

Did British Colonialism Promote Democracy? Divergent Inheritances and Diminishing Legacies

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Abstract

Although many scholars have argued that British colonial rule promoted post-independence democracy, there has been considerable debate over the robustness of this result and its causes. We provide novel evidence that the relationship follows a strong temporal pattern. Former British colonies were considerably more democratic than other countries immediately following independence, but subsequent convergence in democracy levels has largely eliminated these differences in the post-Cold War period. Pre-colonial traits, other colonial influences, and post-colonial factors cannot account for this pattern. Departing from conventional political science theories, we argue for the importance of divergent policy approaches to decolonization by European powers. Britain more consistently treated democratic elections as a prerequisite for gaining independence, leading to higher initial levels of democracy. However, in many British colonies these policies did not reflect differences in social or institutional support for democracy, leading to mean reversion and convergence over time.

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1 Introduction

How did colonial rule affect post-independence political outcomes? Amidst the enormous social science and historical literatures on colonialism, scholars have devoted considerable attention to assessing the relationship between British colonialism and democracy.¹ Existing research is inconclusive. Traditionally, scholars have expounded the pro-democratic legacies of British governance because it promoted the rule of law and better acquainted subjects with the norms of democratic procedures (Emerson 1960; Weiner 1987; Ferguson 2012), and scholars routinely control for a British colonial rule dummy in cross-national democracy regressions. However, statistical findings are varied: some find strong evidence for a Britain effect (Bernhard et al. 2004; Olsson 2009), whereas others do not (Barro 1999; Przeworski et al. 2000; Miller 2015). Furthermore, recent political science research on colonialism and democracy has mainly looked “beyond national colonial legacies” (Owolabi 2014) by instead focusing on alternative historical legacies such as Protestant missionaries, forced migration, and European settlers—sometimes explicitly rejecting the importance of British colonialism. Research on economic development features a similar debate, with support for the importance of colonizer identity (La Porta et al. 1998; Grier 1999; Fails and Kriekhaus 2010; Lee and Schultz 2012) countered by arguments that other aspects of colonial rule were more important (Acemoglu et al. 2001; Kohli 2004; Engerman and Sokoloff 2011).

This paper provides new evidence and theory to establish and explain specific mixed legacies of British colonialism on democracy. The Britain effect cannot be convincingly explained without examining change over time. We document a novel pattern: although British colonial rule tended to bequeath a positive democratic inheritance at independence, this legacy diminished afterwards. In countries’ first full year of independence, the average difference in democracy levels exceeds 30% of the range of the *polity2* scale. In fact, nearly all of the democratic variation among post-colonial nations during the “second wave” of democracy can be explained by British colonialism—because essentially all non-British colonies were non-democratic at independence. However, there is no discernible difference in democracy levels between ex-British and non-former British colonies since 1991.

We first perform numerous statistical tests to demonstrate the existence and robustness of this previously unnoticed pattern. Cross-sectional models estimate a moderately large positive association between British

¹Lindberg and Smith (2014) and de Juan and Pierskalla (2017) have recently reviewed this vast literature.

rule and democracy among all post-independence years for post-1945 decolonization cases. The correlation is quite large at independence and robustly statistically significant, and only a large amount of bias from unobserved covariates could explain away the estimated effect. However, the coefficient estimate is considerably smaller and not significant in a post-1991 sample. These findings are similar when adding a standard set of democracy covariates, when changing democracy measures, and when expanding the sample to include all non-European countries using data since 1800. We also show that the effect estimates at independence remain strong when controlling for compelling alternative historical explanations studied in recent research, contrary to arguments that these factors can explain away the Britain effect.

The second part of the paper argues that cross-imperial differences in policy during the post-1945 decolonization era provide a compelling explanation for the time-varying pattern. Focusing on decolonization builds off a smaller strand of the existing historical and political science literatures (Smith 1978; Kahler 1984; Spruyt 2005; Pepinsky 2015) and contrasts with existing prominent political science theories focused on long-term cultural or institutional factors—which cannot explain change over time. Britain was more willing to allow gradual transition to colonial rule than were other major colonial powers, and one more tailored to local circumstances. Consequently, Britain promoted more competitive elections prior to granting independence, and we show that British colonies would not have exhibited their democratic advantage at independence had they counterfactually gained independence even several years before they factually did. Britain also avoided the successful anti-colonial revolutions that ended European rule in many other colonies. This factor correlates with democracy levels at independence, as do mechanisms that help to explain Britain’s post-1945 decolonization strategy relative to other European powers: democracy level of the metropole and strength of the colonial lobby.

