent seeking will target such locations to maximize their opportunities for extraction under minimal supervision. This creates a real challenge to the recruitment and assignment of police officers. "Bad types" have an incentive to misrepresent their motivations, further reinforcing processes by which



low-quality recruits are misallocated to politically and economically important peripheral regions, while high-quality personnel are assigned to less challenging areas in the administrative centers of the state:

Hypothesis 4: High-quality recruits are more likely to receive nonhardship assignments.

### *The Police in German Southwest Africa*

To test our argument, we analyze the case of German Southwest Africa—one of Germany's few colonial possessions and its only settler colony. While this case proves specific in the extent of colonial violence and metropolitan commitment to settler control,<sup>40</sup> it also reflects the above-mentioned primary scope conditions of our argument, making it a meaningful empirical case for exploring the challenges of repressive resource allocation under conditions of extreme scarcity.

The police force of German Southwest Africa, the so-called *Landespolizei*, was formally established in 1905. Until then, members of the regular colonial army, the *Schutztruppe*, had fulfilled police functions. More than twenty years after the formal beginning of colonial rule, the force's establishment reflected German Southwest Africa's growing importance as a settler colony and the inadequacy of policing by the military. Prompted by growing settler numbers and the desire to disentangle the colony from military administration, the government in Windhuk and the Colonial Department (*Kolonialabteilung*) in Berlin began deliberations in 1900 over the establishment of a civilian police force. After tedious negotiations, they presented their first draft proposal to local magistrates and district chiefs in 1903.<sup>41</sup>

The outbreak of the Herero and Nama war one year later, however, obstructed the realization of these plans. On January 12, 1904, Herero men raided white farms, railroads, and towns, catching the *Schutztruppe* by surprise. Ten months later, the Nama also rose up against German rule. Increasing economic marginalization and repression by white settlers had pushed both into rebellion.<sup>42</sup> It took the Germans three years, a massive surge of the *Schutztruppe*, and a ruthless, genocidal counter-insurgency campaign, which left at least one third of the Herero and Nama dead, to quell the uprising.<sup>43</sup> Although acting governor Tecklenburg formally established the *Landespolizei* in early 1905, the administration failed to introduce a regular police force during the war. The force's first budget provided only for a total of eighty police officers.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, failure of the 1905 ordinance to describe precise employment conditions led to a lack of volunteers. Only after Emperor Wilhelm II signed the decree setting forth the rights and duties of the *Landespolizei* in October 1907 did proper recruitment begin.

Even as the war prevented the establishment of the *Landespolizei*, it also underlined its necessity to German authorities. The white settler community was in constant fear of a renewed uprising.<sup>45</sup> At the same time, the virtual annihilation of the Herero and Nama opened up scarce farmland, which attracted scores of new settlers, many of them former *Schutztruppe* soldiers. Spurred by expanding livestock production and

the discovery of diamonds in 1908, the colony underwent rapid economic development.<sup>46</sup> In 1907, a parliamentary budget memorandum accordingly emphasized that, aside from actual police work, the force had to protect resource extraction and critical infrastructure, and had to prevent renewed violent resistance. The memorandum stated: “The purpose of the Landespolizei consists in protecting borders and farms, in maintaining order in larger settlements, along the railways and in mining districts . . . as well as in checking pilferage.”<sup>47</sup> This language suggests that, at least on paper, the creation of the colonial police forces followed well-defined macro-strategic directives that were in alignment with Hypotheses 1–3.

To fulfill this mandate, appropriate internal personnel management practices had to be established. The colonial authorities modeled the Landespolizei after metropolitan police forces, but they also emphasized its special, colonial, character. In contrast to most other colonial police, the Landespolizei consisted primarily of white officers. That African policemen might control white settlers was anathema to Germans, who considered it irreconcilable with their claim to civilizational superiority.<sup>48</sup> The 1905 ordinance therefore created two divisions of the rank and file. On the one hand stood white sergeants (*Polizeisergeant*) and superior staff sergeants (*Wachtmeister*), later supplemented by constables (*Polizist*) and senior staff sergeants (*Diensttuender Wachtmeister*).<sup>49</sup> On the other hand stood a corps of African police assistants (*Polizeidiener*), whose task consisted in “supporting” their white colleagues.<sup>50</sup> In practice, African officers proved indispensable, especially as translators in daily dealings with the African population.<sup>51</sup>

The German policemen mirrored the regional and religious makeup of the metropole. Most were protestants, had grown up in Prussia, and hailed from petty bourgeois backgrounds. Before entering the military, many had practiced a skilled trade. The majority had also fought together in the Herero and Nama war. What arguably attracted these young men most to the Landespolizei was the chance to earn a premium of 1000 marks (*Dienstprämie*) and guaranteed employment in the civil service (*Zivilversorgungsschein*) after twelve years of combined military and police service.<sup>52</sup> For decommissioned Schutztruppe soldiers in particular, entering the police was a stepping stone to acquiring the capital they needed to buy their own farms in the colony. Magistrates and inspection officers at times explicitly sought to attract qualified officers whom they knew from prior service in the Schutztruppe. For example, in 1909, Magistrate von Frankenberg requested the transfer of sergeants Weernicke and Borchert because both had served in the Sixth Feldkompanie and were therefore familiar with the Outjo area.<sup>53</sup> Frankenberg had commanded part of the same unit during the 1904–7 war and may have served with both of them.<sup>54</sup> Pay depended on rank and seniority and ranged from roughly 3000 to 4000 marks.<sup>55</sup> Although police thus earned approximately three times as much as their peers in the metropole, their wages amounted to little given the high and inflated prices in the colony. Especially during the first years of the police’s existence, most officers lived in poor conditions.<sup>56</sup>

