

September 14, 2008

**PUBLISHERS PROPOSAL**

*Coalition Dharma:*  
**Gridlock, Credibility, and  
National Economic Performance**

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## 1. OVERVIEW

Democratic politics institutionalizes competition between different visions of the public good. In diverse societies, different political parties come to represent varied societal constituencies and to articulate their interests. As political fragmentation grows, it becomes harder for any single party to capture power single-handedly, necessitating compromise between various actors who together share control over the reins of power. The most common forms of such power-sharing arrangements in modern developing democracies are coalition and minority governments in parliamentary systems and divided governments in presidential systems. The difficulties of reaching agreement across partisan lines create gridlock, slowing down the policy process and reducing legislative output.

Economic reform in developing countries requires governments to be able to implement politically sensitive policy measures whose benefits are in the future but whose costs are imminent. This is hardly a political calculus that favors the would-be reformer, and so conventional wisdom suggests that ‘strong’ governments that possess ‘political will’ are most likely to implement business-friendly economic reforms and therefore to encourage investors and generate growth. Coalition governments, and the compromise and gridlock they encourage, are anathema to this reform process, leading some scholars to suggest even that non-democratic states might possess an advantage in generating economic growth in the developing world.

The tremendous economic success of India over the past twenty years poses a dramatic contradiction to these expectations. After four decades of trade protection and state involvement in the economy, the Indian economy underwent its deepest reforms in 1991 and has not looked back since. Yet, the 1991 reforms were implemented by a minority government, and the high growth rates over the last decade have been accompanied by a succession of coalition governments at the Centre. Indeed, India’s political system has undergone a tremendous fragmentation, and regional politics has come to dominate the day. This apparent contradiction – of a vibrant economy amidst a ‘crisis of governability’ – has led some observers to suggest that India’s growth has been ‘In Spite of the Gods’, and to wonder aloud what could have been if India’s politics did not hamper its growth.<sup>1</sup>

*Coalition Dharma*<sup>2</sup> challenges this received wisdom and argues that institutionalized gridlock – by reducing policy volatility and stabilizing investor expectations – is good for economic growth. Good national economic performance, I argue, is the consequence of having the right configuration of national political institutions.<sup>3</sup> But unlike others who have made the same point, I show that the key is not ‘strong states’ with ‘political will’, but rather systems in which policymaking authority is diffused across political institutions controlled by actors responsive to different societal constituencies. The gridlock such diffusion of power creates allows governments to commit credibly to policy stability, which, in turn, engenders higher rates of saving and more stable investment patterns by private economic actors, and makes countries less

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<sup>1</sup> Kohli (1991) uses the phrase ‘crisis of governability’ to describe India’s political situation. Luce (2008) calls his book ‘In Spite of the Gods’.

<sup>2</sup> Literally translated, ‘Dharma’ means ‘that which upholds or supports, but it is generally translated into English as ‘law’. The phrase ‘coalition dharma’ is used by Indian politicians to describe the rules of conduct required to make coalition politics work.

<sup>3</sup> I use the phrase ‘national economic performance’ to cover both the level of growth but also its volatility. This focus on a multidimensional conception of economic performance is a unique strength of the analysis.

susceptible to capital flight as investors are less likely to flee at the first sign of trouble. Taken together, such behavior by private actors leads to less volatile, and higher, economic growth.

### Key Contributions

That political institutions affect national economic performance and investor behavior is not a novel argument. Over the past twenty years alone, political scientists, economists, and sociologists have published many articles assessing the strength and nature of the relationship between politics and markets. Indeed, the fact that two of this decade's Wilson Prize winners investigate the relationship between democracy and development attests to the depth and quality of this research field.<sup>4</sup> *Coalition Dharma* adds to this vibrant research agenda by expanding our understanding of the politics of national economic performance in at least four distinct ways.

First, the empirical implications of the argument are counter-intuitive and potentially controversial. Unlike other scholars who emphasize the importance of 'state strength' and 'political will', I argue that gridlock in the policymaking process can be good for economic development. In this book, separation-of-powers institutions in which political leaders cannot make drastic policy changes unilaterally and arbitrarily are celebrated for providing private economic actors credible information about future policy stability.

