

Civilizational Failsafes, Entitlement, and the Adaptive Scaling of Dark Patterns

Toward an Ecology-Psychology Framework of Domination and Dehumanization

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Abstract

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Comparative analyses of domination often rely on broad categories such as violence, hierarchy, servitude, cruelty, or oppression while leaving the underlying mechanism under-specified. Similar outward forms can arise from different patterned configurations and can generate different trajectories of scale, duration, reversibility, and personhood erosion. This article develops an ecology-psychology framework for differentiating those configurations without collapsing into either moral essentialism or flat universalism.

The framework shifts the explanatory center away from dark traits alone toward a broader spectrum of pathological formations organized around entitlement, inversion, dissociation, domination, and the regulation of personhood. Within this structure, manipulative, grandiose, cold, and coercive tendencies function as adaptive strategies rather than as the final level of explanation. Entitlement carries the main mediating weight because it links patterned operation to normalized asymmetry, weakened reciprocity, and the institutional scaling of harm more directly than aggression alone. Social failsafes supply the main comparative hinge, including kinship obligations, shame systems, personhood boundaries, ritual constraints, and institutional checks that raise or lower the cost of destructive conduct.

The article also reconstructs oppression as an internal selector rather than as a merely external force. Domination reorganizes the internal field of the targeted population by redistributing reward, elevating compromise-susceptible actors, and increasing the viability of brokerage, mimicry, and selective cruelty. Language enters the mechanism at the same level, since euphemism, irony, bureaucratic naming, and moral inversion reduce inhibition and normalize conduct that would otherwise remain more legible as predatory. Comparative historical discussion, including African adaptive variation, migration memory, personhood coding, and the limits of migratory determinism, clarifies why movement, ecological stress, and conflict do not mechanically produce the same thresholds of entitlement, dehumanization, or scalable domination [1]–[4], [13]–[22].

A final contribution formalizes diabolical entitlement as the outer limit of pathological entitlement: a condition in which severe violence, degradation, or dehumanization persists beyond proportionate strategic necessity, despite less destructive alternatives and often at no commensurate gain. The article concludes that human dark potential varies less by essence than by regulation. Historical systems differ most sharply in the strength, distribution, and durability of the restraints that prevent entitlement from hardening into common sense, procedure, and durable rule [9]–[12].

Keywords

Entitlement; dehumanization; domination; social failsafes; pathological formations; dark traits; moral inversion; oppression; compromise susceptibility; comparative psychology

[FR] Résumé analytique

Cet article part d'un constat simple mais décisif : les analyses de la domination utilisent trop souvent des catégories larges comme violence, hiérarchie, servitude, cruauté ou oppression sans préciser le mécanisme qui les produit. Or des formes extérieures apparemment semblables peuvent reposer sur des configurations psychologiques, morales et institutionnelles très différentes. Une hiérarchie n'implique pas toujours le même rapport à la réciprocité. Une violence n'implique pas toujours le même rapport à la personne visée. Une dépendance n'implique pas toujours le même degré de déshumanisation. Le texte propose donc un cadre d'analyse destiné à distinguer ces configurations au lieu de les aplatisir.

La thèse centrale est que **la variable la plus explicative n'est pas l'agression en elle-même, mais la prétention pathologique**, c'est-à-dire le sentiment de droit à l'asymétrie, à l'exemption, à l'extraction et au mépris de la réciprocité. L'article soutient que l'agression est trop hétérogène pour servir de clé principale, puisqu'elle peut être défensive, opportuniste, situationnelle, rituelle ou sadique. La prétention pathologique, en revanche, permet de comprendre pourquoi certains acteurs vivent la domination comme normale, légitime, voire due. Il éclaire donc mieux le passage entre conduites individuelles, institutions durables et systèmes de déshumanisation.

À partir de là, l'article distingue plusieurs **niveaux analytiques** qui sont habituellement confondus. D'abord les **formations pathologiques** larges, comme l'entitlement pathologique, le narcissisme malin, l'inversion perverse, la dissociation prédatrice, la domination sadique ou ce que le texte appelle la **prétention diabolique**. Ensuite les **stratégies adaptatives**, par exemple la grandiosité, la manipulation, le charme sélectif, la froideur affective, la cruauté instrumentale ou la flexibilité opportuniste. Enfin les **résultats**, comme la domination, la déshumanisation, l'exclusion héréditaire, la fragmentation interne ou la prédation à grande échelle. L'un des apports les plus importants de l'article est précisément de montrer que les traits sombres ne doivent pas être traités comme l'explication finale, mais comme des stratégies opérant à l'intérieur de formations plus profondes.

Le texte introduit ensuite la notion de **failsafes sociaux**, c'est-à-dire les dispositifs sociaux qui freinent, limitent ou renchérisent la possibilité de comportements destructeurs. Parmi eux figurent les obligations de parenté, la honte, les normes de réciprocité, les frontières de personne, les contraintes rituelles, la surveillance communautaire, certaines structures familiales, ainsi que les mécanismes institutionnels capables de réduire le prestige ou la légitimité de la prédation. L'argument n'est donc pas de dire que certaines sociétés seraient naturellement bonnes et d'autres naturellement mauvaises, mais que les systèmes humains diffèrent fortement dans la solidité de ces freins. Là où ils tiennent, la domination reste plus coûteuse, plus honteuse, plus bornée. Là où ils s'érodent, l'entitlement se normalise, les stratégies sombres deviennent adaptatives, et la déshumanisation s'étend et s'intensifie plus facilement.

Un autre apport majeur du texte consiste à redéfinir l'**oppression**. Elle n'est pas présentée seulement comme une contrainte extérieure, mais comme un **sélecteur interne**. En pratique, un système oppressif ne se contente pas de frapper. Il réorganise le champ interne du groupe dominé. Il redistribue les récompenses, valorise certains profils plus compromisables, renforce la viabilité de la médiation opportuniste, du mimétisme, de la trahison sélective ou de la cruauté tournée vers son propre groupe. L'article montre ainsi que la domination devient moins coûteuse pour le pouvoir extérieur lorsqu'elle parvient à produire ou à amplifier des intermédiaires internes plus faciles à piloter. Cela donne au texte une portée importante pour penser non seulement la colonisation de la phase négrière à la phase néocoloniale, mais aussi et plus précisément, les classes tampons, les élites cooptées, les dispositifs de renseignement, les fractures intra-groupes et la psychologie des populations dominées.

Le rôle du **langage** constitue un autre axe central. L'article soutient que le langage n'est pas un simple commentaire sur la violence. Il fait partie du mécanisme lui-même. Les mots peuvent excuser, normaliser, requalifier, abaisser l'inhibition morale, transformer une prédation en ordre, une manipulation en stratégie, une cruauté en discipline, un harcèlement racial en amusement ou en "trolling". L'inversion morale devient ici un procédé majeur : l'agresseur se présente comme assiégé, l'humiliateur comme blessé, l'exclusion comme prudence, la domination comme protection. Cela permet de comprendre pourquoi certains systèmes ne tiennent pas seulement par la force, mais par la capacité à faire percevoir l'inadmissible comme raisonnable.

Sur le plan comparatif, l'article accorde une place importante à l'**Afrique**, non pour idéaliser les sociétés africaines, mais pour corriger les fausses équivalences. Il montre que les mobilités, les conflits, les expansions, les hiérarchies et les formes de dépendance ont existé dans de nombreux contextes africains sans déboucher automatiquement sur le même type de déshumanisation héréditaire et abstraite que dans certaines formations européennes et coloniales. Le texte insiste sur le fait que les migrations africaines, y compris celles liées aux populations « bantouphones », ne peuvent pas être lues comme de simples machines à produire le même profil psychopolitique que celui de la domination racialisée européenne. Les variables décisives ne sont pas la mobilité ou la dureté écologique prises isolément, mais la manière dont elles traversent des mondes moraux différents, des structures de parenté différentes, des codes de personne différents et des dispositifs de freinage différents.

L'exemple des **mémoires migratoires africaines**, en particulier dans l'aire Kongo, sert ici à montrer que les récits de fondation, même lorsqu'ils incluent conflit ou conquête, peuvent rester structurés autour de l'alliance, de la négociation, de l'incorporation et de la recomposition politique, plutôt qu'autour d'un droit illimité à l'élimination de l'autre. Cela renforce l'idée que la mémoire politique d'une migration peut être organisée autour de la cohésion et de la fédération plutôt qu'autour de la déshumanisation.

Le texte mobilise aussi les **structures de parenté**, notamment les formes matrilineaires, pour soutenir que certaines organisations sociales africaines ont fonctionné comme des freins distribués contre la fracture, l'entitlement unilatéral et la concentration incontrôlée du pouvoir. L'argument n'est pas que ces systèmes élimineraient toute violence, mais plutôt qu'ils épaississent les obligations, élargissent les champs de responsabilité et rendent socialement plus coûteuse la prédation sans reste.

L'article ajoute enfin une critique importante des **seuils psychologiques occidentaux en matière de sexe et de genre**. Il rejette l'idée selon laquelle les hommes devraient être codés comme naturellement plus agressifs, plus durs et plus dominants, tandis que les femmes seraient naturellement plus douces ou plus relationnelles. Le texte suggère que ce type de codage fonctionne souvent comme un mécanisme secondaire de normalisation : des conduites qui devraient être interrogées comme entitlement, froideur, manipulation ou cruauté sont réinscrites dans une anthropologie naturalisée du masculin. Le problème n'est donc pas seulement l'erreur descriptive. C'est le fait que certaines psychologies adaptent leur baseline à des comportements déviants au lieu de les corriger.

L'un des concepts les plus originaux du texte est celui de **prétention diabolique**. Il désigne le moment où la violence, la dégradation ou la déshumanisation se poursuivent au-delà de toute nécessité stratégique proportionnée, malgré l'existence d'alternatives moins destructrices, parfois même au détriment de l'efficacité. Ce concept permet de distinguer la brutalité stratégique, aussi grave soit-elle, d'une forme de destruction où la souffrance de l'autre acquiert une valeur propre ou devient constitutive du droit que l'acteur s'accorde à lui-même. C'est un apport important parce qu'il évite deux erreurs fréquentes : tout moraliser sous le mot "mal", ou au contraire tout rabattre sur un calcul stratégique caché.

Sur le plan des **contributions théoriques**, le texte en apporte plusieurs. Il redéfinit d'abord le centre explicatif en remplaçant l'agression par l'entitlement. Il réorganise ensuite le rapport entre formations pathologiques, stratégies adaptatives et résultats. Il propose la notion de failsafes sociaux comme outil comparatif plus solide que les oppositions vagues entre civilisations vertueuses et civilisations mauvaises. Il introduit l'oppression comme sélecteur interne. Il intègre le langage à la mécanique même de la domination. Il formalise enfin l'entitlement diabolique comme concept-limite pour penser les excès destructeurs répétés.

L'importance de l'article tient aussi à sa **fonction architecturale**. Il n'essaie pas seulement d'expliquer un cas. Il construit une grammaire théorique réutilisable pour d'autres travaux sur l'empire, la violence institutionnelle, l'humiliation symbolique, la déshumanisation raciale, la psychologie coloniale, les classes intermédiaires compromises, ou encore les blessures psychiques produites par la domination longue. En ce sens, il sert de texte de fondation. Il ne clôt pas les débats. Il donne un outillage plus précis pour les rouvrir.