The 1905 ordinance defined the force as a civilian institution with a military organization. At the center of the latter stood the chief of police, who was a senior military officer. He led police headquarters (*Inspektion*) and commanded all lower-ranking officers. Five so-called inspection officers (*Inspektionsoffiziere*) assisted the chief in

this task, heading one of the five eventual police districts and their subsidiary police stations. Inspection officers oversaw the maintenance of military discipline through regular inspections of police stations. Four (eventually two) police depots organized recruits' basic three to four month military training, which focused on riding, shooting, and patrolling, as well as the legal basis of police work. At the center of the force's civilian organization stood the magistrates (*Bezirksamtmänner*) and district chiefs (*Distriktchefs*). These civilian administrators commanded the district rank and file, instructed them in daily police work, and assigned them to individual police stations.<sup>57</sup>

Assignments of police officers to particular stations followed a strict chain of command, which meant that superior officers and civilian administrators determined the deployment of officers. Work on isolated stations was often dull and dangerous, and living conditions hard and unhealthy, which made such assignments generally unpopular across the rank and file. At the same time, service on a remote station could lead to professional advancement. Officers who exhibited leadership skills, military prowess, and the ability to work on their own for extended periods of time (e.g., by building or extending station buildings) were considered ideal for the position of Stationsältester and Wachtmeister. Thus, service at remote outposts was both a formal requirement—in the sense that someone had to do it to fulfill the tenuous mandate of protecting German settlers—but also an informal one in the sense that the demanding patrol service and harsh environment hardened recruits and prepared them for future responsibilities. Yet individual officers had little opportunity to formally articulate personal preferences in station assignments. For instance, personal documents such as application cover letters were far too formalized to allow prospective policemen the expression of personal preferences. More importantly, superior officers would have considered any such expression a flagrant breach of discipline, deserving punishment.<sup>58</sup> Analyzing assignment patterns in the colonial police therefore constitutes a hard test for our theory of informal bargaining power: official administrative procedures concentrated power at the highest levels of the police, enabling superior officers, in principle, to support their macro-strategic goals with the deployment of high-quality recruits.

Several factors complicated the Landespolizei's official purpose of protecting resource extraction, critical infrastructure, and preventing violent resistance. First, the police's dual organizational structure produced frequent conflict and remained subject to debate. Inspection officers, magistrates, and district chiefs constantly quarreled over the correct chain of command and jealously defended their responsibilities.<sup>59</sup> Second, the force struggled with a lack of sufficient personnel. The Reichstag budget of 1907 provided for a total of 720 sergeants and staff sergeants as well as 370 African police assistants.<sup>60</sup> Because of repeated budget cuts, the strength of the Landespolizei never attained that target. In 1912, the force reached its all-time high of about 570 white and 320 African officers.<sup>61</sup> This modest strength was thinly spread across the vast territory. In theory, stations with fewer than three officers should not have existed.<sup>62</sup> But in 1909, out of a total of sixty-nine stations, thirty-three were staffed with two officers, and nineteen with just one. Many of these one- and two-man stations lay in remote, rural areas, more than 100 kilometers away from the next station.<sup>63</sup> Third, the

Landespolizei's narrowly defined purpose conflicted with an actual plethora of duties. Although German police underwent a process of professionalization around the century, policing remained indebted to an older German notion of *policey* that defined the purpose of policing as ensuring both the welfare of a population and its the security.<sup>64</sup> Coupled with the shortage of police and administrative personnel, this notion meant that members of the Landespolizei had to assume duties that had little or nothing to do with police work in a narrow sense. Policemen handled anything from health and veterinary inspections, the enforcement of mining and labor legislation, to post and customs duties.<sup>65</sup> One leading former officer took pride in the fact that police had acted as "girl Fridays," that is, as all-purpose, itinerant agents of the colonial state.<sup>66</sup>

On the question of adverse selection, it is important to bear in mind that violence was ubiquitous in the work of *all* Landespolizei officers. Whether they worked in Windhuk or in remote Schuckmannsburg in an office or on patrol duty, policemen had to constantly uphold and defend not only their personal honor but also the colonial order itself in their daily interactions with the African population.<sup>67</sup> Few officers hesitated to employ violence to this end. Accordingly, there was no purposeful strategy of assigning potentially more violent and insubordinate recruits to remote stations. Rather, the lack of oversight during such assignments created more fertile conditions for disciplinary infractions and wanton mistreatment of the local population.

## Research Design, Data, and Results

The qualitative description in the previous section offers some evidence of the factors that drove the spatial expansion of the colonial police forces and points to the importance of recruitment problems in police management. In this section we formally confront our theoretical hypotheses with additional evidence in two complementary empirical analyses. To identify the macro drivers of German colonial state building, we trace the spatial expansion of police stations and the allocation of personnel strength across the colony from 1907 to 1914. Specifically, we test whether economic, infrastructural, and political considerations are meaningful predictors of police station presence and personnel strength across the territory of the colony. In a second step, we proceed to unpack the challenges of allocating personnel across police stations. We draw on a near complete record of all police officer files from German archives to construct a dataset that tracks all station assignments from 1907 to 1914. We test which individual-level characteristics determine assignments, documenting essential trade-offs and tensions between the macro-level strategy of the colonial government and the principal-agent relationship that complicates the management of personnel under difficult conditions.