Second, I identify a diverse set of empirical implications of the theoretical framework to tease out the causal mechanisms at work here. Prior studies typically stop short of doing so, and as a result existing arguments linking political institutions such as democracy with economic outcomes are underspecified so that empirical correlations are consistent with several alternative interpretations of the underlying causal mechanisms. *Coalition Dharma* uses cross-national data for all developing countries across a variety of macroeconomic indicators, and supplements these data with a unique World Bank survey for businesses in developing countries. Although this survey has been used in World Bank publications and a few academic articles, to my knowledge this would be the first book to utilize these data. I also use a similar survey of Indian firms to provide the first scholarly analysis of business attitudes in that country. The multiple sources, levels, and types of data used to test my argument constitute a real strength of the book.

Third, my argument returns 'political parties', and through them society, to institutional analyses of economic performance by emphasizing their importance in representing diverse societal preferences within the formal halls of power. This enriches how we think about political institutions, and makes the important normative point that politics must be understood as a competition over power in which policy compromise is to be valued rather than bemoaned because it yields better long-term consequences.

Finally, *Coalition Dharma's* theoretical framework crosses boundaries between comparative and international political economy.<sup>5</sup> For modern developing countries, the dynamics of economic

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<sup>4</sup> The Woodrow Wilson Foundation Award is administered by the American Political Science Association and is given annually to the "best book published on government, politics, or international affairs" published in the previous year. Przeworski et al. (2000) won in 2001; Acemoglu et al. (2006) won in 2007.

<sup>5</sup> This is increasingly common in political economy scholarship. See, for instance, Nita Rudra. 2008. *Globalization and the Race to the Bottom in Developing Countries: Who Really Gets Hurt?* (Cambridge); Nathan Jensen. 2006. *Nation-States and the Multinational Corporation: A Political Economy of Foreign Direct Investment* (Princeton); Layna Mosley. 2002. *Global Capital and National Governments* (Cambridge).

growth are intimately connected to those of international capital flows. International business actors must choose where to invest their capital, and this decision is conditioned in part on the political framework in place and the expected stability of the rules-of-the-game in that country. By explaining where such stability comes from, my framework makes explicit predictions about foreign direct investment and capital flight patterns.

The strengths of *Coalition Dharma* lie in its multidimensional conception of national economic performance – emphasizing both the level and volatility of economic growth – and counter-intuitive explanation of the benefits of democratic political institutions for developing countries. It combines cross-national macroeconomic and survey data with a detailed analysis of India’s economic growth and comparative case studies that show the theoretical framework’s reach. It offers insights into one of the key controversies at the heart of political economy; it draws together insights of relevance to scholars and practitioners alike; and it synthesizes cross-disciplinary literature and presents the results of original research from unique data collection efforts.

## **2. CHAPTER SYNOPSES**

### Chapter Titles

1. Introduction
2. Credible Constraints: A Political-Institutional Framework for Understanding National Economic Performance
3. Credible Constraints: An Empirical Evaluation
4. Credible Constraints: Causal Mechanisms
5. India: Coalition Politics and Economic Growth
6. Comparative Case Studies: Brazil, Botswana, Spain, and Italy
7. Coalition Dharma or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love Gridlock

### Chapter Descriptions

#### **Chapter 1: Introduction**

The introductory chapter develops the key question, the theoretical framework, and the plan for the book. It opens by describing the puzzle of India’s recent economic growth. It then uses Argentina’s recent crisis to focus on growth-rate volatility as a vitally important but woefully understudied dimension of economic development. The aim of these two anecdotes is to engage the reader by suggesting the core puzzles in the book and highlighting the central role of political institutions and private economic actors’ expectations in growth outcomes. The introduction then develops the theoretical arguments for how constraints on policymaking might bolster government credibility, and encourage higher saving and less capital flight. The chapter outlines my major claims about the impact of such ‘credible constraints’ on economic growth, and discusses the implications for our understanding of democratic politics in developing societies. The chapter concludes with a roadmap describing the outline for the rest of the book.