However, the democratic gap at independence emerged from contingent political arrangements rather than from British-ruled territories having higher underlying societal demand for democracy. Evidence from time series regressions demonstrate patterns of both (1) democratic reversals shortly after independence in ex-British colonies and (2) greater democratic gains by non-former British colonies several decades after independence. Whereas long-term cultural and institutional accounts of British colonialism do not anticipate either pattern, they are consistent with our argument that mean reversion gradually eroded short-term decolonization effects. We also show the decolonization mechanisms that correlate with democracy levels at independence do not correlate with post-1991 democracy levels.

The most direct contribution of the paper is to advance debates about British colonialism and democracy. Simply put, the British democratic legacy cannot be understood without examining changes in outcomes over time. Expounding the time-varying pattern is crucial not only for reconciling mixed existing statistical findings, but also for assessing theoretical explanations for the Britain effect—yielding our focus on decolonization-era effects rather than on the traditional explanations from British colonialism studies regarding longer-term cultural and institutional effects. Additionally, although our supplemental results that examine heterogeneity within the British empire complement some accounts by showing evidence that directly ruled British colonies may have enjoyed more durable democratic legacies (Lange 2004; Olsson 2009; Owolabi 2015), we also show that even indirectly ruled British colonies governed for relatively short periods of time enjoyed a democratic advantage at independence. Our decolonization-based explanation accounts for these important democratic similarities that existed across much of the British empire. Overall, rather than extolling or condemning British rule, our findings support a more nuanced interpretation: it facilitated short-term democratic gains relative to other European empires, but in general British rule failed to engender conditions for consolidating democracy.

More broadly, the argument and findings place British colonial legacies back to the center of debates about colonialism and democracy, contrary to recent emphasis in the literature. Additionally, these findings are relevant not only for debates about colonial legacies, but also for more recent debates about external nation-building and democracy promotion, upon which the conclusion elaborates.

2 Existing Research on Colonial Origins of Democracy

Existing research has presented three main types of arguments relating British colonialism and democracy. First, Britain fostered post-colonial democracy by altering the political institutions and/or culture of its territories in ways that increased demand for democracy. A second, closely related perspective is that the Britain effect is conditional on the type of colonial rule it practiced and should only appear in certain types of British colonies. A final school argues against any positive Britain effect, and instead that cross-empire differences can be explained by other colonial-era factors or by pre-colonial differences between empires. Although these three groups of arguments create different implications for the Britain-democracy relationship, none can explain the time-varying pattern that we document: British colonies were systematically more democratic at independence but this effect diminished over time.

2.1 Culture and Institutions

Scholars have proposed numerous mechanisms to link British colonial rule to stronger post-colonial democracy, focusing primarily on cultural and institutional explanations. Weiner's (1987) frequently cited contribution posits two main mechanisms through which Britain promoted "tutelary democracy" (18). First, Britain promoted bureaucratic structures that maintained order through the rule of law rather than through arbitrary authority. Because these administrative institutions gradually become indigenous, colonial subjects gained experience with law-based governance (see also Narizny 2012, 362; Abernethy 2000, 406; and Treisman 2000, 418-427). Second, Britain provided a limited system of representation and elections that enabled political elites to learn to use and to internalize the norms of democratic procedures (see also Lipset et al. 1993, 168; Diamond, 1998, 8; and Abernethy 2000, 367). Although France also introduced elections in many of its African colonies prior to independence, Britain tended to grant greater responsibilities to its elected legislative organs, whereas France practiced a more centralized style of rule (Emerson 1960, 232). These arguments are closely related to arguments about other beneficial British institutional legacies: common law (La Porta et al. 1998) and parliamentary institutions with strong legislative constraints on the executive (Abernethy 2000, 367). Another closely related argument emphasizes the role of human capital (Glaeser et al. 2004)—specifically, higher education levels in former British colonies (Diamond 1998, 9)—in shaping economic and political outcomes.

A common theme among these cultural and institutional arguments is that the positive British effect should be long term. That is, if superior culture or institutions enhanced demand for democracy at independence, then these same factors should promote subsequent democratic stability. These theories therefore face difficulties accounting for change over time—especially because, as shown below, British colonies tended to experience sharp democratic reversals after independence.

2.2 Heterogeneity Within the British Empire

Many have qualified these pro-Britain arguments by instead positing that only certain British colonies received beneficial inheritances. These arguments concern *how* Britain governed its various territories, in particular, how directly it ruled them. One proxy for directness of rule is length of British colonial rule in a territory. Huntington (1984, 206) asserts that British colonial rule should only have promoted democracy

in countries it ruled for a long period, whereas the democratic record of former British colonies in Africa, “where British rule dates only from the late nineteenth century, is not all that different from that of the former African colonies of other European powers.” Olsson (2009) provides statistical evidence that the length of British colonial rule mattered. Mahoney (2010), though not explicitly discussing democracy, emphasizes the intensity of colonial rule and its interaction with colonizer origin.