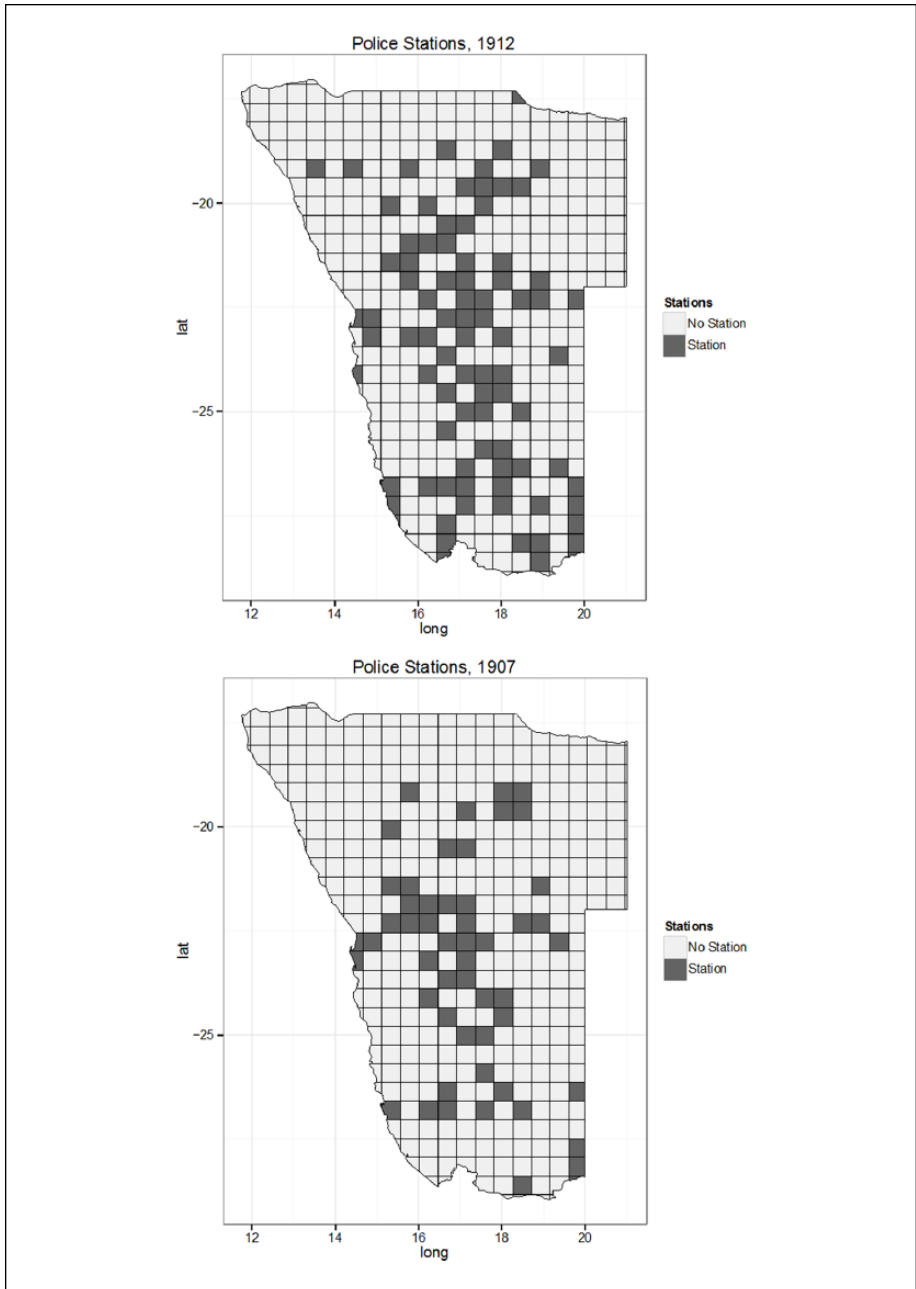
### *The Distribution of Police Stations*

Our first analysis aims to trace the macro-level expansion of repressive state capacity in the colony. We begin by taking the territory of the colony and dividing it into a random set of equally sized grid cell units. We construct grid cells of fifty by fifty

kilometers, which produces 398 cells as our units of analysis. We opt for randomly drawn grid cells, because we want to test the determinants of police expansions without relying on endogenous, preexisting administrative unit boundaries. For each grid cell we determine whether a police station existed in 1907, at the inception of the police force, and in 1912 near the end of Germany's colonial rule. Information on existing police stations comes from Rafalski's 1930 history of German Southwest Africa's police force.<sup>68</sup> Police stations come in three forms: regional stations (*Bezirksämter*), district stations (*Distriktsämter*), and local stations (*Wachtposten*). Regional stations are the largest and most important central offices for the police force and are responsible for all police activity within their designated area. District stations are administratively one level below regional stations, but also oversee their own area. Local stations represent the most common type of police presence and are created within the assigned territory of regional or district stations. They are small outposts for limited groups of police officers that served as base camps for patrols in the area. We also include the police depots that were in charge of training new recruits. We georeference the location of all police stations in 1907 and 1912 via location names and a full registry of town names in colonial Namibia. We create simple dummy and count variables for the presence of police stations in 1907 and 1912 for our analysis. We also create a count measure that sums the total number of personnel assigned to each station in a grid cell to measure the overall manpower committed to a particular region. Figure 1 displays the geographic distribution of police stations in 1907 and 1912.

Our main independent variables capture the economic, infrastructural, and political importance of each grid cell. A dominant theme motivating the expansion of the German colonial state was the extraction of valuable resources, which pertain primarily to minerals and, after 1908, diamonds. Using official colonial maps we identify the number of mineral mines for each grid cell in 1907. The discovery of substantial diamond deposits along the desert coast of Western Namibia in 1908 created an intense rush for extraction that required a parallel expansion of state capacity. We create an additional dummy variable that signifies the presence of diamond deposits after 1908. It is important that this time-varying indicator of economic extraction potential is fairly well identified. Since the location and discovery of diamond deposits was determined largely by exogenous forces, it allows us to identify the effects of resource discovery on the expansion of the police in a difference-in-difference setting. Apart from mineral extraction, the other important activity in the colony was agriculture. We use a detailed map of plots owned by white settlers, assigned for agricultural use to a measure of economic activity in each grid cell and calculate the percentage of land occupied by farmers in 1907 and 1911. Using a settler registry from 1907 we also localize all major towns of white settlers in each grid cell and sum the total size of the white population. Total white population represents an important aggregate measure of taxable resources.

To measure the infrastructural importance of each grid cell, we trace the road and railway network of the colony before 1907 and measure the presence of either infrastructure type for each grid cell. Again, information on colonial roads and railway tracks comes from official maps of the colonial administration. We expect that police



**Figure 1.** Police Stations in 1907 and 1912.

**Source:** Authors' elaboration; Rafalski, *Vom Niemandsland zum Ordnungsstaat*.

presence is more likely in areas with a developed road and rail network, since police officers were tasked with securing these arteries of colonial trade.