#### **Chapter 2: Credible Constraints: A Political-Institutional Framework for Understanding National Economic Performance**

Scholars have been interested in how politics affects economic growth for quite some time. The principal focus of such investigations has been to distinguish between democracies and non-

democracies and the incentives these institutional types create for leaders. In this chapter, which forms the theoretical core of the book, I review the relevant literature from political science and economics, and argue that existing explanations focus almost exclusively on two mechanisms linking democratic politics to economic growth: accountability and competition. To these, I add a third: stability. I argue that the design of political institutions enables some governments to make credible commitments to policy stability, which encourages economic actors to save and invest, and thus generates superior national economic performance. The chapter concludes by identifying the types of institutions that yield such results, and the theoretical mechanisms by which they do so.

### **Chapter 3: Credible Constraints: An Empirical Evaluation**

Chapter 3 begins by making the case for considering economic growth as a multidimensional process, and for focusing on growth-rate volatility as an important subject in its own right. After demonstrating that volatility hurts long-term growth, the chapter offers a statistical test of the main empirical implications of the theoretical framework developed in the previous chapter. *Coalition Dharma* seeks to tackle central debates in the political science literature of the past forty years, and to build on that literature by taking a new perspective in the hopes that a change in tack will yield new insights. Do the data validate this exercise? Using cross-national time-series data from over one hundred developing countries, Chapter 3 shows that, even after controlling for plausible alternative political factors and for theoretically relevant economic factors, coalition governments in parliamentary democracies have higher growth rates than other forms of government, and that such governments experience lower growth-rate volatility too.

### **Chapter 4: Credible Constraints: Causal Mechanisms**

Chapter 4 shows that coalition parliamentary governments encourage more private savings and reduce capital flight. Together these increase the resources available to capital-scarce societies to generate growth and development. Chapter 4 also utilizes firm-level survey data from the World Bank Business Enterprise survey to show that firms located in countries governed by coalition governments are less likely to consider regulatory and economic policy uncertainty to be major obstacles to their businesses, and that this reduced uncertainty increases their willingness to open new establishments in the near future. These survey-based findings bolster confidence in the macro-level results by providing micro-level evidence in favor of the causal mechanisms posited by the theory.

### **Chapter 5: India: Coalition Politics and Economic Growth**

Chapter 5 provides a new interpretation of India's recent economic successes based on the theoretical framework and cross-national economic results that find in favor of coalition governments. As anticipated by those findings, a cross-temporal analysis of India's national economic performance finds that India's rapid growth began only after its political system fragmented to allow more parties a chance to influence the policymaking process. The increasing regionalization of Indian politics has had an important consequence for national-level politics: no one party is competitive throughout the country, making coalition politics a virtual inevitability today. Many public commentators have decried coalition governments for stalling the economic reform process, but my analysis suggests the opposite conclusion might be more apt. To offer an independent test of the hypothesis, I use both state-level economic data and a business survey jointly conducted by the Confederation of Indian Industries and the World Bank to identify the

determinants of firm competitiveness. The results make clear once more that coalition governments reduce the probability firms consider economic policy uncertainty an obstacle, and increase the probability firms invest resources in research and development.

### **Chapter 6: Comparative Case Studies: Brazil, Botswana, Spain, and Italy**

Chapter 6 applies the main theoretical framework to four different countries, two developing and two developed, allowing me to explicate important nuances in the argument while demonstrating its generalizability. To begin, I use Brazil and Botswana as cases of presidential democracy and dominant party parliamentary democracy respectively for the contrast they provide to India's coalition parliamentary system. The case of Brazil, for instance, makes clear that presidential systems face genuine problems when they are fragmented politically, as the gridlock in policy that is created is qualitatively different from the compromise we see in coalition government systems like India. Botswana, in contrast, demonstrates the virtues of long-term political stability which has enabled it to move comfortably into the category of middle-income states; yet, a closer look reveals that concentration of political power in a single dominant political party allowed policy excesses to occur and growth-rate volatility to persist. The gradual increase in political competition in recent years appears to be correlated with a reduction in growth volatility. Finally, two developed democracies, Spain and Italy, show both the tremendous advantages of democracy over dictatorship for providing stable national economic performance, but also how different dynamics of parliamentary politics affect volatility. Spain has a stable two-party system today, but this can generate alternations in economic policy as the parties take turns in power. However, when the Spanish parties work more with other societal groups to build consensus over policy, stability is increased. Italy, by contrast, has an extremely fragmented political system, yet has managed to maintain very stable growth rates in spite of various problems politically because coalition governments have made policy change gradual. These cases thus support the central argument of this book that political fragmentation and the consensus and coalition building that it necessitates can produce stable, predictable economic policies on which economic agents can rely, and thereby improve national economic performance.