Lange (2004, 2009) statistically examines heterogeneity within the British empire by measuring the directness of British rule with the percentage of court cases in the 1950s that were heard in customary rather than British colonial courts. More customary court cases correspond to less direct rule. Among a sample of ex-British colonies, he demonstrates a positive relationship between direct rule and post-colonial democracy (2004, 915). An even more extreme type of British indirect rule occurred in its Middle Eastern colonies, which were acquired as Mandate territories after World War I and/or ruled indirectly through monarchs. There is also evidence that Britain ruled more directly in its forced settlement colonies, in particular by granting metropolitan legal rights to colonial subjects prior to World War II (Owolabi 2015). This relates to Mamdani’s (1996) hypothesis that two-tiered colonial legal systems, prevalent in African colonies, contributed to subsequent political dysfunction.

These arguments differ from unconditional pro-Britain positions by implying that British rule should be associated with democracy in areas where it was especially intrusive (such as the settler and plantation colonies), but not in other areas (such as African and Middle Eastern colonies). However, similar to cultural and institutional arguments, these theories do not attempt to explain change over time. They anticipate that British colonies ruled directly and/or for long periods should be stable democracies since independence, whereas indirectly ruled countries should not be democratic at independence or afterwards.

2.3 Alternative Historical Explanations

Other recent work on historical causes of democracy has argued that the identity of the colonizer is relatively unimportant. This research instead posits that alternative aspects of the colonial or pre-colonial era that correlate with colonizer identity offer greater explanatory power.

Two recent contributions critique the British colonialism-democracy thesis by arguing that cross-empire Protestant missionary influence accounts for any beneficial aspects of British colonial rule: “Some scholars

suggest that British colonialism fostered democracy ... but this may be because [Protestant missionaries] had greater influence in British colonies” (Woodberry 2012, 254). Although British colonies tended to have higher education levels, stronger civil societies, and more electoral participation prior to independence, Woodberry claims these are entirely accounted for by the larger number of Protestant missionaries in British colonies (255). Lankina and Getachew (2012, 466-7) similarly argue: “With respect to the societal underpinnings for democratic development, the record of British colonialism is not very laudable. ... Our call to isolate the impact of missionary activity from that of colonial authority rests on the role of Christian missions in the promotion of education.” Empirically, Woodberry (2012) demonstrates that the British colonialism dummy becomes statistically insignificant and substantively small when controlling for colonial-era Protestant missionaries using a large sample of non-European countries with democracy level averaged between 1950 and 1994. This resembles Hadenius’ (1992, 133) earlier finding that controlling for Protestant population share explains away the Britain effect.

Hariri (2012) offers a different account that links the pre-colonial and colonial eras, providing evidence that (1) territories with a long history of statehood have experienced lower levels of post-Cold War democracy and (2) a proxy for European settler influence positively correlates with democracy. Although Hariri does not focus on the Britain-democracy thesis, the general thrust of Hariri’s (2012) framework resembles Woodberry (2012) and Lankina and Getachew (2012): specific colonial-era actors caused democracy rather than any inherent features of different empires. Similarly, pre-colonial characteristics of territories, i.e., selection effects, impact prospects for the directness of rule and for democracy promotion rather than the identity of the colonizer. Acemoglu et al.’s (2001) related contribution about colonial-era European settlers explicitly draws this conclusion: “it appears that British colonies are found to perform substantially better in other studies in large part because Britain colonized places where [large-scale European] settlements were possible, and this made British colonies inherit better institutions” (1388).

Like other existing arguments about Britain and democracy, these alternative historical explanations do not anticipate changes in the efficacy of British colonialism over time. They posit that after controlling for the causally important historical factors—and therefore addressing selection effects—British rule should not correlate with democracy either at independence or anytime afterwards.

3 Empirical Setup

3.1 Samples

A key feature of the current study is to examine multiple time periods. The core models examine correlations among all post-independence years, the first full year of independence,² and only post-1991 years. The latter period corresponds with the end of the Cold War, which is theoretically relevant for reasons discussed in the mechanism sections below. However, the appendix also shows the results are similar using different definitions of “early” and “late” periods since independence (Appendix Table A.8). The appendix also presents models that interact British colonialism with years since independence and calendar years (Appendix Table A.9). Using disaggregated time periods provides an important difference between our study and other recent colonialism-democracy articles that only analyze average outcomes over long or potentially unrepresentative time periods. For example, Woodberry (2012) only examines average democracy levels between 1950 and 1994 and Hariri (2012) only analyzes average democracy levels between 1991 and 2007. Studying multiple periods enables distinguishing short-term from long-term effects, which is crucial for theory assessment.