Finally, after the war against the Herero and Nama, a major concern for the colonial government was to ensure the dominance and safety of the white settler population. Hence we expect that particular attention was paid to areas of prior resistance against the colonial power. We measure an area's prior resistance by georeferencing the location of skirmishes and battles between the colonial military and Africans before 1907. Accounts of individual incidents come from official records of the *Schutztruppe*.<sup>69</sup> We were able to georeference the vast majority of individual incidents by town and village names mentioned in the reports. For each grid cell we simply calculate the total count of battles that occurred before 1907.

We add a number of important political and social controls to our grid cell data. First, in order to differentiate the expansion of the police from other forms of preexisting state capacity, we measure the presence of military and missionary stations across the colony. Information on military stations comes from an official map of the German colonial office that details the location of all permanent posts of the *Schutztruppe*.<sup>70</sup> Missionary activity, organized by private religious organizations, was heavily sanctioned and supported by the state. We identify the set of existing religious missions from Schlunk<sup>71</sup> and georeference their location. Using the location of military and missionary stations we construct simple count variables for each grid cell. We also code a dummy variable as 1 for all grid cells that fall into the official "police zone." This zone had its origins in a veterinary border created in 1897 after the outbreak of Rinderpest, which threatened the economically important cattle industry (and contributed to the economic marginalization of the Herero). At first a loose string of outposts meant to stop the spread of the disease from north to south, the veterinary border was gradually expanded and adjusted and became, in 1907, the so-called police zone. While it designated a core area of settlement for Germans, the police zone pushed Africans out. The colonial administration encouraged settlement and guaranteed the enforcement of property rights only within its borders. It thus acted as a powerful geographic magnet for the more general development of state capacity.<sup>72</sup> We also calculate the distance from each grid cell's centroid to the capital city Windhuk and the closest international border to measure the remoteness of the region.

To measure the local disease environment, we rely on the German administration's own assessment. The colonial government issued an official map that divided the territory in regions deemed "healthy" for white settlers and "unhealthy," which largely tracks the geographic incidence of malaria in modern Namibia.<sup>73</sup> We use this demarcation to classify grid cells as either healthy or unhealthy. Last, we calculate the number of indigenous ethnic groups within each grid cell based on a colonial map of the colony.<sup>74</sup> For additional robustness checks we extend our set of control variables to cover average temperature levels, precipitation, elevation, agricultural soil quality, and the topographical ruggedness of each grid cell. Using the map of ethnic settlement areas, we also construct a series of dummy variables for the presence of each major ethnic group (Western Bechuan, Sambesi, Ovambo, Nama, Herero, Gunun, Bushmen, Basters). Using Murdoch's<sup>75</sup> data on precolonial features of ethnic groups, we also

determine whether in a given grid cell African societies showed forms of political centralization.

Our first analysis estimates the effect of economic extraction potential, infrastructure, and prior resistance against colonial rule on the initial distribution of police stations in 1907. This allows us to unpack the underlying rationale for the spatial extent of the colonial police forces at their inception. We estimate simple cross-sectional models of the following form:

$$\eta_i = \alpha + \beta * econ_i + \gamma * resist_i + \mu * inf ra_i + \theta * z$$

Where  $\beta$  estimates the effect of our economic potential variables, the effect of prior resistance,  $\mu$  the effect of infrastructure, and  $\theta$  is a vector of coefficients for control variables. We use a number of link functions for the linear predictor  $\eta_i$ , depending on the exact nature of our outcome measure. For our binary variable of station presence we employ a standard logit link as well as a normal linear model. For our police station and manpower count variable, we use negative binomial models (to account for overdispersion) and also standard linear models. Across all specifications we use robust standard errors to account for heteroskedasticity.

In a second step, we combine information from 1907 with the distribution of stations in 1912 and construct a two period panel dataset. We use information on time-varying controls from before 1907 and 1911. We estimate models of the following form:

$$\eta_i = \alpha_i + \delta_t + \beta * econ_{it} + \gamma * resist_t + \mu * inf ra_{it} + \theta * z_{it}$$

We begin by estimating standard logit and OLS models with our binary measure of police presence that omit grid cell fixed effects  $\alpha_i$  and year fixed effects  $\delta_t$ . We then estimate a linear panel model that includes both, in order to control for unobserved, time-invariant characteristics of the grid cells and temporal shocks to the station network. We cluster standard errors at the grid cell level for all three models. We repeat this type of analysis for our station count measure, using negative binomial, OLS, and OLS with fixed effects models. We estimate the same set of specifications for the total manpower count for each grid cell. Last, we also construct a measure that captures the police station type in each grid cell. Since stations differed in their authority and administrative rank, we construct an ordinal measure ranging from zero (no station present), 1 (local station), 2 (district station), to 3 (regional station). We estimate a pooled ordinal logit, OLS, and OLS with fixed effects for this outcome variable.

Table 1 presents our main, cross-sectional results. Turning to our main variables of interest, we find broad support for Hypotheses 1–3. First, the number of prior battles between German troops and indigenous groups has a positive and statistically significant effect in five of the six models. The effect is also substantively meaningful. Model 2 implies that a grid cell with a one standard deviation higher level of battles has a four percentage points higher probability of receiving a police station in 1907. Given that the baseline probability of receiving a station was approximately 13 percent, this is a