### **Chapter 7: Coalition Dharma or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love Gridlock**

*Coalition Dharma* concludes by considering the implications of my analysis for democratic governance. Elections are a blunt instrument for expressing the policy preferences of the public, and the fragmentation of party systems in developing countries has potentially troubling consequences for governance and development of coherent economic policies, and for the accountability of elected officials. These problems are not to be denied, but the record must also show that when parties are willing to respect their coalition partners and to consider the public interest – to observe the edicts of 'coalition dharma' – national economic performance is improved.<sup>6</sup>

## **3. READERSHIP**

The aim is to produce a clear, innovative, and original analysis of the relationship between political institutions and national economic performance in the developing world. The manuscript is designed for the field of political science, but will find relevance in economics,

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<sup>6</sup> See Robert E. Goodin. 1996. "Institutionalizing the Public Interest: The Defense of Deadlock and Beyond," *American Political Science Review* 90 (2): 331-343.

sociology, history, and South Asian studies as well. It will be of interest for colleagues and graduate students but will also be accessible for a wider readership of undergraduates, journalists, and practitioners. The manuscript includes easily interpretable figures and tables, with more technical materials dealt with in greater detail within footnotes and chapter appendices. The main target readership will be in the United States and India, although the thematic approach will raise relevant questions for a broader international market.

*Coalition Dharma* will be of interest to a number of different organized sections of the American Political Science Association: Public Policy, Representation and Electoral Systems, Comparative Politics, Political Economy, Comparative Democratization, Legislative Studies, and Federalism and Intergovernmental Relations. The book will provide a secondary text for courses in comparative politics, comparative and international political economy, political sociology, political parties, and elections.

#### **4. THE AUTHOR**

**IRFAN NOORUDDIN** is an assistant professor of political science at Ohio State University. His research focuses on economic development, globalization, international organizations, civil conflict, elections and party competition, and government performance. His work has been published in many academic journals, including *International Organization*, *Comparative Political Studies*, *International Interactions*, *Politics & Gender*, *Review of International Organizations*, as well as in edited volumes. Forthcoming articles will appear in *International Studies Quarterly* and the *Journal of Conflict Resolution*.

He holds a Doctoral degree in Political Science from the University of Michigan and a Bachelor of Arts in Economics and International Studies from Ohio Wesleyan University. Among the courses he teaches are introductory courses in comparative politics and data analysis, upper-level undergraduate courses on states and markets and the political economy of development, and graduate-level courses in political institutions, South Asia, and regression analysis. For the past two years he has also been a lead instructor for a summer workshop on data analysis in Indian politics at the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla, India. More information about his research and teaching can be found at [polisci.osu.edu/faculty/nooruddi](http://polisci.osu.edu/faculty/nooruddi).

#### **5. REVIEW OF THE MARKET: WHY A NEW BOOK?**

As shown in the attached select bibliography, scholars have long been interested in the effect of political institutions on national economic performance. Recent years have seen no abatement of such interest as evidenced by the number of articles written on this topic in academic journals in political science, economics, and sociology. Unfortunately, most of the recent academic studies focus on the simplistic question of “Does Democracy Matter for Growth?” and the cumulative answer is a less-than-inspiring “Maybe.”<sup>7</sup> Moreover, existing research does not consider different dimensions of national economic performance, and tends to focus exclusively on explaining the level of growth rather than its volatility. Indeed, as of this writing, even though

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<sup>7</sup> Doucouliagos, Hristos, and Mehmet Ali Ulubasoglu. 2008. “Democracy and Economic Growth: A Meta-Analysis,” *American Journal of Political Science* 52: 61-83.

evidence that volatility is harmful for growth is mounting,<sup>8</sup> there are just four published articles linking political institutions to growth volatility.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, scholars have studied the determinants of growth independently of the causes of domestic savings and foreign investment, even though these processes are intimately linked. This manuscript provides a unified theory of savings, firm behavior, capital flight, growth, and growth volatility, and is thus unique in both the theoretical scope and the variety of methods used to study the comparative politics of national economic performance.