Sa pertinence scientifique est donc double. D'un côté, il corrige des simplifications fréquentes dans les sciences sociales et psychologiques, notamment l'aplatissement des formes de violence ou l'universalisation de baselines occidentales. De l'autre, il propose un modèle plus mécaniste pour comprendre comment certaines sociétés, institutions ou classes dirigeantes parviennent à transformer des conduites destructrices en ordre normal, en procédure, en bon sens, voire en idéal implicite.

En résumé, l'article soutient que **la différence décisive entre systèmes historiques ne réside pas d'abord dans la simple présence de violence ou de hiérarchie, mais dans la force, la distribution et la durabilité des freins qui empêchent**

l'entitlement de se transformer en domination durable, déshumanisation scalable et règle ordinaire. C'est là son idée la plus forte, et probablement son apport le plus durable.

[EN]

Introduction

Comparative discussions of domination frequently begin at the level of visible outcome. By the time analysis starts, a population has already been conquered, an institution has already hardened, or a target has already been degraded through a vocabulary that lowers the weight of what has been done. Description then becomes easy, while explanation remains thin. Terms such as evil, aggression, brutality, oppression, tyranny, or empire register moral seriousness, yet they do not identify the patterned formations that organize conduct, neutralize restraint, or authorize escalation. The analytical problem lies upstream: which configurations regulate entitlement, where personhood boundaries narrow, and why some social fields permit scalable harm while others impose stronger brakes [1]–[4].

Outwardly similar acts do not necessarily belong to the same structure. Coercion can remain bounded within a shared moral world or drift toward hereditary degradation and durable social death. Hierarchy can remain tied to redistribution, reciprocity, shame, and visibility, or it can detach rank from reciprocal burden and widen the right of disposal. Violence can remain reactive, situational, or strategically limited, or it can enter a more expansive grammar of classification, humiliation, and reduction. Once these distinctions collapse, comparison also collapses. Surface similarity then masks deeper differences in moral coding, reversibility, institutional scale, and long-term consequence [8]–[13].

This article reorganizes the problem around pathological formations, adaptive strategies, selection environments, and outcomes. Dark traits do not occupy the final explanatory level in this model. They operate here as adaptive strategies nested within broader formations such as pathological entitlement, malignant narcissism, perverse inversion, predatory dissociation, sadistic domination, and diabolical entitlement. Entitlement carries the main analytical weight because it links patterned operation to normalized asymmetry, weakened reciprocity, and the durable authorization of harm more directly than aggression alone. Social failsafes then serve as the comparative hinge, since they determine whether destructive configurations remain costly and bounded or become adaptive, admired, and institutionally scalable.

The analysis proceeds through conceptual clarification, comparative historical comparison, and interdisciplinary assembly. It first distinguishes forms of violence, hierarchy, and servitude that outwardly resemble one another yet differ in personhood coding, obligation, incorporation, and alienability. It then reconstructs ecology, migration, and bottleneck effects without granting them deterministic force. Oppression enters as a selector that reorganizes internal social fields, while language enters as part of the mechanism through euphemism, irony, bureaucratic naming, and moral inversion. The comparative sections then turn to African adaptive variation, migration memory, kinship restraints, and the limits of migratory determinism before formalizing diabolical entitlement as the limit concept

for repeated destructive excess beyond proportionate strategic necessity [16]–[22].

Six claims organize the argument. Violence, hierarchy, and servitude are analytically heterogeneous. Entitlement explains scalable domination more effectively than aggression. Dark traits function more coherently as adaptive strategies than as the core explanatory unit. Social failsafes furnish a stronger comparative concept than diffuse appeals to civilizational virtue or evil. Oppression reorganizes internal reward structures rather than merely injuring from outside. Naming practices belong to the mechanism itself because they lower inhibition and normalize harm. Taken together, these claims provide a reusable foundation for later work on empire, institutional violence, moral inversion, colonial psychology, and the internal reorganization of dominated populations. The framework also stands in dialogue with African / Black traditions of analysis that treated domination not merely as force or inequality, but as a problem of civilizational structure, colonial psychology, symbolic control, and damaged personhood, especially in the work of Cheikh Anta Diop, Frantz Fanon, and Amos Wilson.

1. Methodological and Conceptual Foundations

1.1. Underspecified categories and the problem of surface description

Much discussion of violence, domination, hierarchy, servitude, cruelty, or evil remains trapped at the level of surface description. These terms carry moral force, yet their analytical precision remains limited when they stand alone. They point toward visible outcomes, public judgments, and social

effects, while leaving open the deeper question of what kind of patterned configuration produced those effects in the first place. A raid, a conquest, a punitive ritual, a war of defense, an exterminatory campaign, a system of labor extraction, and a regime of hereditary racial degradation may all involve force, asymmetry, and suffering, yet they do not spring from the same behavioral logic, they do not unfold through the same moral vocabulary, and they do not generate the same long-term consequences.

The same difficulty appears with aggression. Aggression can emerge from fear, scarcity, panic, humiliation, territorial defense, ritual obligation, strategic calculation, predatory opportunism, narcissistic injury, sadistic enjoyment, or dissociative coldness. Its outward form may look similar while its internal structure differs sharply. Intensity, duration, reversibility, target selection, symbolic meaning, and institutional scalability all depend on these deeper differences. A bounded retaliatory act within a shared moral world does not belong to the same category as a durable project of degrading, classifying, and destroying whole populations through legally protected asymmetry and elaborated justificatory language. Surface resemblance therefore obscures more than it reveals.

Hierarchy and servitude follow the same pattern. Hierarchies vary in their relation to reciprocity, obligation, incorporation, shame, reversibility, and personhood. Some remain embedded in dense networks of mutual expectation. Others detach rank from reciprocal accountability and move toward abstraction, alienability, and durable disposability. Forms of dependence likewise differ in whether they permit incorporation,

social ascent, redemption, re-entry, or kin absorption, or whether they freeze targets into permanently degraded categories. A serious comparative framework cannot afford to collapse these differences into a single register of domination.

The analytical task pursued here begins from that distinction. Violence counts as a form. Domination counts as a relational outcome. Dehumanization counts as a reduction in recognized personhood. None of these categories, taken alone, identifies the patterned psychological and moral formations that animate them. The present framework therefore shifts inquiry away from generalized moral labels and toward recurrent behavioral-moral configurations, their adaptive strategies, the environments that reward them, and the outcomes they make possible.

1.2. Psychology as contextual modeling

The present argument proceeds from a restrained understanding of psychology. Outside clearer neurological disease or injury, psychology offers no transparent access to inner essence. What becomes available to inquiry consists of patterned conduct, self-presentation, recurrent affective style, relational habits, decision tendencies, and the social consequences that follow from them. Inference remains unavoidable, but sound inference depends on repeated behavioral regularities across contexts rather than on metaphysical claims about hidden interior substance.

This point matters because two opposite errors dominate much public and scholarly discussion. One treats psychology as a device for reading souls and assigning final identity from limited evidence. The other hides behind diagnostic gatekeeping and

refuses to describe obvious patterned harm unless a formal instrument has been administered under clinical supervision. Both distort the problem. Ordinary social, political, and institutional life unfolds through visible patterns long before any clinic enters the scene. Chronic manipulation, ritual humiliation, entitlement, moral inversion, repeated predation, and remorseless exploitation remain socially legible even where no formal diagnosis appears. Precision, repetition, and contextual discipline matter more than ritual silence.

For that reason, the categories used in this paper function as contextual models of operation. They:

- track how actors recurrently move through relations of power, asymmetry, reciprocity, coercion, and self-justification.
- do not claim infallible access to inner being,
- identify stable enough configurations to explain how certain forms of domination become thinkable, defensible, and reproducible. The relevant standard concerns neither metaphysical certainty nor clinical absolutism. It concerns patterned, cross-situational, socially consequential behavior.

This methodological stance also guards comparative work against a second distortion: the assumption that a single contemporary psychological baseline can stand for humanity as such. Every diagnostic vocabulary emerges within a history, a moral world, a language of normality, and a set of institutional incentives. Once a society recodes grandiosity as charisma, manipulation as strategy, coldness as professionalism, or

racial harassment as mere provocation, the baseline of normality begins to drift. Comparative psychology then requires attention to the ecology in which behavior receives its meaning, its rewards, and its camouflage [1]–[4].

1.3. Pathological formations, adaptive strategies, and outcomes

The framework distinguishes three analytical layers often collapsed in comparative writing: pathological formations, adaptive strategies, and outcomes.

At the first level stand broader pathological formations. These include malignant narcissism, pathological entitlement, perverse inversion, predatory dissociation, sadistic domination, and diabolical entitlement. Each names a recurrent configuration rather than an isolated act. Each involves a recognizable pattern of moral orientation, relation to others, management of asymmetry, and response to restraint. These formations occupy the center of the present framework because they capture the larger structure within which darker strategies operate.

At the second level stand adaptive strategies. Grandiosity, deception, manipulation, impression management, selective charm, emotional coldness, coercive cruelty, and opportunistic flexibility belong here. Much of the standard dark-triad and dark-tetrad literature describes these operative tendencies with useful precision. Their explanatory role, however, remains secondary in the present paper. They function as instruments, tactics, and recurrent means through which broader pathological formations express

themselves under given ecological and institutional conditions.

At the third level stand outcomes. Domination, dehumanization, hereditary exclusion, internal fragmentation, scalable predation, compromise susceptibility, and legitimized asymmetry belong to this domain. Outcomes emerge when pathological formations, operating through adaptive strategies, encounter weak restraints, favorable incentives, or institutional protection. Confusion follows quickly once outcomes get mistaken for traits or once tactics get mistaken for the deeper formation they serve. The model adopted here avoids that flattening.

This layered structure offers two advantages. First, it keeps the analysis disciplined. A manipulative act alone does not establish a whole configuration. A pattern of manipulation embedded in entitlement, repeated asymmetry, moral inversion, and weak inhibition points toward something far more serious. Second, it allows comparison across cultures and institutions without reducing every case to the same vocabulary. Different settings may reward the same strategy for different reasons or may channel the same pathological formation through different tactical repertoires.

1.4. Entitlement as the central mediating orientation

Entitlement provides the central hinge of the argument as aggression remains too vague, heterogeneous, and too tied to outward form to carry the full weight of the framework. Entitlement on the other hand, reaches deeper. It organizes the actor's sense of rightful exemption from reciprocity, restraint, equal regard, and shared

consequence. Through entitlement, asymmetry acquires moral permission. Through it, extraction appears deserved, and the suffering of others becomes negotiable, irrelevant, or even fitting.

This orientation can take mild, severe, and extreme forms. In milder forms, it licenses privilege without much self-scrutiny. In more pathological forms, it joins grandiosity, grievance, manipulation, or dissociation and begins to demand social recognition of superiority, exemption, or exceptional right. In its most destructive form, it fuses with cruelty and inversion, allowing actors to treat domination as legitimate order and resistance as deviance. Entitlement therefore links inner patterned operation to outward political and institutional consequence more directly than aggression alone.