**Table 1.** Police Station Presence, Cross-Section, 1907.

	Police Station Presence		Police Station Count		Police Strength	
	Logistic	OLS	Negative Binomial	OLS	Negative Binomial	OLS
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Minerals	1.290** (0.529)	0.156*** (0.047)	0.250* (0.141)	0.177*** (0.066)	1.131*** (0.223)	0.601 (0.463)
Military Stations	0.550 (0.540)	0.073 (0.087)	0.600** (0.286)	0.031 (0.085)	0.909*** (0.344)	-1.040** (0.453)
Missions	0.270 (0.469)	0.092 (0.089)	0.118 (0.206)	0.121 (0.094)	0.448 (0.387)	0.475 (0.713)
Police Zone	0.251 (0.724)	-0.008 (0.031)	0.706 (0.454)	-0.024 (0.034)	0.622 (0.538)	-0.363* (0.194)
Railways	0.901 (0.633)	0.132 (0.101)	0.386 (0.317)	0.154 (0.120)	0.156 (0.440)	-0.398 (0.612)
Roads	2.096*** (0.664)	0.100** (0.039)	1.788** (0.767)	0.063 (0.048)	2.082*** (0.619)	0.006 (0.179)
Population	0.027*** (0.010)	0.002** (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)	0.002*** (0.0005)	0.012*** (0.001)	0.047*** (0.008)
Good Health Conditions	-0.892 (0.880)	-0.038 (0.029)	-0.395 (0.522)	-0.039 (0.031)	-0.696 (0.738)	-0.015 (0.268)
Number Ethnic Groups	0.175 (0.293)	0.016 (0.020)	0.209 (0.205)	0.031 (0.027)	0.227 (0.259)	0.149 (0.217)
Battles	0.283** (0.130)	0.030** (0.013)	0.159*** (0.043)	0.038** (0.015)	0.282*** (0.103)	0.319 (0.224)
Border Distance	0.001 (0.005)	0.0001 (0.0003)	0.0004 (0.002)	0.0002 (0.0003)	0.005 (0.003)	0.005 (0.003)
Capital Distance	-0.004* (0.002)	-0.0002 (0.0001)	-0.002 (0.001)	-0.0003* (0.0002)	-0.003* (0.002)	-0.001 (0.001)
Farms Pct	2.203* (1.253)	0.288* (0.151)	1.897*** (0.730)	0.528** (0.238)	0.896 (0.997)	-0.816 (1.280)
Constant	-3.484*** (1.654)	0.076 (0.076)	-3.854*** (1.037)	0.090 (0.088)	-4.008*** (1.396)	-0.230 (0.644)
N	398	398	398	398	398	398
R <sup>2</sup>		0.408		0.417		0.496
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>		0.388		0.397		0.479
Log Likelihood	-77.672		-119.969		-212.863	
Θ			3,538.882 (32,832.330)		0.344*** (0.072)	
Akaike Inf. Crit.	183.343		267.938		453.726	
Residual Std. Error (df = 384)		0.266		0.325		2.694
F Statistic (df = 13; 384)		20.361***		21.101***		29.063***

Source: Authors' data.

\*\*\*Significant at the 1 percent level; \*\*significant at the 5 percent level; \*significant at the 10 percent level.

30 percent increase in the relative probability. Our economic extraction variables—the presence of minerals, the percentage of farmland, and the size of the white population—also show positive and statistically significant effects. Grid cells with a single mineral mine were nearly sixteen percentage points more likely to receive a police station in 1907. Grid cells with a one standard deviation higher level of farmland were four percentage points more likely to feature a police station, while cells with a one standard deviation higher level of white population were 10 percent more likely to have a station. The presence of infrastructure also seems to have an effect. While the coefficient on railroad presence fails to attain statistical significance, grid cells that featured road infrastructure before 1907 were more likely to receive a police station in 1907 (by about ten percentage points). All findings suggest that the macro logic of state building heavily emphasized resource extraction, the protection of infrastructure, and the pacification of the indigenous population. The results also clearly show that the geographical allocation of police infrastructures and the distribution of police manpower followed a very similar logic, being both influenced by a very similar set of economic, infrastructural, and political factors.

Our findings are robust to a number of alternative tests. We reestimate the models in Table 1 with additional controls for precipitation levels (and its square), average temperature, elevation, ruggedness, and soil quality (see Section 2 in the online Appendix<sup>76</sup>). We also include dummies for specific ethnic groups (Appendix, Section 3) and Murdoch's indicator of prior political centralization, without affecting our main findings (see Appendix, Section 4).

Table 2 extends our analysis to the panel data setup. The table reports results for our binary indicator of police station presence in 1907 and 1912. We will constrain our discussion to our main variables of interest. Our battle indicator is still estimated to be positive in the pooled specifications, but only attains 10 percent significance in Model 2, in part because of the time invariant nature of this variable, which can essentially explain only cross-sectional differences in our panel. When we repeat the analysis using the number of stations, the number of police officers or the station type as dependent variables, the statistical significance of the positive effect increases dramatically (see Sections 5–7 in the Appendix).

Our indicator for mineral mines also remains positive and statistically significant in Models 1 and 2 (with similar findings for the other outcome measures). Since there is no change in the number of mineral mines after 1907, this indicator is absorbed in the grid cell fixed effects in Model 3. For our panel data we can include a new indicator for economic extraction that tracks the discovery of diamonds. Across all three models we find that diamonds are positively associated with the creation of a police stations, even in the panel model with grid cell and year fixed effects. Model 3 suggests that a single diamond field increased the probability of having a station in 1912 by nearly twenty-four percentage points. Our measure of white settler farmland is also positive across all three specifications, but only attains statistical significance in Model 2, similar to the coefficient for the overall size of the white population. This might be the case because both indicators only change slowly between 1907 and 1912. Last, our indicator that captures the road network remains positive and statistically significant across all three specifications.