In looking at other books currently available on the market, there are at least three that address the most prominent topics in *Coalition Dharma*, although each is distinct in important ways. Of the three books discussed above, only one is written by political scientists and deals explicitly with the political dimension of economic growth. Yet even that book does not cover the period from 1990 to present, and does not distinguish between democratic political institutions.

- (i) Adam Przeworski, Michael E. Alvarez, Jose Antonio Cheibub and Fernando Limongi. 2000. *Democracy and Development: Political Institutions and Well-Being in the World, 1950-1990*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

This important study sets out to estimate the impact of wealth on democracy, using a precise and parsimonious classification of regimes worldwide from 1950 to 1990 into either autocracies or democracies. The book uses econometric techniques with a cross-sectional time-series dataset to examine the probability of a regime being democratic based on per capita income, controlling for levels of ethnic fractionalization, the predominant type of religion, the type of colonial legacies in each society, and the type of presidential or parliamentary executive.

Przeworski et al. confirmed the conventional empirical observation that wealthier countries were more likely to sustain democracy. But the authors emphasized that this relationship operated through a threshold effect, rather than as a linear process. Above a certain minimal level of economic development (estimated at a GDP per capita of around \$4000), they argue, democracies are impregnable and endure. Below this level, the study found that democracies may prosper or they may falter and die. Wealth remained strongly related to democracy even after applying the battery of controls. Przeworski et al. also found that the reverse relationship did not hold, that is, democracies were no better (and no worse) than dictatorships at generating economic growth.

The study presents an important advance in methodology, but the analysis also now needs updating since their dataset ends in 1990, before the collapse of the Soviet Union and the expansion of democratic regimes which followed in post-Communist Europe and elsewhere.

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<sup>8</sup> Ramey, Garey and Valerie Ramey. 1995. "Cross-Country Evidence on the Link Between Volatility and Growth." *American Economic Review* 85:1138–1151; Imbs, Jean. 2007. "Growth and Volatility." *Journal of Monetary Economics* 54:1848–1862.

<sup>9</sup> Rodrik, Dani. 2000. "Participatory Politics, Social Cooperation, and Economic Stability." *American Economic Review* 90; Quinn, Dennis P., and John T. Woolley. 2001. "Democracy and National Economic Performance: The Preference for Stability." *American Journal of Political Science* 45 (July): 634-657; Acemoglu, Daron, Simon Johnson, James Robinson and Yunyong Thaicharoen. 2003. "Institutional Causes, Macroeconomic Symptoms: Volatility, Crises and Growth." *Journal of Monetary Economics* 50:49–123.; Mobarak, A. Mushfiq. 2005. "Democracy, Volatility and Development," *The Review of Economics and Statistics* 87 (2).

Moreover the book did not seek to explore institutions per se, and the study did not consider some of the most important institutions which are the focus of this study, such as the impact of coalition and divided governments, central bank independence, and judicial review.

- (ii) Douglass C. North. 2006. *Understanding the Process of Economic Change*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

In his most recent book, Nobel Laureate Douglass North expands on his seminal work on economic change in the Western World. In his earlier work, North emphasized the importance of institutions that protect property rights for generating incentives for economic actors to invest in the economy. One of the questions North's early work raised was the role of ideology in economic development. North's latest book tackles the role of ideas in the process of economic change to answer the question of how societies solve (or fail to solve) the problems they face.

North's work influences my own, but our approaches and foci are very different. While North works within the realm of Western economic history<sup>10</sup>, my concerns are with the modern developing world. Our approaches also differ: North uses historical analysis, while I use quantitative techniques of cross-national macroeconomic and survey data. My book is thus a complement to North's.