We also examine two different country samples among countries with Polity IV data (Marshall and Gurr 2014).³ First, former colonies that gained independence from a Western European country between World War II and 1980. This corresponds with the second major wave of Western European decolonization (Abernethy 2000; Olsson 2009). Empirically, almost every British colony (besides its four historically exceptional New World offshoots) gained independence during this period.⁴ It is already well-established that aspects of British colonialism positively affected democracy in the neo-Britains, and it is informative to assess whether the British legacy extends beyond these four.⁵ Furthermore, to the extent that post-World War II decolonization coincided with more liberal democratic impulses across all Western European colonizers than decolonization from authoritarian Spain in the early 19th century—which accounted for most non-British

²Polity IV measures its variables in December 31 of the given year, and only provides post-independence data.

³Polity IV includes all countries with a population of at least 500,000 in 2015.

⁴The others are South Africa, Egypt, and Iraq.

⁵Krieckhaus and Fails (2010) show that Acemoglu et al.’s (2001) findings about European settlers and economic development are highly contingent on the neo-Britains.

independence cases prior to 1945—it is useful to compare the bulk of the British empire only to other post-World War II independence cases. This sample contains 73 countries listed in Appendix Table A.1.

Second, to demonstrate that the temporally contingent Britain effect does not depend upon this particular sample, we re-run the main specifications using a sample of all non-European countries in Polity IV using data since 1800, including never-colonized countries. This sample contains 128 countries. The results for all non-European countries show that including the bulk of the former Spanish empire and the neo-Britains do not substantively change the findings for British colonialism, although comparing results from the two samples carries important implications for other prominent colonialism-democracy hypotheses.

3.2 Data

Colonizer identity. The core results use a broad definition of British colonies, including territories over which Britain gained control as League of Nations mandates after World War I (e.g., Tanganyika/Tanzania, Iraq) and exerted minimal internal control (e.g., Kuwait). Table A.1 lists every British colony in the post-1945 sample. This is somewhat broader than Lange’s (2009) definition of British colonies because he does not include any of Britain’s Middle Eastern colonies.⁶ We prefer the broader concept to ensure that our findings are not driven by selection effects regarding how intensely and for how long Britain decided to rule a territory after gaining nominal control. However, Table A.16 shows that the results are similar among non-Middle Eastern countries, and Table A.15 disaggregates British colonies in various ways according to the directness of rule.

Democracy. We use the standard *polity2* variable from the Polity IV dataset (Marshall and Gurr 2014) to measure democracy. In addition to wide usage in the literature, this dataset is also advantageous because of its broad temporal coverage: 1800 to the present. The appendix provides robustness checks using Cheibub et al.’s (2013) update of Przeworski et al.’s (2000) binary democracy variable, which has coverage starting in 1946, and Coppedge et al.’s (2016) polyarchy measure from the V-Dem dataset (coverage starts in 1900). Separately, although coding democracy scores at independence may seem to be an error-prone process,

⁶Middle Eastern countries provide the only difference between our British colonialism variable and his. Like Lange, we do not code as British colonies modern-day countries that merged a smaller British colony with a larger non-British colony (Cameroon, Somalia, Yemen).

there do not appear to be strong concerns about measurement error in *polity2* at independence relative to other times and places. The Polity coders do not flag any cases of coding uncertainty in the year after independence, compared to 33 cases in later years of our sample.

Finally, although it is standard in the literature to use aggregated democracy measures, the appendix also presents robustness checks based on various subindices of democracy drawn from the Polity IV and V-Dem datasets to assess whether British rule only influenced certain aspects of democracy.

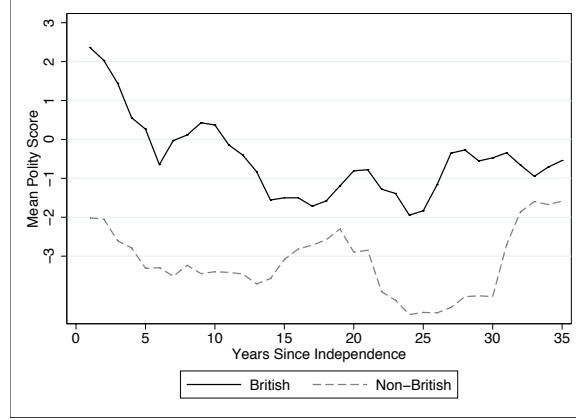
Table A.2 details the various covariates used below. Table A.3 provides summary statistics for each variable.