**Table 2.** Police Station Presence, Panel 1907 and 1912.

	Police Station Presence		
	<i>Logistic</i>	<i>OLS</i>	<i>Panel Linear</i>
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Minerals	0.460* (0.241)	0.059* (0.035)	
Military Stations	0.365 (0.491)	0.044 (0.070)	-0.023 (0.062)
Missions	0.666** (0.338)	0.142** (0.070)	0.079 (0.068)
Police Zone	0.633 (0.423)	0.028 (0.029)	-0.023 (0.058)
Railways	0.361 (0.355)	0.129* (0.066)	0.148 (0.129)
Roads	1.877*** (0.405)	0.146*** (0.031)	0.107** (0.046)
Population	0.012 (0.010)	0.001** (0.0003)	0.0005 (0.0003)
Good Health Conditions	0.120 (0.472)	-0.008 (0.026)	
Number Ethnic Groups	0.337* (0.081)	0.031* (0.012)	
Battles	0.080 (0.081)	0.021* (0.012)	
Border Distance	0.002 (0.002)	0.0001 (0.0002)	
Capital Distance	0.0001 (0.001)	-0.00004 (0.0001)	
Farms Pct	1.130 (1.105)	0.311*** (0.112)	0.159 (0.139)
Diamonds	3.376*** (0.865)	0.293** (0.126)	0.237* (0.124)
Telegraph	-0.298 (0.691)	-0.023 (0.120)	0.053 (0.147)
Constant	-5.054*** (0.849)	-0.037 (0.060)	
N	796	796	796
R <sup>2</sup>		0.345	0.071
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>		0.332	0.035
Log Likelihood	-227.357		
Akaike Inf. Crit.	486.713		
Residual Std. Error		0.311 (df = 780)	
F Statistic		27.392*** (df = 15; 780)	3.302*** (df = 9; 389)

Source: Authors' data.

\*\*\*Significant at the 1 percent level; \*\*significant at the 5 percent level; \*significant at the 10 percent level.

In sum, results from our cross-sectional and panel data analysis lend strong support for our theoretical expectations expressed in Hypotheses 1–3. The overall geographic distribution of police stations and police personnel followed a clear, overarching logic: repressive state capacity was created in areas that experienced prior resistance to colonial rule, where the potential for economic extraction was particularly strong, and where essential state infrastructure had to be protected.

### *The Distribution of Personnel*

In our second analysis we explore how individual police officers were assigned across police stations within colonial Namibia. By doing so, we are able to identify the individual-level characteristics of officers that played a role in determining assignments to hardship posts versus more desirable locations. This, in turn, allows us to assess in how far the allocation of human resources was affected by adverse selection problems. As described in the section “Constructing the State,” above, we argue that the colonial government faced a substantial principal-agent problem in the use of police officers to enforce the monopoly of violence. We argue that the substantial bargaining power of skilled, experienced, senior officers vis-à-vis their superiors, strengthened by the administration’s need to retain skilled officers for challenging monitoring tasks in the center of the colonial state, created higher likelihood that they would be assigned to desirable stations. By contrast, the lack of bargaining power of young, unqualified recruits (or the desire for rent seeking) led to their assignment to remote stations with low oversight.

To trace indirect evidence for these dynamics, we begin by constructing a person-station-spell dataset. In effect, we take all individual records for each police officer and create as units of analysis separate station assignments, linked by a unique officer identifier. We focus exclusively on the Landespolizei’s German officers because the colonial authorities did not compile any personnel files of African police assistants. For each assignment spell we are able to identify the regional station of the posting from archival records (a finer-grained matching to district or local stations was not feasible because personnel were repeatedly reallocated within individual regions). For the purposes of our analysis, we distinguish between three major characteristics of assignment locations: economic importance, political importance, and general desirability of the districts. The first two characteristics reflect two of the state’s macro goals, while conversely representing “hardship” assignments from the police officer’s perspective, which allows us to observe a misalignment between the state’s and individual police officer’s preferences.<sup>77</sup> The third characteristic reflects assignments that are generally desirable for officers but of no immediate strategic concern to the state. The distinction is exhaustive or nonoverlapping, since economically important districts, for example, can simultaneously be politically important, and some desirable locations (e.g., having schools and hospitals) are also economically relevant. To measure each dimension we use a number of observable metrics and then simply dichotomize to ease interpretation. In other words, each assignment location can fall under several (or none) of the three types: “economically important,” “politically important,” and “nonhardship.”

We consider an assignment to be in an economically important location if the administrative district either had mineral or diamond mine or was above the median value of the percentage of white farmland.<sup>78</sup> Such assignments were important to the leadership of the colonial police force, who were charged with overseeing and regulating economic extraction in the colony. They were also often hardship assignments, because they either were in remote and desolate areas, as was often the case with minerals and diamonds, or because they required a lot of work for police officers, such as patrolling settlers' plots.

For politically sensitive areas we assign a value of 1 if a district experienced a number of battles between German forces and locals before 1907 above median for the colony. Again, such assignments were politically important: officers were tasked with the delicate and crucial management of relations with local ethnic groups, who had strong grievances against both the colonial government and white population and who had demonstrated an ability to threaten colonial forces. Such stations were hardship positions also because of their remote location, outside the police zone, which meant increased personal risks for police officers.

Our third type captures assignments that were fairly desirable from the perspective of police officers and constitute nonhardship locations. These were less dangerous stations, often centrally located, which featured less demanding tasks than assignments in the other two categories. We code nonhardship assignments according to whether a station falls into regions without a health risk designation, whether the district falls within the boundaries of the official police zone, and whether there were any colonial hospitals and schools present. Prime examples of such assignments are stations in Windhuk or Swakopmund, which offered a substantially higher quality of life for police officers.

The independent variables of interest pertain to the individual characteristics of the officers. Using their personnel records, we code variables for: their ages at the beginning of each assignment spell, whether they were Catholic or Protestant, whether they had completed some form of advanced schooling, whether they had learned a skilled trade (e.g., carpentry or metalsmithing), whether they had served in the *Schutztruppe* before switching to the civilian police force, whether they were ever promoted during their military service, whether they gained any experience during the campaigns against the Herero or Nama, and whether they earned any official merits for valor in combat during their military service. We also create dummy variables for: marital status, whether they had children, a count for their tenure as police officer at the beginning of each assignment spell, and whether the police administration's internal assessment deemed them fit for service in the tropics. Superiors in the German colonial police were also required to grade each employee on their skills in operating fire arms, riding a horse, and leadership. We create a binary variable that records whether an individual always, across all categories and recorded assessments, scored in the top category. This is meant to capture the overall "quality" of individual officers as assessed by their superiors in the police force. Last, we count the number of prior reassignments for each individual at the beginning of each station spell.