- (iii) Dani Rodrik. 2007. *One Economics, Many Recipes: Globalization, Institutions, and Economic Growth*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Dani Rodrik, a Harvard economist, argues in this book that there are no general policy solutions to the problem of economic growth, but that each country must craft its own path to development. I concur, and, in fact, use Rodrik's insight to develop my argument that the content of policy often matters less than the stability of that policy. Rodrik's book is a collection of essays he has written in recent years, and is written for a more general economics audience. My book complements Rodrik's by incorporating his economic analysis into a political economy of economic growth.

Another set of books relevant to the market for *Coalition Dharma* focuses on India's rapid ascent to a world economic power. Multiple popular press books have been published in the past few years,<sup>11</sup> and a comprehensive economic analysis was published earlier this year.<sup>12</sup> Three scholarly books have also been published that are worthy of mention with respect to the political dimension of India's growth.

- (iv) Vivek Chhibber. 2003. *Locked in Place: State-Building and Late Industrialization in India*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

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<sup>10</sup> For another recent influential work in institutional economic history, see Avner Grief. 2006. *Institutions and the Path to the Modern Economy: Lessons from Medieval Trade* (Cambridge).

<sup>11</sup> For instance, see: Edward Luce. 2008. *In Spite of the Gods* (Anchor); Mira Kamdar. 2008. *Planet India* (Scribner); Robyn Meredith. 2008. *The Elephant and the Dragon* (W.W. Norton); Pete Engardio, ed. 2006. *Chindia* (McGraw-Hill); Gurcharan Das. 2002. *India Unbound* (Anchor).

<sup>12</sup> Arvind Panagariya. 2008. *India: An Emerging Giant* (Oxford).

Sociologist Vivek Chibber argues that the key to successful growth is the outcome of the struggle for power between the state and capitalists in society. Where this struggle results in the state power being controlled by pro-capitalist interests, industrialization can ensue, but where the central players on each side are unable to agree on a plan for industrialization, as Chibber argues was the case in India's post-independence, industrialization was hampered and the economy was constrained. Chibber's book is an excellent example of historical sociology, and uses exclusively qualitative data. My book adds to his analysis by bringing the analysis to the present and utilizing quantitative data. My theoretical focus differs from Chibber's in its explication of the effects of coalition government on India's growth, which his account ignores.

- (v) Atul Kohli. 2004. *State-Directed Development: Political Power and Industrialization in the Global Periphery*. Cambridge University Press.

Atul Kohli argues that industrialization is the sine qua non of economic development today, just as it has been historically. But industrialization can be a difficult process, requiring the vast mobilization of societal capital and the mobilization of an industrial labor pool. Using the cases of Korea, Brazil, India, and Nigeria, Kohli states that the "creation of effective states within the developing world has generally preceded the emergence of industrializing economies" (p. 2). The key is the organization of state power and the direction of this power for the purposes of economic/industrial development. Where leaders were able to mobilize such power, growth resulted. Kohli's work also falls in the historical sociology camp, though he pays much more attention to the politics of coalition building in India's industrialization process. As with Chibber's, my book complements Kohli's book by updating the analysis and using different research strategies to answer the question of politics and economic growth. Theoretically, I offer a different framework than Kohli. Kohli's book is about state capacity and political will, while mine is about coalition politics and business expectations and behavior.

- (vi) Aseema Sinha. 2005. *The Regional Roots of Developmental Politics in India: A Divided Leviathan*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Sinha, like Kohli, is a political scientist. Her book anticipates my argument by discussing the political divisions within India, and the consequences of these divisions for the design and implementation of developmental politics in India. She makes the important point that regional politics in India have made state governments 'players' of note in the policymaking process, a point missed in most national-level analyses of Indian politics. I incorporate this key insight in my book by articulating a vital mechanism by which regional political elites have been able to influence the national debate over economic policy: participation in coalition governments in Delhi. While Sinha's book does an excellent job of unpacking the policymaking process at the regional level in India, mine differs theoretically in focusing on coalition politics nationally and by engaging more directly the democracy-development debate.

## 6. LENGTH

The manuscript is approximately 70,000 words in length. There are 18 tables and 17 graphical figures, and four chapter appendices.

## 7. SCHEDULE

The manuscript is complete, and available for review upon request.

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