Pathological entitlement occupies a special place within this continuum. It names a persistent organization of self and power in which reciprocity weakens, moral symmetry collapses, and the actor experiences claims upon others as self-evident. Such actors do not merely pursue advantage. They experience domination as proper. Limits appear insulting. Restraints look artificial. Negotiation becomes offensive once it requires recognition of the other as an equal moral presence. In this respect, entitlement helps explain why some systems continue to escalate harm long after immediate necessity has receded.

Diabolical entitlement marks the outer extreme of this pattern. It refers to a condition in which severe violence, degradation, or dehumanization continues beyond proportionate strategic necessity, despite the availability of less destructive alternatives and often at clear cost to efficiency, stability, or negotiated settlement. The category names a

breakdown, override, or moral reversal of ordinary inhibitory restraints. Harming the other acquires independent value. The destruction, humiliation, or suffering of the target no longer functions merely as a harsh means toward some end. It enters the structure of perceived right itself. Analytical caution remains important here, since the term belongs only to repeated excess and not to every instance of brutality. Yet without such a category, whole regions of historical and institutional violence become falsely redescribed as merely strategic.

1.5. Social failsafes and the regulation of dark-pattern scalability

Human populations display a broad behavioral range. Cooperative attachment, reciprocity, moral inhibition, predation, domination, opportunism, dissociation, and cruelty all belong to the human range. The decisive comparative question concerns the restraints that regulate this range and the conditions under which those restraints erode, narrow, or harden. The present paper uses the term social failsafes to name those inhibitory structures.

Social failsafes include kinship obligations, shame systems, reciprocity norms, personhood boundaries, ritual constraints, communal oversight, moral vocabularies that limit disposability, elite accountability, child socialization against domination, and any institutional mechanisms that reduce the prestige, legitimacy, or rewardability of destructive patterns. Some operate through intimacy and proximity. Others operate through cosmology, law, ritual, honor, or collective memory. Their distribution, durability and strength under stress vary. What matters analytically concerns the degree to which they prevent pathological

formations from becoming normalized and institutionally scalable. [8], [11], [13]

Once these failsafes weaken, several shifts become more likely. Entitlement gains room to expand. Manipulative and predatory strategies receive stronger reward. Personhood boundaries narrow. Targets become easier to classify as lesser, dangerous, contaminating, or irrelevant. Harm becomes easier to narrate as necessity, discipline, order, protection, purification, destiny, or progress. Over time, the system may begin to select for those most able to exploit such drift, while sidelining those whose conscience, reciprocity, or attachment renders them less useful to the new incentive structure.

Social failsafes sit at the center of comparison because they help explain why superficially similar pressures do not produce identical outcomes everywhere. Migration, ecological stress, scarcity, conflict, and hierarchy recur across human history. Yet they do not mechanically generate the same threshold of dehumanization, the same style of entitlement, or the same tolerance for scalable predation. The variation depends on how restraint, personhood, reciprocity, and moral inhibition interact with those pressures. Comparative analysis therefore turns less on the bare presence of violence than on the patterned regulation of entitlement and the social capacity to prevent darker configurations from hardening into durable forms of domination.

2. Comparative Calibration, Personhood,

and the Problem of False Equivalence

Surface analogies must be avoided as they flatten history. A raid, a conquest, a hierarchy, a captive population, a dependent labor regime, an imperial frontier, a ritualized caste order, and an exterminatory campaign may all display coercion, yet their internal organization differs profoundly. Much turns on whether the target remains legible as a person, whether reintegration remains conceivable, whether violence stays bounded by reciprocal worlds, whether asymmetry carries obligations, whether degradation hardens into hereditary status, and whether harm requires justification or simply borrows legitimacy from the actor's own rank.

That is why the choice is made to not sort cases by merely asking whether violence occurred: it occurred widely. Nor is it asked whether inequality existed: it also appeared widely. The relevant question concerns the moral and relational coding of asymmetry. Some systems constrained power through proximity, kin obligation, ritual accountability, shame, and the persistence of the victim's intelligible personhood. Others widened the distance between actor and target, thinned reciprocal expectation, abstracted status from obligation, and made it easier to classify whole populations as inherently violable. Once that threshold shifts, outwardly similar practices begin to diverge cleanly in duration, cruelty, transmissibility, and scale.

The distinction becomes especially important in discussions of servitude and dependency. Captivity during war, debt dependence, patron-client ties, lineage subordination, domestic servitude,

tributary obligation, and chattel slavery cannot be treated as a single phenomenon merely because each involves asymmetry and constrained freedom. Their key distinction lies in the definition of the dependent person: One arrangement may leave open movement, absorption, marriage, affiliation, redemption, or social ascent. Another may close those paths and turn the dependent into an abstracted object of transfer. One may preserve a thick social vocabulary around obligation, proximity, and incorporation. Another may strip the target down to labor value, category, and disposability. The difference has consequences that reach far beyond legal form. It bears on whether the other remains located within a human order that still imposes limits on what can be done to them.

For the same reason, hierarchy cannot be read through a single moral template. A hierarchical order may bind superiors through duty, redistribution, honor, visibility, and fear of shame. It may also organize rank in a way that protects the powerful from consequence, severs authority from reciprocal burden, and licenses extraction without moral remainder. In the first case, domination remains constrained by the fact that the dominated still appear within a shared field of recognition. In the second, domination detaches itself from relational weight and begins to resemble a permanent right of disposal. Therefore, stable asymmetry alone explains little, and the relevant explanatory burden on the other hand falls on the way entitlement interacts with personhood boundaries and with the institutions that either check or enlarge it.

Here the language of personhood encodes gives insight into institutions and the lived reality. Every social order marks persons and nonpersons, insiders and outsiders,

recognized claims and negligible ones. Yet those boundaries do not sit at the same place in every historical formation. In some cultural settings, an enemy may still remain imaginable as a future dependent, affine, convert, client, or incorporable being (eg pre colonial central and west Africa). In others, an enemy population appears through a code of contamination, essence, civilizational inferiority or inherited dangerousness that drains the very idea of reintegration (eg « immigrants », « coloured » in europoid societies : apartheid, Europe, USA) : Once that happens, force changes character. Violence ceases to function only as coercion or punishment. It begins to work as purification, demonstration, elimination, pedagogy, selective justice enforcement or ontological sorting. That shift matters more than the bare fact that force has been used.

Differences of this kind help explain why comparisons based solely on mobility, raiding, or environmental stress fail so easily. Mobile populations do not all produce the same social psychology. Harsh ecologies do not all generate the same entitlement profile. Pastoral expansion in one region may remain nested within a wider moral world that continues to limit disposability, while frontier expansion elsewhere may fuse with abstraction, universalized superiority, and elaborate justificatory language. The issue does not lie in movement as such, but what movement enters into: what kinship density survives it, what obligations regulate it, what institutional memory accompanies it, what philosophies rationalize it, and what inhibitions erode or persist under pressure.

A similar problem appears whenever all aggression gets treated as equivalent. One form remains reactive, episodic, and bounded by context. Another becomes strategic but limited by norms of reciprocity

or post-conflict incorporation. A third widens into a durable project of entitlement, where the actor's right to dominate no longer needs continuous proof. A fourth exceeds even instrumental harshness and enters a domain where degradation continues beyond obvious gain. Without that differentiation, violence looks flatter than it is. Once the distinctions are restored, differences in intensity, duration, symbolic excess, and institutional scalability become easier to understand.

This also clarifies why the framework privileges patterned formations over moral generalities. Terms such as cruelty or evil may register the observer's judgment, but they do not specify whether the underlying process reflects narcissistic injury, predatory opportunism, sadistic enjoyment, dissociative coldness, perverse inversion, or entitlement that has ceased to recognize limits. Yet these differences shape the entire trajectory of an event. They influence how violence begins, what justifications accompany it, whether negotiation remains imaginable, whether the target can be restored to recognition, and whether the practice tends toward bounded asymmetry or toward hereditary, transferable, and scalable domination.

With the problem framed at that depth, false equivalences lose much of their force. Indeed, the existence of conflict in many societies does not erase differences in how those societies code the defeated. The presence of hierarchy does not erase differences in what rank permits. The appearance of servitude does not erase differences in alienability, reversibility, and personhood. Nor does expansion alone explain why some systems move toward civilizational programs of classification, degradation, and destruction while others

do not. The analysis must therefore track how social failsafes, entitlement, and personhood boundaries interact under pressure, asking when those interactions hold destructive potentials in check and when they instead allow those potentials to harden into durable systems: are there effective pathways for undifferentiated integration into society or on the contrary, are there essence-coded mechanisms to normalise asymmetry and abuse.

3. Ecologies of Selection, Bottlenecks, and the Uneven Reward of Dark Patterns

No social order selects evenly across the whole human range. Every historical environment changes the relative payoff of different dispositions, temperaments, and strategies. Under one configuration, reciprocity, patience, and obligation may carry prestige because survival depends on durable interdependence. Under another, manipulation, hardness, distance, and opportunistic coalition-making may travel farther because the field rewards narrow advantage, rapid dominance, or detachment from the suffering of others. What emerges from such settings never reduces to instinct alone, yet neither does it float free of material and institutional conditions: individuals are not fixed objects either isolated from their environment or devoid of psychology, and the same goes for societies. Repeated exposure to the same reward structure leaves traces in leadership norms, moral language, thresholds of shame, and ideas of what counts as strength.

Ecology, as a consequence, contributes to shape these, though never as a mechanical

cause. Climate, resource distribution, disease burden, mobility corridors, and demographic stress shape the environments in which people pursue security, reproduction, status, and continuity. Still, the same pressure can travel through very different social forms. Scarcity filtered through dense kinship and thick reciprocity will not produce the same results as scarcity filtered through fragmented allegiance, weak mutual accountability, and expanding distance between actor and target. Environmental stress plays a role through mediators: dependency structures, personhood boundaries, prestige systems, and the institutional handling of fear, scarcity, and rivalry. Any account that leaps directly from terrain to psychology leaves the most decisive mechanisms untouched [8], [16], [17].

Migration and population splitting complicate the picture further. A population that disperses does not simply carry a static essence into new terrain. It enters new ecologies, narrows or expands its social networks, confronts new threats, loses some inherited restraints, preserves others, and develops fresh ways of organizing hierarchy, obligation, and alliance. Bottlenecks compress the range of social relations and may weaken older forms of distributed moral pressure. Under some conditions, that compression can heighten local solidarity. Under others, it can reduce the number of effective restraints on domination, especially when survival, expansion, or extraction increasingly rewards actors able to suspend empathy or narrow the circle of recognized obligation.

This helps explain why movement alone predicts so little. Large historical dispersals occurred in multiple regions. Yet dispersal did not everywhere culminate in the same right to classify outsiders as permanently degradable, nor did it everywhere produce

the same institutionalization of hereditary exclusion. The mere fact of migration therefore carries limited explanatory force. More revealing is the way migration reorganizes attachment, alliance, status competition, and moral distance. Once those shifts are tracked, the field of selection becomes clearer. Some settings favor actors who can maintain reciprocity under strain. Others favor those who can exploit asymmetry without moral hesitation.