We estimate standard logit models with our assignment types as dependent variables. We employ robust standard errors throughout our analysis. Table 3 reports our

**Table 3.** Allocation of Personnel.

	Economic	Resistance	Nonhardship
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Age	0.011 (0.008)	0.005 (0.007)	-0.002 (0.007)
Catholic	0.117 (0.150)	-0.097 (0.151)	-0.219 (0.153)
Adv School	0.028 (0.199)	-0.227 (0.200)	0.033 (0.194)
Schutztruppe	-0.185 (0.199)	0.104 (0.195)	0.147 (0.198)
Promotion Army	-0.151 (0.364)	0.492 (0.392)	0.021 (0.352)
Fight Exp	0.088 (0.222)	0.191 (0.226)	-0.529** (0.223)
Merits	-0.020 (0.236)	0.471* (0.245)	-0.106 (0.235)
Skilled Trade	-0.146 (0.123)	-0.206* (0.124)	0.050 (0.124)
Married	0.087 (0.170)	0.141 (0.169)	0.179 (0.168)
Children	-0.478** (0.197)	-0.390** (0.198)	-0.252 (0.199)
Tenure Length	-0.170*** (0.031)	-0.109*** (0.030)	-0.104*** (0.031)
Fit Tropics	0.292* (0.149)	0.367** (0.147)	0.004 (0.150)
Quality	-0.029 (0.158)	-0.447*** (0.161)	0.312** (0.156)
Reassignments	0.019 (0.063)	-0.199*** (0.068)	0.225*** (0.065)
Constant	0.778* (0.397)	-0.968** (0.433)	0.093 (0.389)
N	1,200	1,200	1,200
Log Likelihood	-779.024	-781.987	-785.418
Akaike Inf. Crit.	1,588.048	1,593.974	1,600.836

**Source:** Authors' data.

\*\*\*Significant at the 1 percent level; \*\*significant at the 5 percent level; \*significant at the 10 percent level.

results. Model 1 shows the estimated coefficients for assignment to an economically important district. We can see that the only statistically significant factors are whether the individual had children, their tenure length, and the “fit for tropics” indicator. This

suggests that especially young and fresh recruits, without family and extensive experience were assigned to remote mining areas and locations with increased patrol responsibilities. In contrast, individuals with a longer service record and with families were able to avoid postings to economically important areas.

Model 2 details our findings for dangerous but politically important locations. Here we find that combat merits, skilled trade, children, tenure length, fitness for tropics, quality assessment, and number of prior reassignments are statistically significant predictors. The implications of the patterns are interesting. They clearly show that the colonial administration had to balance a desire to assign capable agents to sensitive areas with the desire of skilled officers to avoid frontline assignments. Having documented combat skills via earned merits increases the probability of assignment. The negative effect of tenure length and prior reassignments suggests that largely young, inexperienced individuals were pushed toward service in the most dangerous places. Individuals with increased bargaining power, that is, with children, knowledge of a skilled trade, and longer tenure times and multiple rotations under their belt, were more likely to avoid postings in politically important areas. One of the most interesting findings pertains to the role of the internal quality assessment: we find that high quality assessments are negatively correlated with dangerous assignments. This suggests that the most capable officers were able to parlay their skill into better assignments closer to the administrative centers of the capital. In contrast, young, low-quality recruits with a penchant for violence were most likely to be assigned to remote and dangerous locations.

These findings are further confirmed in Model 3. Assignments to nonhardship locations were driven by prior fighting experience, tenure length, a positive quality assessment of the individual, and prior reassignments. Both the coefficient for reassignments and quality of the officer suggest that established, high-quality individuals had a higher likelihood of being assigned to nonhardship districts. On the other hand, officers with prior fighting experience are less likely to receive nonhardship assignments. It is interesting that although the count of prior reassignments has an overall negative effect, tenure length also shows a negative and significant coefficient. This result speaks against the notion that more experienced officers always received more desirable assignments. The reason might very well be because new recruits were often assigned to police depots for initial training, whereas seasoned officers had to serve some stints in less desirable locations.

We extend our analysis further by restricting our sample to initial assignment spells of new recruits, focusing on individuals with at least one and not more than two years of service. Identifying *initial* assignment decisions allows us to assess whether high-quality recruits received better assignments from the start, and not only after a sufficient service record had been established. We again find evidence that prior experience with violence is correlated with an assignment in an economically or politically important location, while high-quality recruits—by their superiors' assessments—received nonhardship assignments.

Overall, these patterns are in line with Hypothesis 4 and offer evidence for the existence of a trade-off between the macro-strategic goals of the colonial

administration and its ability to overcome micro-level challenges of personnel management. Given the severity of the principal-agent problem in remote and challenging locations, the administration should prefer to assign seasoned veterans, with high levels of discipline, instead of inexperienced recruits. It was clearly not feasible to do so, because recruits with the highest assessments leveraged their informal bargaining power to receive better assignments, or because rent-seeking recruits self-selected into remote assignments, or because the colonial administration needed high-quality recruits at the central level to fulfill monitoring functions. As a consequence, the administration assigned individuals with lower assessments by superior officers, but with documented military or combat experience, to strategically important locations.

This outcome of principle-agent problems and resource scarcity had important consequences. Although the larger strategic goal of securing economic extraction and ensuring the pacification of local ethnic groups was supported in terms of *infrastructure* and *overall manpower*, internal personnel management struggled to supply the appropriate police officers. In the personnel files we investigated, policemen's superiors recorded officers' numerous disciplinary infractions, which ranged from disobedience, drunkenness, and physical abuse to sexual assault on the local population. These transgressions fundamentally undermined the overall goals of the colonial administration: they reduced the actual effectiveness of police, negatively affected the perception of its legitimacy, and led to an oversupply of state violence at the local level.