4 Statistical Evidence for a Time-Varying British Legacy

The tabulated patterns for British and non-British ex-colonies are striking. Over half of British ex-colonies were democratic (*polity2* score of at least 6) at independence, compared to only one non-British colony (Appendix Table A.4 provides details). Therefore, nearly all of the democratic variation among post-colonial nations during the “second wave” of democracy can be explained by British colonialism—because essentially all non-British colonies were non-democratic at independence. However, since 1991, only 23% of ex-British colonies have had an average *polity2* score of at least 6, compared to 16% of non-British colonies. Figure 1 illustrates these two key cross-sectional patterns in the data by plotting average *polity2* score for ex-British and non-former British colonies against years since each country gained independence, among post-1945 decolonization cases. It contains the first 35 years of independence because this is the longest time period that enables a constant sample of countries. First, ex-British colonies were strikingly more democratic on average at independence than other ex-colonies. Second, this gap narrowed considerably over time. Because many countries in the sample gained independence in the early 1960s, the period of 30-to-35 years after independence roughly corresponds to the peak of the “Third Wave” in the mid-1990s.

This section statistically establishes the core cross-sectional patterns—robustly strong correlation at independence and weak post-1991 correlation—before subsequent sections explain *why* British colonies were advantaged at independence followed by convergence over time. The cross-sectional findings are similar when adding a standard set of democracy covariates, when changing democracy measures, when expanding the sample to include all non-European countries using data since 1800, and when controlling for compelling

Figure 1: Ex-British Colonies Versus Other Countries, by Years Since Independence



Notes: The vertical axis shows the average *polity2* score for ex-British colonies and for other countries in the post-1945 decolonization sample, averaged across the number of years since a particular country achieved independence.

alternative explanations studied in previous research. We also examine heterogeneity among British colonies and show that the temporal pattern is strongest among indirectly ruled colonies. The finding that indirectly ruled British colonies enjoyed systematic democratic advantages at independence is somewhat remarkable when compared to contrary arguments from the literature. And although directly ruled British colonies also experienced convergence, there is suggestive evidence that their democratic advantage at independence persisted to some extent.

We present results from pooled OLS models that use country-year as the unit of observation and cluster standard errors by country. The basic model estimated in Table 1 is:

$$polity2_{it} = \alpha + \delta BritishColony_i + \beta X_{it} + \epsilon_{it}, \quad (1)$$

where $polity2_{it}$ is the *polity2* score for country i in year t , δ is the main parameter of interest, and X_{it} is a vector of covariates that differs across specifications.

4.1 Core Results

Table 1, Panel A examines countries that gained independence after 1945 from a Western European country, and Panel B uses the expanded sample since 1800 of all non-European countries with *polity2* data. Column 1 in both panels pools all sample years. It recovers the common finding in the existing large-N literature:

Table 1: Core Results

Panel A. Post-1945 independence cases. DV: <i>polity2</i> score						
	All post-indep. years, 1945-		First yr. indep.		Post-1991	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
British colony	3.521*** (1.151)	2.482** (1.038)	6.290*** (1.439)	6.912*** (1.574)	1.253 (1.279)	0.0463 (1.331)
Ethnic frac.		-2.630 (2.298)		-0.987 (2.525)		-0.596 (3.214)
Muslim %		-0.0325** (0.0131)		-0.0309 (0.0186)		-0.0341** (0.0153)
ln(GDP/cap)		1.025 (0.657)		0.424 (1.026)		0.569 (0.868)
ln(Pop.)		0.669* (0.388)		0.541 (0.478)		0.372 (0.456)
ln(Oil & gas/capita)		-0.460* (0.235)		-0.753* (0.397)		-0.549* (0.279)
Country-years	3,825	3,681	73	69	1,734	1,663
R-squared	0.071	0.169	0.218	0.376	0.011	0.145
Panel B. All non-European countries. DV: <i>polity2</i> score						
	All post-indep. years, 1800-		First yr. indep.		Post-1991	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
British colony	4.512*** (1.224)	4.682*** (1.008)	6.346*** (1.178)	6.360*** (1.106)	0.422 (1.165)	0.250 (0.967)
Muslim %		-0.0548*** (0.00785)		-0.0401*** (0.0129)		-0.0769*** (0.0118)
Ethnic frac.		-1.724 (1.444)		-0.203 (1.893)		-1.942 (1.980)
Country-years	11,088	11,071	129	127	3,147	3,130
R-squared	0.087	0.199	0.226	0.302	0.001	0.222