At this point the language of reward becomes crucial. A behavioral configuration does not need to dominate numerically in order to matter historically. A smaller proportion of actors can drive large outcomes when the ecology disproportionately rewards them, shelters them, and hands them instruments of scale. A polity, market, military frontier, plantation regime, bureaucratic empire, or media environment may all function this way. The central issue concerns not raw prevalence but selective amplification. Which formations receive prestige? Which receive plausible deniability? Which gain institutional cover? Which attract followers precisely because they perform confidence, certainty, harshness, and immunity to doubt? With these questions, cultural calibration is understandable as a system and no longer as an abstraction [5]–[8].

The same logic applies in dominated settings. Oppression does not merely wound from outside. Instead it reorganizes the internal distribution of advantage. Some actors gain by brokerage, mimicry, selective cruelty, or access to the ruling power's language and rewards. Others lose ground because conscience, solidarity, or refusal makes them less adaptable to the imposed field. This does not mean domination manufactures every harmful pattern from nothing, but it sharpens some, rewards others, and gives institutional leverage to

those already most responsive to prestige, proximity, grievance, secrecy, or selective benefit. In that sense, oppression works as a selector that reveals which formations bend toward collective defense and which drift toward compromise, fragmentation, and instrumental betrayal. These leave the mystery of moral qualities and become intelligible, predictable, controllable again.

The long-run consequences reach beyond individual adaptation. In effect, a reward structure persists across generations, it begins to sediment into common sense. A manipulative actor no longer looks deviant if the field repeatedly crowns such behavior with status and success. Emotional detachment begins to look like realism. Grandiose entitlement begins to look like leadership. Perverse inversion, repeated often enough, teaches observers to distrust the harmed and admire the aggressor's certainty. This is how ecology and selection move from behavioral advantage into culture. They enter language, pedagogy, institutional procedure, administrative rationality, and eventually the self-description of the social order.

No claim about fixed moral substance is required: adaptation, amplification, and stabilization offer sufficient explanatory and predictive power. Human beings everywhere carry a wide repertoire of possible reactions. Historical systems differ in the costs they assign to each part of that repertoire instead of unexplained innate moral qualities. Some make predatory formations expensive and humiliating. Others make them useful and admirable. Some preserve dense restraints around personhood. Others progressively erode those restraints, especially where distance, abstraction, classification, or civilizational self-authorization begin to shield the actor

from reciprocal recognition. Once that erosion settles into norm and institution, domination no longer looks like a deviation from order, but becomes perceived as order itself.

4. Oppression, Cooptation, and the Internal Reorganization of Social Fields

Oppression rarely governs through direct force alone. Coercion opens the field, but durable control depends on a more subtle technology: the reorganization of internal incentives, loyalties, fears, and aspirations within the dominated population itself. External power survives longer once it can recruit local carriers, reward selective compliance, magnify rivalry, and turn parts of the target group into instruments against the rest. The result does not depend on universal corruption. A smaller number of strategically placed actors can suffice, provided their profiles fit the imposed ecology and the system can shield, flatter, or enrich them enough to keep them useful.

This pattern changes the internal moral landscape of a dominated society. Under ordinary conditions, a given community may still contain opportunists, narcissistic climbers, secret manipulators, and latent sadists. Yet those formations remain limited where the surrounding field makes them costly, shameful, or socially dangerous. Oppression alters that equation because it introduces asymmetrical access to goods, security, recognition, legal protection, and material advancement. At once, some profiles become easier to compromise. Prestige hunger grows more exploitable. Grievance finds patrons. Secrecy gains value. Detachment from the suffering of one's own group begins to carry advantage. What once looked like moral failure can

now masquerade as realism, moderation, professionalism, or upward mobility.

The psychological shift is important, but the relational shift is a stronger contributor. A dominated population no longer navigates one shared moral field. It moves through overlapping ones. One field still carries the memory of reciprocity, solidarity, and common injury. Another offers rewards for selective distance from that world. Intermediaries emerge in this gap. Some translate the language of the ruler downward. Others translate the vulnerabilities of the dominated upward. Some rationalize coercion. Others soften it symbolically while preserving its substance. Still others locate their value precisely in being less constrained than their neighbors, more legible to power, more willing to discipline those with whom they share origin. Oppression therefore does not simply produce an external enemy and an internal victim. It reshapes the social architecture so that internal differentiation itself becomes one of the central technologies of control.

This process helps explain why dominated groups often display a spectrum rather than a binary. Heroism and betrayal mark only the outer edges. Between them sit anxious conformists, prestige-seeking brokers, cynics who detach themselves from collective fate, wounded actors who learn to survive through mimicry, and opportunists who discover that access to power depends on how effectively they can administer downward harm. Some internalize the ruler's categories and repeat them with special zeal. Others perform compliance while privately retaining an older moral map. Others still learn to divide themselves: one self for the power above, another for those below. Such gradations reveal oppression as a selector of profiles rather than merely a producer of obedience.

Compromise susceptibility becomes intelligible in this setting. Certain actors prove easier to capture because their regulatory anchors lie elsewhere. Flattery works on those organized around recognition hunger. Secret bargains work on those oriented toward advantage with low shame cost. Impunity tempts those whose concern for reciprocal injury has already thinned. Symbolic elevation seduces those who require hierarchy to stabilize a fragile self. None of this requires mystification. A hostile system does not need omnipotence. It needs leverage. Pathological formations offer leverage when the field teaches them that private ascent, selective cruelty, or mediated distance from one's own people carries reward.

The consequences extend beyond the compromised actors themselves. Once such figures rise, they help recalibrate the broader population's sense of possibility. They mechanistically model what advancement now requires, demonstrate which speech is safe through intimidation and shaming, which loyalties pay, which refusals cost too much through coercion and sanctions. In this way, cooptation becomes pedagogical, by teaching the dominated population which parts of the self remain viable under rule and which must be suppressed, hidden, or relinquished. Over time, this produces moral fatigue. People begin to confuse survival with agreement, adaptation with belief, and silence with consent. At that point, domination no longer appears only as an external imposition but reproduces itself through intimacy, ordinary relations, family strategies, language habits, and aspirational ideals.

Yet pressure alone does not fully explain who bends and what mechanisms are at work. Two actors exposed to the same domination may respond quite differently. One tightens loyalty under stress. Another

loosens it. One becomes more protective of communal boundaries. Another treats those boundaries as obstacles to self-advancement. One preserves restraint despite fear. Another discovers a taste for licensed cruelty. Oppression makes these differences more visible. It acts as a real-life laboratory, not because it reveals hidden essence, but because it redistributes reward in ways that make certain formations more legible and more consequential. It can elevate the opportunist, harden the dissociated, embolden the entitled, and test the durability of every remaining social brake.

The structural lesson follows naturally. Domination deepens where a ruling order succeeds in selecting and amplifying those most able to neutralize their own reciprocal inhibitions. Such actors cost less to steer. They carry fewer internal frictions. They can narrate betrayal as sophistication and cruelty as discipline. As institutions, media, or security systems begin to rely on them, the pathology contaminates the infrastructure. Harm no longer depends on singular villains but becomes reproducible through channels, routines, and incentives. That marks a decisive transition in which a compromised actor can damage a circle. A compromised intermediary class can reorganize a people.

This pattern belongs to colonial settings, occupied societies, racialized states, authoritarian orders, and heavily stratified market societies alike, though each channels it differently. Sometimes the selector takes the form of the security state. Sometimes it works through labor markets, legal access, accreditation systems, or prestige institutions. Sometimes it appears through cultural brokerage, philanthropic patronage, or mediated visibility. Whatever the vehicle,

the underlying logic remains recognizable. Control grows cheaper once the target population contains enough actors willing to sacrifice reciprocal belonging for selective advantage and enough observers trained to confuse such actors with pragmatists, moderates, or natural leaders.

The field of domination therefore extends inward. It reaches self-esteem, trust, aspiration, and the coding of relational worth. Those developments will be further developed in future work on the colonized mind, since oppressed populations often inherit damaged expectations of recognition and belonging long after formal rule recedes. For the purposes of the present argument, the main point lies elsewhere. Oppression does not merely injure. It also sorts. It turns social life into a pressure chamber in which pathological formations gain or lose viability depending on how thoroughly social failsafes hold, fracture, or get bought off. Where those failsafes weaken, domination acquires local carriers. Where they endure, even severe pressure may still fail to convert the group's internal field into a reliable instrument of its own subjugation [24].

5. Language, Moral Inversion, and the Laundering of Pathology

Pathological formations scale more easily once language begins to protect them. Harm can be inflicted directly through force, but its endurance depends heavily on naming. Words classify, excuse, elevate, soften, and redirect. They decide whether a predatory actor appears as a danger, a leader, a realist, a visionary, a disciplinarian, or a protector. They decide whether the injured appear as victims, obstacles, ingrates, threats, collateral matter, or proof that harsher action was needed. Once language starts

working this way, pathology acquires moral cover.

Dark formations enter prestige systems in disguised form. Grandiosity rarely presents itself under its own name. It arrives as confidence, authority, conviction, or destiny. Manipulation finds safer shelter in the language of strategy, positioning, messaging, or pragmatism. Emotional coldness turns into professionalism, composure, or rational detachment. Licensed cruelty can pass as firmness, discipline, civilizing force, or maintaining order. Even racial harassment, once buffered by irony and repetition, reappears as humor, provocation, or “trolling,” a childish label that shifts attention from the victim’s injury to the aggressor’s posture of unseriousness. At each stage, naming changes the threshold of recognition. What should trigger alarm instead enters circulation as talent, competence, wit, or necessity [5], [6], [21]–[23].

Moral inversion drives this process further. Inversion does not merely excuse harm. It recodes it as righteousness. The actor who dominates presents himself as embattled. The one who humiliates claims injury. Extraction becomes stewardship. Suppression becomes security. Exclusion becomes prudence. Resistance becomes aggression. The harmed are then forced to defend their own perception before they can even name what has happened to them. This maneuver appears in intimate abuse, institutional politics, colonial discourse, racial propaganda, and digital harassment alike, though its historical consequences vary with scale and infrastructure. Once widely normalized, inversion corrodes not only judgment but memory. Whole populations may come to narrate predation as order restored and protest as disorder.

The role of language here cannot be reduced to propaganda in the narrow sense. It extends into ordinary categories of evaluation. A child learns what kind of person earns admiration. A citizen learns which injuries deserve seriousness and which attract ridicule. A bureaucrat learns what style of speech confers legitimacy. A population under media saturation learns which terms sound sober and which sound extreme, regardless of their relation to reality. Through this slow training, the public becomes easier to govern morally. It no longer needs to love domination. Toleration will suffice. The work of language lies precisely in making intolerable patterns feel routine, isolated, exaggerated by critics, or somehow necessary under the circumstances.

Market societies add another layer. Once visibility, branding, and narrative management become central to social advancement, pathology can borrow the grammar of performance. The manipulator appears polished. The entitled actor appears aspirational. The humiliator appears blunt, honest, unfiltered. A system organized around attention and competition can reward exactly those personalities most capable of spectacle, emotional asymmetry, and shameless repetition. The field then begins to confuse impact with truth, confidence with competence, and immunity to remorse with strength. This confusion affects more than celebrity culture or electoral politics. It filters downward into institutional promotion, conflict mediation, workplace leadership, and ordinary social aspiration.