## Conclusion

How do states build security institutions to enforce their monopoly on violence? We investigate this question in the context of colonial Namibia. We argue that macro-strategic goals of extraction, pacification, and the protection of crucial state infrastructure determine the allocation of scarce repressive resources across the colony's territory. Analyzing historical data from German archives, we provide statistical evidence to that effect. We find that the expansion of the colonial police force was heavily influenced by the location of valuable mineral deposits, prior resistance against the colonial state, and the presence of road and railroad infrastructure.

We provide evidence for the rationale underlying the construction of the police force. We also uncover evidence for the pathologies and trade-offs that appear in the management of personnel tasked with the enforcement of the monopoly of violence. The imperative to project state power across the colony's territory generates adverse-selection problems in the recruitment and assignment of staff and increases monitoring costs. Given the scarcity of human capital and the high bargaining power of skilled police officers, station heads had to make difficult choices about the deployment of their staff. We provide evidence from personnel records that station heads were forced to assign low-quality and inexperienced recruits to the most strategically important locations in the colony, likely undermining the macro-strategic goals that were driving the expansion of the colonial police.



Our article adds useful insights to the literatures on state building and colonialism. Existing work on state building has emphasized the roles of structural conditions and violent conflict for building effective states. Most prior research has relied on the assumption that patterns of state penetration can be inferred from those conditions and from the state-builder's rational strategies. We add to that research in two ways. First, we provide support for the importance of extractive potential and instances of violence in shaping macro strategies of state building and the allocation of resources in terms of infrastructure and manpower. Second, we also identify the presence of a trade-off between macro-strategic goals and the allocation of a key state resource: human capital. Internal administrative challenges undermine the effective implementation of the macro strategy of allocating the most qualified agents to priority areas. This finding underscores the need to consider the administrative challenges of the state-building process more fully rather than to focus on preexisting structural conditions and rational strategies of resource allocation alone.

Finally, the case of German Southwest Africa provides a detailed quantitative analysis of state-building efforts to the literature on colonialism. Previous work has highlighted the massive resource constraints of colonial state-building projects.<sup>79</sup> Whereas these studies emphasize how resource scarcity constrained the geographical extent of colonial state penetration, our own research demonstrates how the lack of resources also shaped the processes of resource allocation within colonial administrations. Scarcity of resources not only prevented the establishment of a meaningful presence across the colony but also fostered adverse allocation of resources within the limited territorial reach of the state. Our analysis also speaks to debates around the specific characteristics of settler colonies. Others have pointed out that settler colonies often featured a particularly violent relationship between the white minority population and natives.<sup>80</sup> Our work serves as a detailed quantitative case study of how a colonial government constructed a police apparatus to manage this relationship. Existing scholarship on settler colonies has also identified another form of principal-agent problem: the divergence of interests between local settlers and the colonial home government. Although not as flagrant in German Southwest Africa, cases such as the *pieds noirs* in Algeria, or of white settlers in the Rhodesias, illustrate the emergence of stark differences in political priorities that complicate the role of colonial government. Hence, colonial administrations with a large footprint—common in settler colonies or under direct rule—possibly invite two distinct types of principal-agent problems: (1) a cleavage between principals in the metropole and local colonists and (2) agency problems *internal* to the administration of the settler colony. Although extractive colonies with small administrative presence (e.g., because of a reliance on forms of indirect rule) might be better placed to avoid either problem, they in turn have to manage principal-agent problems *external* to the organization of the colonial government, such as the management of relationships with local headmen and chiefs. Future research will have to investigate further the trade-offs between these different governance strategies.

Other studies will also have to unpack our findings on the tension between macro goals and problems of personnel management. Specifically, we do not have enough quantitative data or qualitative evidence to distinguish effectively between the different

potential micro-level mechanisms driving the misallocation of personnel across stations, nor can we trace the importance of hitherto unobserved factors, such as personal networks, in the assignment of police officers. Individuals with a long duration of tenure as well as biographical ties to superiors may be better able to ensure assignment to low-hardship positions.<sup>81</sup> We are also unable fully to investigate the unintended consequences of the trade-off between the spatial expansion of police stations and the inability to assign high-quality recruits to strategically important locations. Although anecdotal evidence suggests that this practice engendered a host of disciplinary problems and violence against the civilian population, further study is necessary.

The results of our study are in some ways specific to German Southwest Africa because of the close convergence of settler and metropolitan interests around the maintenance of white minority rule. Nevertheless, we believe that our analysis may contribute to other, comparable contexts. Specifically, we contend that the trade-off between macro-strategic goals of state building and principal-agent problems in personnel management is pervasive in four scenarios: other white-minority settler colonies, nascent or fragile states that claim large territories (e.g., postcolonial African states),<sup>82</sup> state-building efforts under occupation (e.g., the United States in Iraq and Afghanistan), and instances of internal colonization (the US western frontier or Australia's interior).

### Authors' Note

This paper has been presented at APSA 2016, the Yale OCV Workshop on Micro-Comparative Studies of 20th Century Conflicts (2016), and the Colonial Legacies Workshop at The Ohio State University (April 29–30, 2016).

### Acknowledgments

We would like to thank the editors of *Politics & Society*, Didac Queralt, Marcus Kurtz, Phil Roessler, Nic van de Walle, Roberto Foa, Alex Lee, Anne Meng, Jenny Guardado, Tom Pepinsky, Shiv Mukherjee, Theo McLauchlin, Jason Wittenberg, Adam Scharpf, Henry Thomson, Emmanuel Kreike, and Arturas Rozenas for many helpful comments on an earlier version of the article. We are also grateful to Billy Holzberg for excellent research assistance.

### Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

### Funding

The author(s) disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: This article has been prepared in the framework of the research project "Territorial Dynamics of Colonial State-Building" funded by the Gerda Henkel Foundation.

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78. As with critical infrastructure, we do not include the size of the white population to determine economically important districts. Whereas white population centers are economically important for taxation purposes, they are generally less taxing assignments for police officers than remote mining settlements or farms. Moreover, including white population as an additional criterion does not substantively change our findings.
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