Notes: Table 1 summarizes a series of OLS regressions by presenting coefficient estimates, and country-clustered robust standard error estimates in parentheses. *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

former British colonies are in general more democratic than other countries. Column 2 demonstrates that this relationship remains even when controlling for a set of five standard democracy covariates in Panel A: logged annual GDP per capita, logged annual population, logged annual oil and gas production per capita, Muslim percentage of the population in 1980, and ethnic fractionalization.⁷

Although Columns 1 and 2 of Table 1 provide evidence for a positive British colonialism effect, the estimated magnitude of the coefficients is relatively small. The three-point estimated effect in Panel A corresponds to the move from Saudi Arabia to slightly more liberal Kuwait in 2012, or from Guyana to India. Furthermore,

⁷Three of the 73 countries in the core sample are missing GDP per capita data in all years (four at independence), which accounts for the discrepancy in sample size between the specifications that include these covariates versus those that do not. Because of missing data on the three time-varying covariates in the 19th century, the Panel B regressions with controls only include ethnic fractionalization and Muslims (two countries are missing data on these variables in the bigger sample).

as shown below, the coefficient estimate in the full temporal sample is not robustly statistically significant using every democracy measure (Table A.6, Panel B, Column 2) nor across all types of British colonies (Tables A.15 and A.16). The estimated effect in Panel B is somewhat larger, although this arises primarily from including four historically exceptional neo-Britains.

The remainder of Table 1 disaggregates time periods. Columns 3 and 4 present results for each country's first full year of independence.⁸ The Britain coefficient estimate in Panel A is almost twice the size of the corresponding specification for the full temporal sample (Column 3), and the difference is even larger once standard covariates (Column 4) or region or year fixed effects (Table A.5) are included. The estimated effect is remarkably large, at more than six on the standard 20-point *polity2* scale and rising above seven in the year fixed effects model. For comparison, Sweden had a *polity2* score only seven points larger than Gabon's in 2012. The coefficient estimates are also large in Panel B.

One hint that the findings at independence are unlikely to be entirely driven by unobserved factors is that the coefficient estimate *increases* when adding covariates in both Panels A and B. Therefore, the sign of the bias induced by omitting unobservables must (1) go in the opposite direction as the bias induced by omitting the observable factors in Table 1 and (2) be very large in magnitude in order to explain away the finding. Considering the large magnitude of the coefficient estimate and insensitivity to observables, even without being able to exploit natural experimental variation it appears quite unlikely that selection effects can explain away the positive British colonial rule effect at independence—although the robustness checks below further examine this possibility.

However, the findings are quite different when instead examining the period since 1991. The coefficient estimates in Columns 5 and 6 of Table 1 are substantively small in estimated effect and never statistically significant. Therefore, lingering concerns that omitted variable bias drives the results at independence must additionally address the diminished coefficient estimates in the post-Cold War era by identifying factors that covary with British colonialism and a short-term *but not* long-term positive democracy effect.

⁸Never-colonized countries' "year of independence" in our data is their first year with Polity IV data. The United States' "year of independence" in our dataset is 1800 because Polity IV does not have data for 1783.

4.2 Robustness Checks for Core Results

Three sets of robustness checks reinforce these findings: adding year or region fixed effects, altering the dependent variable, and changing the different cutoff dates. The latter includes interacting British colonialism with years since independence.

First, Appendix Table A.5 alters the set of covariates and demonstrates similar results when controlling for either region or year fixed effects to account for unobserved heterogeneity in the cultural characteristics of specific regions or in the international climate toward democracy at different times.

Second, the results are similar across different dependent variable measures. Appendix Table A.6 considers both Cheibub’s (2013) update of Przeworski et al.’s (2000) binary democracy variable and V-Dem’s polycharchy measure, rather than *polity2*. Appendix Table A.7 shows that the findings are mostly similar for different subcomponents of democracy drawn from Polity IV and V-Dem.

Third, the chosen date cutoffs do not seem to affect the findings, either. Appendix Table A.8 demonstrates that the coefficient estimates from Columns 3 and 4 of Table 1 are similar when analyzing average *polity2* score over each country’s first six years of independence, instead of just the first year. We address below why the coefficient estimates are somewhat smaller when expanding the initial post-independence period to six years. Additionally, Appendix Table A.8 show the findings from Columns 5 and 6 of Table 1 are mostly unchanged when defining “recent” years as either 35 years after independence (the same end year used in Figure 1) or only 2012, rather than the post-1991 period.⁹ Finally, rather than truncating the sample by time period, Appendix Table A.9 interacts British colonialism with either year or years since independence. It shows that the Britain coefficient estimates declines significantly over time.