The colonial and racial dimensions further intensify this point, where a language of classification can move whole populations out of the circle of recognized grief. Terms of backwardness, savagery, contamination, criminality, civilizational deficiency, tribal

unreliability, or demographic threat do more than describe. They prepare action, lower inhibition and widen the gap between the actor's self-understanding and the target's suffering. In this way, language functions to move harm from episodic brutality toward durable policy. Once an enemy becomes a category rather than a visible person, entitlement grows easier to maintain. In South Africa, the category « African immigrants » are frequently scapegoated, deprived of individuality and labelled as drug dealers and criminals as a group. This discourse popularised by apartheid adjacent groups, insulates the white population from criticism of its resistance to reparations. Racism is redistributed within Africans and normalised in parts of the South African population. Furthermore, when a population becomes a problem rather than a people, solutions can drift toward elimination, fragmentation, confinement, or managed exhaustion without producing equal levels of moral friction. Online discourse also shows FBA and ADOS mirroring white racial harassers (minimised under the almost harmless « troll » moniker), target yet again « African immigrants » as if they were the reason [9], [10], [25].

Such developments do not require universal belief. Repetition suffices. Enough institutional use, enough media circulation, enough elite endorsement, and enough selective enforcement can stabilize a vocabulary that many privately doubt yet publicly obey. This helps explain why moral laundering often looks banal. The language need not sound dramatic. Indeed, its power often increases as it becomes administrative, procedural, or casually ironic. Bureaucratic euphemism, expert neutrality, strategic framing, and deadpan

mockery all serve similar ends when they strip injury of its proper weight and convert pathology into something ordinary.

A great deal of contemporary confusion follows from ignoring this linguistic layer. Observers may identify the violence but miss the naming that allowed it to travel farther than force alone could have carried it. Or they may recognize the naming but treat it as secondary ornament rather than as one of the main infrastructures through which entitlement secures compliance. The present framework does not permit that separation. Language belongs to the mechanism itself. It helps decide which formations become speakable, defensible, admirable, or deniable. It helps decide whether social failsafes fire in time or remain asleep while pathology acquires legitimacy.

The implications for comparative analysis are as follows. **Societies differ** not only in what they do but also in what they can say about what they do without collapsing into shame. **Where domination** requires constant defensive language, remaining restraints still exert pressure. Where it speaks in the voice of common sense, order, professionalism, humor, or necessity, the erosion has gone farther. **The actor** no longer needs to hide from the moral law. He speaks as though he embodies it. At that point, pathology acquires its most dangerous form: it arrives already authorized, prepackaged in ambient culture.

6. Historical Variation, African Adaptive Range, and the Limits of Migratory Determinism

Large population movements are a powerful and quick test to weak theories. If migration, ecological stress, mobility, or

intermittent raiding directly generated the same entitlement profile everywhere, similar pressures would have yielded far greater historical convergence than they did. Instead, human groups moved across forests, savannas, river systems, plateaus, coasts, and semi-arid zones without arriving at a single moral outcome. The movement of "Bantu"-speaking populations across much of subequatorial Africa offers one of the clearest long-duration cases. These dispersals unfolded over millennia, crossed highly varied environments, and involved extensive encounter, admixture, local adaptation, and regional differentiation. Yet this vast history does not straightforwardly culminate in a durable pattern equivalent to later European racialized global domination. Mobility, expansion, hierarchy, and conflict proved real; but what did not follow automatically was a single civilizational logic of hereditary abstraction and scalable dehumanization. [16], [17]

False comparisons often begin by flattening movement itself. "Nomad," "migrant," "expanding group," or "frontier people" can sound explanatory only so long as one ignores what movement enters into. A mobile population may still remain enclosed within a moral world that preserves recognizable limits around personhood, reciprocity, alliance, and eventual incorporation. Another may enter a field where classification hardens, distance widens, and superiority acquires a more permanent vocabulary. Under those conditions, movement no longer simply reallocates people across space. It begins to reorganize the value of proximity, the rights of conquest, and the disposability of outsiders. Movement therefore carries little explanatory force on its own. The surrounding relational order does the heavier work.

African historical variation makes that especially clear [13]–[17]. Climatic zones shifted repeatedly. Deserts did not always look as they do now. Forest margins changed. Pastoral and agricultural forms overlapped, competed, merged, and gave way to one another. Some populations that later appeared sedentary carried memories of movement, while some groups later described as mobile had passed through more settled phases or interacted closely with centralized polities. This long adaptive range complicates every simplistic contrast between "nomadic" and "civilized" peoples. Social codes did not emerge once and remain frozen. They were tested, revised, hardened, weakened, and reworked across changing conditions. A comparative theory that ignores such temporal depth ends up confusing present labels for deep causes.

For that reason, the present framework treats many African restraint patterns as historically sedimented rather than romantically assumed. Extended ecological variation and repeated social experimentation increase the likelihood that populations encounter, absorb, and remember the consequences of unchecked predation. From there, social brakes can take shape in different forms: thicker incorporation logics, stronger shame around gratuitous cruelty, more durable obligations linking rank to reciprocity, or limits around radical disposability. No uniform African code follows from this. Variation remained immense. Still, the historical record permits a narrower claim of real importance: mobility and conflict in African settings often unfolded within social worlds that retained more pathways of recognition and incorporation than later Atlantic and European racial regimes would allow.

The literature on dependence and slavery in Africa sharpens this distinction. It

complicates any temptation to reduce African dependency to a single story of benevolent belonging, yet it also resists the opposite flattening move that treats all forms of unfreedom as interchangeable. Rossi's intervention proves especially useful here. Dependence, unfreedom, and slavery overlapped, but they did not collapse neatly into one essence; belonging, personhood, and incorporation all mattered, and the social coding of the dependent remained historically variable. This variability does not erase coercion but clarifies its structure. Some dependent persons could move toward affiliation, status, or integration, whereas other systems narrowed those possibilities sharply. What follows from that distinction extends far beyond legal taxonomy. It bears directly on whether domination remains bounded within a human order that still imposes limits or whether it drifts toward abstraction, transferability, and durable social death. [13]-[15]

That difference also exposes the poverty of arguments that invoke "Africa also had slavery" or "Africa also had war" as though surface labels resolved the question. A comparative framework asks whether the captive remains thinkable as incorporable, whether dependence leaves room for restored recognition, whether the superior remains bound by visible obligation, and whether violence tends toward bounded asymmetry or toward transgenerational degradation protected by legal and symbolic abstraction. Once those questions enter, false equivalence becomes harder to sustain. The issue no longer concerns innocence on one side and guilt on the other. It concerns patterned calibration of personhood and the degree to which domination acquires the right to perpetuate itself independently of concrete relation.

European history, by contrast, provides repeated evidence of a different hardening process. Naming did not remain incidental. It moved into the machinery of exclusion itself. Classificatory language helped mark populations as dangerous, contaminating, inferior, backward, or less than fully human, and such language repeatedly fed escalation. Nazi propaganda offers the clearest modern case, since dehumanizing labels and imagery formed part of the wider process through which Jews could be socially recoded and then destroyed. The point extends beyond one regime. European history repeatedly shows how naming can delegitimize entire populations and reduce the moral friction of persecution, expulsion, enslavement, or extermination. Where such language settles into bureaucracy, law, media, and common sense, entitlement acquires a more durable infrastructure.

This does not mean that genocidal violence appeared nowhere else or that Europe monopolized brutality. Such claims would add heat and subtract precision. The real question centres on pervasiveness, elaboration, and institutional scale. European formations repeatedly developed powerful combinations of classificatory language, hereditary exclusion, civilizational self-authorization, and bureaucratic distance that made severe domination easier to generalize and defend. The consequence reaches beyond death counts alone. It concerns the normalization of a style of rule in which the target's personhood can be emptied in advance through language, then managed through procedure, commerce, law, or organized force without requiring equal moral recognition.

The comparative significance of the "Bantu" case therefore comes into focus. Large-scale

dispersal, ecological adaptation, and long historical mobility did not generate one inevitable route toward the same entitlement structure. Nor did movement itself dictate a civilizational need for racially coded, indefinitely scalable domination. That fact weakens any theory that tries to derive later European forms directly from migration, pastoralism, desert life, or nomadism as such. More decisive variables intervene: how personhood gets coded, how obligation survives asymmetry, how kinship and alliance mediate violence, how language narrows or widens the circle of recognition, and how institutions either preserve or corrode restraints.

Once those elements are kept in view, a more exact conclusion becomes available. Human groups can move widely, adapt repeatedly, and fight intensely without converging on the same threshold of dehumanization. Social evolution does not travel through a single script. It branches through moral worlds. Some retain stronger barriers against converting the defeated into permanently abstracted matter. Others weaken those barriers and discover in classification, distance, and entitlement a more expansive grammar of domination. That difference, rather than movement alone, marks the real terrain of comparison.

6.1. African migration memory, cohesion, and the preservation of restraint

African population movements did not leave only trails of displacement and conflict. They also left political memories, oral traditions, and institutional forms organized around alliance, settlement, negotiation, incorporation, and the reconstitution of order. Kongo traditions are instructive here. Accounts of early state formation do include conquest, yet they also place founding

moments within alliance structures linking Mpemba Kasi and Mbata, with succession, legitimacy, and regional authority tied to negotiated relationships rather than to a pure mythology of exterminatory entitlement. Oral and historical reconstructions of early Kongo formation repeatedly preserve this relational dimension, including agreements over rule, elector status, and shared political architecture. This shows that migration memory itself can be structured around political composition rather than around the unrestricted right of violent disposal. In that respect, movement and expansion did not automatically dissolve reciprocity into a permanent grammar of dehumanization. They could also generate mechanisms for federation, alliance, and re-legitimation. [18]

This pattern extends beyond Kongo alone. Across sub-Saharan Africa, kinship groups often functioned as primary political units through which obligation, inheritance, burial responsibility, land claims, and mutual support were organized. Where matrilineal systems prevailed, lineage membership through women often shaped access to land, political participation, and enduring obligations among kin. Recent cross-African research shows that matrilineality correlates with narrower gender gaps in political participation, greater autonomy for women, lower acceptance of domestic violence, and stronger intra-lineage support systems. Those findings do not justify a romantic theory of matrilineity, nor do they imply that all African kinship systems worked the same way [13], [14]. They do, however, support a specific and more relevant claim: many African family and lineage structures operated as distributed restraints against fracture, unilateral entitlement, and unchecked concentration of social power. They thickened obligation. They widened

the field of accountability. They made the social consequences of predation harder to evade.

Once these institutional memories are taken seriously, migration looks different. It no longer appears simply as an engine of aggression. It appears as a field in which political communities repeatedly had to solve problems of coexistence, succession, alliance, and reintegration under changing ecological conditions. That history helps explain why many African systems preserved stronger social brakes around personhood and reciprocal obligation even where warfare, raiding, and hierarchy remained real. The crucial issue, then, concerns not whether African populations moved, fought, or expanded, but what kind of social architecture they repeatedly built in order to prevent mobility and conflict from collapsing into a durable right of disposability.

6.2. Gender coding, normative baselines, and the laundering of harmful conduct

A related distortion appears in the treatment of sex and gender. Large parts of popular psychology, along with some strands of academic psychology, continue to speak as though men naturally belong closer to overt aggression, hardness, and dominance, while women belong closer to softness, caution, and relationality. Yet the empirical picture remains far less rigid. The American Psychological Association has summarized evidence for the gender similarities hypothesis, showing that men and women overlap on most psychological variables and that many alleged differences are either small or context-sensitive. Recent review work on gender and aggression likewise emphasizes that observed sex

differences in aggression vary strongly by provocation, anonymity, social role, and cultural context rather than expressing a fixed essence. Aggression tracks situations, norms, identities, and incentives more than a simple binary nature.