4.3 Selecting Better Colonies?

Many studies have proposed colonial or pre-colonial factors other than British colonization as predictors of democracy. Appendix Tables A.10 through A.14 evaluate prominent alternative historical accounts. These tables generate two main takeaways. First, alternative historical accounts do not explain away the Britain

⁹The Britain coefficient is statistically significant at 10% in one of the specifications for 35 years after independence in the full sample, which the appendix discusses.

effect even though, as discussed below, many of them likely introduce post-treatment bias into the regression estimates. The Britain coefficient remains large and statistically significant in every regression in the first year of independence (Columns 3 and 4 of each panel), and the coefficient estimates from the whole-sample regressions are also minimally impacted (Columns 1 and 2). Second, the disaggregated time periods and samples we present suggest important qualifications to arguments about other colonial legacies. These findings mitigate concerns that Britain—which, as the world’s leading naval power in the 19th century, was well-positioned to annex the most economically and strategically desirable colonies—simply colonized places that were inclined to become more democratic regardless of which European power colonized them.

Panel A of Tables [A.10](#) and [A.11](#) assesses the European settlers thesis—premised on the idea that settlers transplanted pro-democratic institutions—which does not explain away the temporally contingent Britain effect and itself receives circumscribed support. When examining post-1945 decolonization cases, the European settler coefficient is consistently small in magnitude and never statistically significant. Among all non-European countries, the settlers thesis receives support in all years and in post-1991 years but not at independence. Therefore, European settlers may explain some variation in post-colonial democracy, but these differences did not exist at independence. In addition, the null results in Panel A suggest that pro-settler findings are driven entirely by comparing early independence cases in the New World to late-decolonizing Old World countries—a concerning basis for counterfactual comparison because many differences besides European settlers distinguish these areas of the world.

The thesis that areas with longer histories of statehood above the local level should be less democratic, evaluated in Panel B of Tables [A.10](#) and [A.11](#), receives even weaker support. Overall, the results are similar to those for European settlers: no support in the post-1945 decolonization sample; and, among all non-European countries, some support in all years and post-1991 (although not when including covariates), but not at independence. Every specification for the first year of independence has a positive sign, i.e., opposite from theoretical prediction. Appendix Table [A.12](#) demonstrates similar results when controlling for related pre-colonial or early colonial factors: European settler mortality rates (Acemoglu et al. 2001), historical population density (Acemoglu et al. 2002), years elapsed since a territory’s Neolithic transition (Hariri 2012), and year of colonial conquest.

The Protestant missionary hypothesis also cannot explain away the Britain effect at independence,¹⁰ and itself appears to follow a similar temporal pattern. In Panel C of Tables A.10 and A.11, Protestant missionaries correlate somewhat strongly with democracy in all years, and very strongly at independence—but not after 1991. Additional theorizing is needed to explain this temporally contingent pattern because existing pro-missionary arguments rely on the types of structural cultural influences that seemingly should imply a long-term in addition to a short-term effect (Woodberry 2012; Lankina and Getachew 2012). Tables A.13 and A.14 show that two related human capital explanations (secondary education and literacy) also cannot explain away the Britain effect, nor can standard geographical controls.

Two theoretical considerations should be noted. First, it is not clear *a priori* whether these colonial-era factors are truly alternative explanations—implying that omitted variables bias the Britain coefficient estimate in regressions that do not include these factors—or are consequences of the Britain treatment, which would imply that controlling for them introduces post-treatment bias to the Britain coefficient estimate. For example, if colonies that factually had large Protestant missionary populations would have hosted similarly large missions even had they been counterfactually colonized by a different power, then Protestant missionaries are an alternative explanation for the Britain-democracy correlation. If instead large missionary populations were a consequence of British colonial rule, then Protestant missionaries are a post-treatment mechanism connecting British colonialism and democracy. Because it is not clear theoretically whether concerns about omitted variable bias or post-treatment bias are more relevant for these data, it is reassuring that the Table 1 and Table A.10 findings for British colonialism are quite similar.

Second, pre-colonial factors provide a poor theoretical explanation for the time-varying nature of the British colonialism-democracy relationship. Although Britain may have colonized areas with some inherent affinity for democracy, it seems implausible that Britain colonized areas (1) more inherently likely to experience democracy at independence, but (2) not to remain more democratic than the rest of the post-colonial world over time. At the very least, the literature provides no guidance for what such a selection mechanism might look like.