That is key for the present framework because crude gender coding often performs a second-order legitimating function. Once overt aggression, emotional coldness, domination, or coercive hardness can be narrated as natural extensions of masculinity, harmful patterns become easier to normalize. Deviance is recoded as role-congruent behavior. The baseline shifts quietly. What should be scrutinized as entitlement, manipulation, dissociation, or cruelty instead passes as realism, competitiveness, masculine candor, or natural male temperament. In this way, gender theory can become part of the very laundering process the paper has already identified elsewhere. It ceases to describe behavior and begins to protect it by absorbing it into a supposedly natural order.

An African comparative perspective complicates that baseline. Many African kinship systems, especially those with stronger lineage obligations and less rigid concentration of authority in the conjugal male line, do not map neatly onto a theory in which men carry an inherent mandate toward overt aggression while women merely soften the social field around them. The historical record shows much greater institutional variation: women could hold political authority, kinship could distribute obligations through female lines, and communal order could depend on forms of accountability poorly captured by modern Western binaries of dominant male and pacifying female. The issue therefore concerns not whether sex differences ever

appear, but whether a given society chooses to elevate those differences into a moral anthropology that normalizes harmful conduct. That move itself belongs to the pattern under study. It converts historically contingent behavior into naturalized expectation and, by doing so, lowers the threshold at which entitlement and overt aggression attract criticism.

From this angle, the problem goes deeper than stereotype. A society that repeatedly codes harmful male conduct as natural may be adapting its descriptive baseline to its own pathologies. Instead of correcting deviance, it builds a psychological language able to house it. That is precisely why the present paper refuses to treat overt aggression as the primary key. Entitlement, inhibition, personhood boundaries, and social failsafes cut deeper than sex-coded surface behavior. They explain why some systems resist the normalization of harm while others quietly teach populations to misrecognize it as ordinary human difference.

7. From Strategic Brutality to Diabolical Entitlement

A final distinction becomes necessary once the comparative field is clear. Severe violence often invites a quick explanatory shortcut. Observers see excess and immediately call it irrational, or else they see planning and immediately call it strategic. Neither move suffices. Historical actors can pursue cruelty instrumentally for deterrence, extraction, intimidation, or demonstration. They can also exceed those functions. Once excess persists beyond proportionate gain, once less destructive alternatives stand available, once negotiation would secure objectives more efficiently, and once harm still deepens,

another formation has entered the picture. The actor no longer seeks only advantage. He seeks the continuation of licensed destruction itself.

This threshold helps distinguish such cases from forms of strategic brutality that still retain a relation to recognizable ends. It may be vicious, opportunistic, and morally intolerable, yet it remains legible within a frame of gain, control, fear, or survival. Diabolical entitlement begins where that frame no longer explains enough. Severe harm continues, not simply because coercion appears useful, but because the target's suffering has acquired independent value or because the actor's sense of rightful power now requires visible degradation beyond need. Harming the other becomes a confirmation of status, a vindication of grievance, a ritual of purification, or an assertion that no limit outside the self deserves acknowledgment.

This transition can be seen most clearly where actors override their own practical interest in order to preserve a deeper priority. A ruler may reject settlement even where settlement would stabilize control. A military force may continue humiliating, mutilating, or annihilating targets after operational goals have already been secured. An institution may prefer prolonged harm to cheaper reform because reform would require recognizing the injured party as a legitimate moral claimant. In each case, the excess points toward more than harshness. It signals the neutralization of ordinary failsafes and the conversion of entitlement into something more absolute.

The category proves useful precisely because it prevents a recurring error in the analysis of domination. Too much explanatory work has been handed either to abstract evil or to narrow strategic rationality. The first moralizes without

mechanism. The second normalizes excess by insisting that whatever powerful actors repeatedly do must somehow serve a hidden function. Yet some campaigns drift into modes of destruction that outstrip credible proportionality. Their continuation imposes costs, forecloses efficient alternatives, and intensifies cruelty even where instrumental goals no longer require it. A concept capable of marking that threshold becomes indispensable.

Diabolical entitlement meets that need. It captures the outer extreme of pathological entitlement, where the actor's right to harm no longer depends on proportion, reciprocity, or practical necessity. Internal restraints have not merely weakened. They have been suspended, reversed, or morally re-coded. The target no longer appears as a negotiating counterpart, a manageable enemy, or even a useful subordinate. The target appears as matter for degradation, elimination, or demonstrative suffering. Once this formation takes hold, domination changes tone. It no longer seeks only obedience. It seeks ontological reduction.

That does not mean every atrocity belongs under this heading. Analytical precision remains essential. A single brutal act, however shocking, does not establish the formation. Repetition, pattern, functional excess, counterproductive persistence are key indicators. So is the availability of less destructive paths. The category belongs where actors repeatedly privilege humiliation, severe suffering, or annihilation beyond clear strategic need and where such escalation reveals a stable moral orientation rather than an isolated collapse. Used this way, the term clarifies rather than inflames.

The comparative payoff is considerable. It allows the paper to distinguish three broad registers. At one end lie bounded conflicts still structured by reciprocal worlds and constrained personhood boundaries. In the middle lie strategic forms of domination that remain harsh, exploitative, and often expansive, yet still track intelligible goals of extraction, deterrence, or control. At the far edge lies diabolical entitlement, where destruction acquires self-justifying force and the actor's relation to the target no longer passes through ordinary calculations alone. This register explains why some campaigns leave observers with the impression that "mere strategy" no longer reaches the phenomenon, even though the actors continue to plan, organize, and justify themselves.

Placed within the broader framework, the concept also clarifies the role of language and institutions. A formation this extreme does not scale through personal rage alone. It requires vocabularies capable of removing moral friction and institutions willing to protect excess from correction. In that sense, diabolical entitlement rarely appears as naked appetite for long. It clothes itself in security, destiny, purification, civilization, honor, divine mission, or procedural necessity. The more fully such coverings succeed, the easier it becomes for a society to absorb escalating cruelty without triggering its own remaining restraints and for another to continue extracting from it.

Work on empire, institutional harm, malignant leadership, and the occult laundering of violence all depends on the distinction developed here. Some actors seek advantage through ordinary predation. Others move farther. They neutralize internal brakes, absorb cruelty into their

sense of right, and continue harming even where gain no longer explains the persistence. Without a term for that outer edge, later analyses would repeatedly oscillate between under-description and moral dramatization. With it, they gain a disciplined way to name a patterned reality that history has displayed too often to remain theoretically unmarked.

8. Literature, Correctives, and the Assembly of the Framework

Modern behavioral science long treated a narrow slice of humanity as though it furnished the human baseline itself. Henrich, Heine, and Norenzayan disrupted that assumption by showing how heavily psychology generalized from Western, educated, industrialized, rich, democratic populations whose behavioral profiles often diverge markedly from those found elsewhere [1], [2]. That intervention unsettles more than sampling practice. It unsettles the silent normativity built into the language of reasonableness, selfhood, leadership, deviance, and social competence. This paper extends that break. Sample distortion alone does not exhaust the problem. Interpretive distortion also matters, since the societies that dominate the sample base frequently supply the very moral vocabulary through which manipulative, entitled, or dissociated conduct gets redescribed as strategy, realism, professionalism, or charisma [1], [2].

Cultural psychiatry sharpens the point. Kirmayer showed that psychiatric and psychological categories develop within particular histories of meaning, service design, explanatory style, and social order [3], [4]. Once that is granted, psychology no longer appears as a transparent reading of inner essence. It becomes a contextual model of patterned functioning whose

categories travel unevenly across worlds of kinship, morality, and suffering. The present framework accepts that discipline and pushes it further. Recurrent patterns of humiliation, inversion, manipulation, coldness, and entitlement remain observable, yet their visibility alone does not settle their meaning. Some fields stigmatize such conduct quickly. Others absorb, reward, euphemize, or even celebrate it. The argument developed here therefore moves from cultural inflection in diagnosis to cultural calibration of restraint itself [3], [4].

Research on dark traits in organizations supplies a third anchor. Reviews of dark-triad behavior in work settings document persistent links between narcissistic, psychopathic, and Machiavellian patterns, on the one hand, and abusive conduct, manipulation, counterproductive behavior, and certain forms of leader emergence, on the other [5]. Meta-analytic work on narcissism and leadership deepens the point by showing that grandiosity can carry an initial advantage in perceived leader-likeness even where longer-term consequences prove corrosive [6]. This literature supports one of the framework's central moves: harmful strategies often receive reward before they receive sanction. Yet it also leaves a gap. Organizational studies usually remain close to the tactical level. They identify recurrent strategies, behavioral correlates, and leadership effects within firms or formal institutions [5]–[7]. The present paper widens that field. Dark traits enter here as adaptive strategies nested within broader pathological formations, and those formations can be socially scaled through historical ecologies, prestige systems, and weakened inhibitory structures [5]–[8].

The self-regulation literature adds an important complementary layer.

Heatherton's review of self and self-regulation emphasizes the centrality of inhibition, social norm alignment, and belonging for human behavioral control [8]. That insight supports the present concept of social failsafes. Destructive formations do not become historically consequential merely because they exist in latent form. They become consequential when the social architecture around them fails to impose sufficient cost, shame, reciprocity, or restraint. The shift from latent possibility to adaptive viability depends on the weakening, bypassing, or inversion of those regulatory structures [8].

African and Black critical traditions also reinforce key parts of the present framework. Diop's work on African civilizational formations supports the legitimacy of long-range comparison without reducing Africa to anecdote or ethnographic exception. Fanon clarifies how domination reorganizes perception, violence, and the interior life of the dominated, which aligns directly with the article's treatment of oppression as an internal selector rather than a purely external force. Amos Wilson, in turn, sharpens the analysis of symbolic control, educational baselines, and psychological normalization under domination. These traditions are not reproduced in full here, since the present article is primarily architectural, yet they form part of the wider intellectual field within which the framework is situated.

Work on dehumanization and hierarchy provides the next set of supports. Haslam's integrative review clarified how dehumanization strips targets of qualities associated with full personhood and thereby widens the moral space for degradation and harm [9]. Phillips'

philosophical synthesis reinforces the point by treating dehumanization as a conceptual and historical problem extending beyond isolated prejudice into broader structures of misrecognition and exclusion [10]. Sidanius and Pratto's social dominance framework, meanwhile, offers a language for understanding how hierarchical systems stabilize asymmetry and legitimize unequal treatment across groups [11]. Mbembe pushes this field farther still by showing how modern sovereignty can extend toward the power to expose populations to death, abandonment, and systematic disposability [12]. The present framework draws from all four bodies of work but alters their arrangement. Dehumanization enters here as an outcome, not a starting trait. Hierarchy enters as an insufficiently specific surface form. What decides the scale and durability of harm lies deeper: entitlement, personhood boundaries, moral inversion, and the strength or erosion of the failsafes that prevent asymmetry from hardening into common sense [9]–[12].

Africanist scholarship on dependence and unfreedom supplies a crucial corrective to false equivalence. Rossi resists both sentimental compression and cynical flattening by showing that dependence, unfreedom, and slavery across African settings did not collapse into a single uniform relation of personhood [13]. Kopytoff and Miers likewise emphasized the marginal and incorporative dimensions of some African forms of servitude, where social location, affiliation, and gradual absorption mattered in ways poorly captured by Atlantic chattel analogies in ways poorly captured by Atlantic chattel analogies [14]. Glassman's work on bondage in the Indian Ocean world further illustrates how dependent status could in some settings interact with pathways to

respectability, incorporation, or transformed social positioning rather than with permanent abstract alienability [15]. These studies do not erase coercion. They clarify its structure. Their value for the present framework lies precisely there. Once incorporation, reversibility, obligation, and social recognition enter the analysis, unfreedom no longer appears as a single moral and institutional form. The decisive comparative issue becomes the coding of personhood and the degree to which asymmetry remains constrained by a still-operative human order [13]–[15].

Research on African dispersal and adaptation supports the critique of migratory determinism. Bostoen's synthesis of the "Bantu" expansion situates these movements within long processes of dispersal, local adaptation, encounter, and differentiation [16]. Population-genetic work on "Bantu"-speaker migration and admixture confirms the complexity, regional variation, and layered demographic history of these movements [17]. Together, such materials weaken any simple claim that migration, ecological stress, or expansion automatically generate the same entitlement profile or the same path toward durable racialized domination. Movement proved real, conflict proved real, adaptation proved real, yet those conditions did not everywhere culminate in the same threshold of hereditary abstraction, scalable dehumanization, or institutionally normalized disposability [16], [17]. The lesson fits the larger model: ecology contributes, through mediators such as kinship density, symbolic order, obligation, prestige, and personhood coding.

The persuasion and media literature then clarifies how destructive formations travel beyond force itself. DellaVigna and Gentzkow show that persuasive communication can produce measurable

changes in belief and behavior [18]. Prat and Strömberg extend that logic into the political field by showing how media systems shape accountability, agenda-setting, and political perception [19]. Zhuravskaya, Petrova, and Enikolopov demonstrate how digital information environments further restructure political judgment, mobilization, and manipulation [20]. These findings are relevant here because the present argument treats language as part of the mechanism, not as commentary floating above it. A society saturated with euphemism, prestige-framing, irony, and bureaucratic naming does more than circulate messages. It recalibrates seriousness. It changes which harms sound ordinary, which forms of entitlement pass as competence, and which injuries appear exaggerated when named directly [21]–[23].

The archive on oppression as internal reorganization appears most sharply in COINTELPRO. FBI records on operations targeting Black nationalist formations document surveillance, infiltration, destabilization, and deliberate interference with internal organizational life [24]. Their significance reaches beyond the immediate historical case. They show external domination working not only through repression but through mistrust, fracture, selective vulnerability, and the exploitation of internal susceptibility. This directly supports the paper's treatment of oppression as a selector. Power reduces its own burden once it can identify and amplify actors whose status hunger, grievance, secrecy tolerance, vanity, or thinned reciprocal inhibition make them easier to steer [24].

Holocaust scholarship on antisemitic propaganda completes the structure. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's documentation of long

antisemitic traditions shows how repetitive naming, classification, caricature, and animalization help lower moral inhibition and prepare wider populations for persecution, exclusion, and exterminatory escalation [25]. This material demonstrates with unusual clarity that language does not decorate violence from the outside. It redistributes recognition, alters moral thresholds, and expands the actor's felt right to proceed. Once populations can be classified as parasitic, contaminating, criminal, or civilizationally dangerous, dehumanization no longer waits for violence to begin. It has already prepared the social and psychological ground on which violence will later stand [25].

Taken together, these literatures do not furnish a single ready-made theory. They furnish components. WEIRD psychology destabilizes the false universal baseline [1], [2]. Cultural psychiatry disciplines psychological inference and relocates it within historical worlds of meaning [3], [4]. Dark-trait research shows that harmful strategies can be rewarded before they are condemned [5]–[7]. Self-regulation research clarifies the importance of inhibitory architecture [8]. Dehumanization and hierarchy research identify the outcomes and political forms that emerge when such architecture weakens [9]–[12]. Africanist work prevents false equivalence in the treatment of dependence, personhood, and adaptation [13]–[17]. Media and persuasion research explains how naming lowers moral friction [18]–[20]. COINTELPRO and antisemitic propaganda archives show how oppression and classificatory language turn these mechanisms into instruments of durable control [24], [25]. The framework assembled here draws those lines together around four linked questions: which pathological formations a historical field

rewards, how entitlement acquires legitimacy, where personhood boundaries tighten or loosen, and whether social failsafes remain strong enough to prevent domination and dehumanization from becoming scalable.

9. Conceptual Findings and Theoretical Payoff

Several findings emerge from the framework even before one turns to downstream applications. First, the common habit of comparing societies through broad surface categories such as violence, hierarchy, servitude, or cruelty obscures more than it clarifies. Those labels name visible outcomes while leaving untouched the patterned formations that animate them. Once the deeper level enters, a conflict bounded by reciprocity no longer belongs in the same analytical drawer as a project of hereditary degradation supported by classificatory distance and moral inversion. The difference does not lie in whether suffering occurred. It lies in how entitlement, personhood, inhibition, and institutional reinforcement interact to produce particular kinds of suffering and particular trajectories of scale.

Second, entitlement carries more explanatory weight than aggression. Aggression can mark fear, panic, strategic necessity, wounded pride, ritualized conflict, territorial defense, or sadistic escalation. Entitlement, by contrast, reaches the actor's presumed right to asymmetry. It explains why domination can appear natural, why extraction can feel deserved, why reciprocity can look optional, and why negotiation can feel insulting when it requires acknowledgment of the other as an equal claimant. This shift from aggression to entitlement also makes later analyses easier

to integrate. Work on empire, pathological leadership, institutional harm, racial dehumanization, and moral inversion all plugs more cleanly into entitlement than into violence in general.

Third, dark traits fit more productively at the level of adaptive strategy than at the level of final explanation. The present framework therefore treats grandiosity, manipulation, emotional coldness, selective charm, deceit, and coercive cruelty as recurrent instruments nested within larger formations. That move allows the analysis to retain the descriptive usefulness of dark-trait research without becoming trapped inside its narrower taxonomy. A manipulative strategy may serve malignant narcissism in one case, predatory dissociation in another, and perverse inversion in a third.

Fourth, social failsafes supply a comparative concept capable of carrying substantial theoretical weight. Rather than asking whether one civilization possessed virtue and another did not, the framework asks how strongly each field restrains, shames, limits, redirects, or rewards destructive formations. This makes comparison more exact. A society may contain inequality yet still preserve thick brakes against gratuitous degradation. Another may celebrate equality rhetorically while quietly rewarding actors whose entitlement, dissociation, and manipulative skill allow them to dominate without reciprocal burden. The failsafe concept thus opens a path between moral essentialism and flattening universalism. It keeps the comparison historical, ecological, and behavioral.

Fifth, oppression appears in a new light once treated as a selection environment. External domination imposes pain, but it also sorts. It redistributes advantage,

creates brokerage niches, lowers the cost of betrayal for some actors, raises the price of conscience for others, and teaches the population what types of selfhood remain viable under pressure. This finding helps explain why dominated populations often display sharp internal spectrums rather than simple binaries. It also provides a bridge to later work on the colonized mind, since damaged trust, altered self-esteem, and recoded relational expectation can be approached as downstream consequences of a long-reorganized social field rather than as isolated individual pathologies. [5]-[7]

Sixth, the framework supplies a disciplined place for diabolical entitlement. Severe domination often gets misread in one of two directions. Either it becomes moral theater, described only through inflated language, or it gets flattened into strategic necessity. The concept developed here marks the zone where repeated excess outruns proportionate gain, where less destructive alternatives remain available, and where harm still deepens because the target's suffering has acquired value in itself or has become inseparable from the actor's sense of rightful power. This does not replace strategic analysis. It refines it by identifying the point at which strategy alone no longer explains enough.

Finally, the framework provides a reusable grammar for the broader body of work into which it will feed. Studies of empire can draw on its account of entitlement, moral inversion, and scalable domination. Work on institutional violence can use its distinctions between tactic, formation, and outcome. Analyses of racial harassment and symbolic abuse can build on its treatment of language as part of the mechanism of dehumanization rather than a mere accompaniment. Research on the colonized mind can extend its model of oppression as

internal reorganization. The gain lies not merely in conceptual elegance. It lies in the possibility of mechanistic continuity across papers that address different arenas of the same underlying problem. [24]

The framework therefore reaches a conclusion of some importance. Human dark potential does not need discovery; it needs regulation. Historical systems diverge less by the bare presence of harmful tendencies than by the way they calibrate restraint, reward asymmetry, code personhood, and authorize entitlement through language and institution. Once those variables line up in the wrong direction, domination and dehumanization become easier to scale. Once they line up in the other, even severe pressure may fail to turn destructive formations into civilizational common sense. That difference, more than surface violence alone, defines the real terrain of comparison.

10. Objections, Pressure Points, and the Limits of the Framework

A framework of this kind will predictably attract two opposite objections. One side will hear comparative language and suspect concealed essentialism. The other will hear contextual language and suspect analytical softness. Both objections are valid, yet neither reaches the core of the argument once the levels remain distinct.

The essentialism charge usually enters through a false shortcut. Comparative work mentions patterned differences across historical systems; from there, critics infer a claim about fixed inner substance. Nothing in the present framework requires that move. The analysis tracks calibration, selection, reinforcement, restraint, and

scale. Populations carry broad human potential. Historical fields reward some formations more heavily than others. Those rewards shape institutions, language, leadership norms, and personhood boundaries over time. The issue therefore concerns distribution and amplification, not immutable essence. Once that point is kept steady, variation within populations ceases to threaten the framework. On the contrary, such variation belongs exactly where the model expects it: some actors embody rewarded formations strongly, others partially, others defensively, others not at all, and still others resist at personal cost.

A second objection insists that all empires, all strong states, or all hierarchical systems manipulate language, reward predatory actors, and dehumanize enemies under pressure. The historical kernel in that observation should not be denied. Human societies repeatedly generate asymmetry, coercion, and self-justifying narratives. Yet this broad fact resolves very little. The relevant comparison concerns degree, elaboration, durability, and institutional scale. Not every system converts outsiders into hereditary abstractions. Not every system fuses classification, law, commerce, and bureaucracy into a long-range machine of dehumanization. Not every system requires the same level of moral distance between actor and target. Not every system launders entitlement through the same density of civilizational language. Similar mechanisms can therefore exist at a general level while remaining far from equivalent in consequence or structure.

The charge of romantic compression appears next, especially in relation to African histories. The framework does not place African societies under a single moral sign. It does not erase war, dependence,

internal hierarchy, or severe violence. It does not propose a continent-wide innocence. Its narrower claim concerns comparative calibration. In many African settings, domination remained more entangled with obligation, recognition, incorporation, or relational visibility than in later systems organized around stronger legal, symbolic, and commercial abstraction of the target. That claim leaves ample room for brutality, conflict, and regional divergence. What it refuses is the flattening move by which any occurrence of violence or unfreedom automatically cancels deeper differences in personhood coding and the scalability of disposability.

An adjacent objection questions the use of psychological language beyond individual clinics. Here again, a distinction becomes decisive. The framework does not diagnose civilizations as though they were patients. Nor does it infer invisible essence from isolated acts. It works with recurrent, socially consequential, cross-contextual patterns that remain legible in institutions, rhetoric, leadership styles, and repeated forms of relation. This resembles historical sociology and political psychology more than bedside diagnosis. A state campaign that repeatedly humiliates beyond need, a leadership class that normalizes manipulative inversion, an institution that rewards dissociation and shields entitlement, or a propaganda system that steadily strips targets of recognized personhood all present enough patterned evidence for comparative inference. Clinical absolutism would only blind the analysis to the public worlds in which harm is made durable.

A more serious pressure point concerns circularity. One could object that weak failsafes are simply inferred from the very domination they are meant to explain. That danger is real unless the concept receives

independent content. The present framework avoids the circle by locating failsafes in observable structures that need not be read backward from imperial outcome alone: kin obligations that constrain rank, personhood norms that limit alienability, shame systems that punish gratuitous cruelty, ritual or legal restrictions on disposal, elite accountability mechanisms, and ordinary vocabularies that continue to treat the injured as claim-bearing persons. Once such indicators are specified, restraint can be discussed independently of the final scale of domination, even though the two remain historically related. [9]–[12]

Another pressure point concerns explanatory reach. The model travels across empire, colonial rule, organizational life, propaganda, and oppression within dominated populations. Breadth can strengthen a theory, yet it can also create the impression that one vocabulary has been stretched too widely. The answer lies in discipline of use. The framework does not claim to explain every historical episode in full. It offers a grammar for a recurring family of problems: how entitlement, adaptive dark strategies, weak restraint, personhood narrowing, and moral inversion interact to make domination more scalable. Cases where those mechanisms do little work will require other explanatory tools. Cases where they converge sharply will reward the framework more fully. Such limits preserve force rather than diminish it.

The concept of diabolical entitlement requires especially careful handling. Its usefulness lies in marking repeated excess beyond proportionate strategic need. Its danger lies in indiscriminate inflation. A single atrocity, however severe, does not suffice. Nor does ordinary strategic brutality. The category belongs where violent escalation persists across time

despite available alternatives, where humiliation or destruction continues at disproportionate cost, and where the actor's conduct repeatedly suggests that harm itself has become wrapped into perceived right. Used sparingly, the term sharpens analysis. Used carelessly, it collapses back into moral theater. The framework therefore binds the concept to pattern, persistence, functional excess, and repeated neutralization of inhibition.

A further objection questions whether the emphasis on language and naming grants discourse too much power. Material factors, coercive capacity, military force, and economic interest remain central in any serious account of domination. Yet language does not compete with these forces from the outside. It arranges their moral passage. It lowers friction, reallocates sympathy, stabilizes categories, and teaches populations how to perceive both actor and target. When propaganda, euphemism, bureaucratic terminology, irony, or expert neutrality repeatedly strip injury of its weight, discourse becomes one of the practical conditions under which coercive systems endure. The framework therefore treats language neither as ornamental nor as omnipotent. It enters as part of the infrastructure of authorization. [21]–[25]

One final pressure point concerns agency. Comparative models can drift toward structural fatalism if they assign too much power to ecology, institutions, or reward systems. The present argument resists that drift. Social fields select, but they do not mechanically determine. Dominated populations generate resisters alongside brokers. Institutions recruit manipulators, yet they also encounter conscience, refusal, sabotage, memory, and protective solidarity. The framework gains precisely because it

keeps both pressure and response in view. Pathological formations become adaptive under some conditions; they never exhaust the human range available under those same conditions. This remains crucial both analytically and politically, since later work in the series depends on understanding not only how domination scales but also how it can fail.

11. Scope, Method, and Grounds for Further Inquiry

The present paper operates as a theoretical foundation rather than as a single-case historical monograph or a psychometric study. Its method combines conceptual clarification, comparative historical reasoning, and interdisciplinary assembly. The central question does not concern whether one can discover a hidden essence inside peoples, civilizations, or actors. It concerns whether patterned differences in restraint, personhood coding, reward structure, and entitlement illuminate why some historical systems move more readily toward scalable domination and dehumanization than others. The answer advanced here proceeds through layered comparison rather than through universal law.

Several scope decisions follow from that orientation. The first concerns scale. The paper moves across populations, institutions, elites, media systems, and dominated communities. Such movement does not imply that these levels collapse into one another. Their distinction remains essential. Pathological formations operate through persons and groups; institutions reward or contain them; media name and

launder them; larger historical ecologies alter their relative payoff. Multi-level interaction therefore enters the model by necessity. Restricting the analysis to one level would conceal the feedback loops through which domination acquires durability.

The second concerns evidence. The paper relies on bodies of literature and selected anchor cases rather than exhaustive archival reconstruction for every claim. That choice fits the paper's function in the broader project. Conceptual vocabulary must first be assembled with enough clarity that later applications can proceed without rebuilding the mechanism each time. Hence the present text privileges definitional precision, structured comparison, and careful placement of supporting literatures. Later papers can then test, illustrate, and sharpen particular portions of the model in denser empirical settings: empire, institutional violence, colonial psychology, racial harassment, media inversion, or compromised intermediary classes.

The third concerns falsifiability. A framework of this kind needs more than rhetorical persuasiveness. Several observations would count against it or force substantial revision. The model would weaken if markedly different personhood structures produced no meaningful difference in the boundaries of legitimate domination. It would weaken if systems with distinct reward ecologies showed no patterned divergence in which formations rise, which get shamed, and which get institutionally protected. It would weaken if oppression failed to reorganize internal selection and compromise susceptibility inside dominated populations. It would weaken if dehumanizing language proved largely unrelated to reduced inhibition, escalatory policy, or public tolerance of severe asymmetry. These conditions matter

because they prevent the framework from dissolving into a catch-all moral theory. Its claims remain historical and comparative and therefore answerable to disconfirming patterns.

A fourth scope decision concerns chronology. The framework reaches across long durations and therefore must avoid presentist simplification. Modern categories cannot simply be projected backward unchanged. Yet patterned questions about personhood, reciprocity, entitlement, shame, incorporation, and asymmetry do travel historically, provided they are handled with care. The task lies not in forcing identical vocabulary onto every era, but in identifying functional equivalents and historically specific expressions. A ritual code that limits disposability and a legal doctrine that protects claim-bearing status do not look the same, yet both may operate as restraints. Conversely, an imperial theology of chosenness and a bureaucratic racial classification regime differ in form while converging in the work they do for entitlement. Historical variation therefore refines the framework rather than undermining it.

The final methodological point concerns order. Because this paper lays groundwork for a larger body of research, it privileges generative distinctions over exhaustive closure. The central gains lie in the separation of levels, the relocation of dark traits to the sphere of adaptive strategy, the elevation of entitlement as the mediating orientation, the articulation of social failsafes as the comparative hinge, and the formal introduction of diabolical entitlement as a limit concept for repeated destructive excess. These gains already alter the field into which later analyses will enter. Work on the occult laundering of violence can now plug directly into moral inversion and prestige language [8], [11], [13]. Work

on empire can plug into scalable entitlement and personhood narrowing. Work on colonized subjectivities can extend the account of internal reorganization, damaged trust, and long-run compromise susceptibility. In that sense, the method here serves not only explanation but architecture.

Several lines of further inquiry follow immediately. Comparative studies of personhood boundaries across African, European, and colonial settings would deepen the model's empirical precision. Research on leadership selection under different moral ecologies could test how far entitlement predicts rise to power more effectively than aggression alone [13]–[17]. Analyses of bureaucratic euphemism, media framing, and ironic trivialization could sharpen the account of moral laundering. Work on oppressed populations and intermediary classes could further map how selective incentives interact with patterned vulnerability, pride, grievance, and recognition hunger. Each avenue would strengthen the framework by forcing its concepts through denser evidence and by clarifying where its explanatory power peaks or reaches its limits.

The paper therefore concludes its methodological labor with a position that remains intentionally demanding. Human populations carry wide behavioral potential. Historical systems do not create that potential from nothing. They calibrate its cost, its legitimacy, its reward, and its scale. Some preserve thicker brakes against entitlement and personhood erosion. Others discover ways to neutralize those brakes through distance, classification, prestige, fear, and language [21]–[25]. Once that neutralization hardens into routine, domination no longer appears exceptional.

It becomes common sense, then procedure, then order. A theory capable of tracing that movement offers more than conceptual refinement. It opens a disciplined path for studying how destructive formations travel from persons to institutions, from institutions to civilizations, and from civilizations back into the damaged interior worlds of those compelled to survive beneath them.

Conclusion

The framework developed here separates several levels that usually remain entangled: pathological formations, adaptive strategies, selection environments, and outcomes. That separation changes the analysis of domination. Violence, hierarchy, and servitude no longer function as self-explanatory categories. They become surface forms whose meaning depends on personhood coding, reciprocity, obligation, moral distance, and the social regulation of entitlement. The core comparative question then concerns restraint rather than moral essence: which historical fields keep destructive configurations costly, and which progressively convert them into viable, protected, and normalized forms of order.

Entitlement emerges as the decisive mediating orientation. It explains why asymmetry can appear rightful, why reciprocity can become optional, and why the suffering of others can be recoded as necessary, deserved, or administratively negligible. Dark traits fit more coherently at the level of adaptive strategy than at the level of final explanation. They supply recurrent instruments—grandiosity, manipulation, coldness, selective charm, coercive cruelty—through which broader

pathological formations operate once the surrounding field rewards them.

Social failsafes supply the comparative hinge. Kinship obligations, shame systems, ritual constraints, personhood boundaries, and institutional checks do not eliminate destructive potential, but they alter its cost, legitimacy, and scale. Their erosion helps explain why some historical systems move more readily toward hereditary exclusion, dehumanization, and durable asymmetry. Their persistence helps explain why severe pressure does not everywhere produce the same outcome. Movement, ecological stress, conflict, and expansion recur widely across history. Their consequences diverge because they pass through different moral worlds, different personhood thresholds, and different structures of accountability.

Oppression and language complete the mechanism. Domination deepens when external power reorganizes internal reward structures, elevates compromise-susceptible actors, and lowers the cost of brokerage, mimicry, and selective cruelty. It deepens further when naming protects the process by translating manipulation into strategy, cruelty into discipline, and degradation into order. At that point harm no longer appears as deviation. It appears as common sense, procedure, or necessity. Diabolical entitlement marks the outer edge of that development, where repeated destructive excess persists beyond proportionate strategic utility and reveals a deeper neutralization or inversion of ordinary restraints.

The broader payoff of the article is architectural. It furnishes a stable grammar for later analyses of empire, institutional harm, racial dehumanization, moral

inversion, symbolic abuse, and the damaged internal worlds produced by long domination. Its central proposition remains narrow and demanding. Later studies can deepen this architecture through more explicit engagement with African and Black traditions of analysis, especially on civilizational structure, colonial injury, and symbolic domination.

Human dark potential does not vary most sharply by essence. It varies by regulation. Historical systems diverge above all in the strength, distribution, and durability of the restraints that keep entitlement from hardening into common sense, durable rule, and scalable harm.

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