¹⁰The magnitude of the coefficient estimate for British colonialism in Panel C of Table A.11 relative to Panel B of Table 1 is somewhat attenuated because Woodberry (2012) is missing data for the four neo-Britains.

4.4 Heterogeneity Within the British Empire

Section [A.4](#) examines heterogeneity within the British empire. The British empire was notable for the cultural and geographic diversity of areas it ruled and for the variety of institutional forms adopted to govern them. Various British bureaucracies—such as the Colonial Office, India Office, the Foreign Office, and for-profit corporations—established their own local institutions and followed divergent policies toward local inhabitants and traditional authorities. Whereas many have argued that British democratic legacies are limited to directly ruled colonies (Diamond 1989; Lange 2004; Olsson 2009; Owolabi 2015), Appendix Tables [A.15](#) through [A.18](#) show that the core time-varying pattern exists among many subsets of British colonies. There is evidence of democratic advantages at independence among indirectly ruled British colonies, British colonies without metropolitan legal institutions, short-ruled British colonies, and when subsetting the data to only include Sub-Saharan African colonies. One difference found in these tables, however, is that directly ruled colonies as measured using Lange’s (2009) customary courts variable exhibit a democratic advantage even in the post-1991 period (Panel A of Table [A.15](#), although it is not robust to adding covariates). Still, directly ruled colonies fit the general pattern of convergence because the coefficient estimate is considerably smaller than at independence (37% decline between Columns 1 and 5), and other proxies for direct British rule do not exhibit any evidence of persistence: British colonies with metropolitan legal institutions and long-ruled British colonies (Panels B and C of Table [A.15](#)).

4.5 Additional Robustness Checks

The appendix demonstrates that these results are qualitatively similar under two additional robustness checks. First, we examine the role of superpower rivalry during the Cold War and post-colonial military presence (Table [A.19](#)). Second, we disaggregate non-British colonies by their colonizer and show that no single non-British colonizer drives the findings (Table [A.20](#)).

5 Mechanisms I: British Democratic Advantages at Independence

Despite wide-ranging debates about British colonial legacies, existing political science theories cannot explain change over time: the strong short-term yet weak aggregate long-term estimated effect for British

colonialism. The remainder of the paper presents an alternative theory that integrates Britain’s relatively gradual and flexible approach to decolonization into traditional arguments, accompanied by statistical and qualitative evidence. The theory builds off more historically oriented research on decolonization (Smith 1978; Kahler 1984; Spruyt 2005). This section focuses on democracy levels at independence, and the next section explains why the effect declined over time.¹¹

To explain British colonies’ democratic advantages at independence, we argue that relative to its imperial rivals, Britain was more adept at encouraging democratic preparation prior to granting independence and at tailoring the timing of independence to individual colonies’ democratic development. Consequently, Britain promoted more competitive elections prior to granting independence, and we show that British colonies would not have exhibited their democratic advantage at independence had they counterfactually gained independence even several years before they factually did. Britain also tended to grant independence in response to strong local demands, which prevented having to relinquish the post-colonial state to guerrilla movements. By contrast, other colonizers alternated between an undignified hurry to relinquish colonial possessions and inflexibly opposing independence. Statistical evidence demonstrates these decolonization differences—which stemmed in part from Britain’s relatively high level of democracy and less entrenched colonial lobby—help to explain divergent democratic inheritances.

5.1 Democracy as an “Honourable” Exit Strategy

Britain more actively encouraged democratic preparation prior to granting independence and tailored the timing of independence to individual colonies’ democratic development (Young 1970). Britain generally followed its decolonization strategy of transferring “complete power to colonies as soon as the transfer could be made decently—that is, to a democratically elected government which could reasonably be held to represent a ‘national will’” (Fieldhouse 1986, 8), although of course not every colony met this ideal.

¹¹The remainder of the paper only analyzes the main, post-1945 decolonization sample for reasons described when introducing the sample. This period contained almost every British colony besides the neo-Britains, and offers the best counterfactual comparison cases for the bulk of the British empire. Related, our theory is historically circumscribed and introducing older cases would introduce causal heterogeneity. Finally, as a practical matter, much of the colonial-era data we use below is unavailable for early decolonization cases because V-Dem data does not begin until 1900.

The final pre-independence election tended to culminate a longer process of democratic devolution to fulfill Britain's goal of an "honourable exit" (Young 1970, 482). This produced structures for democratically electing national officials. For example, India gained independence from Britain in 1947, about a year after the introduction of responsible self-government at the national level, though wealthy voters had elected national and provincial legislators since the early 1920s, and elected officials had controlled all the executive departments in some provinces since the 1930s.

Even in poorer and less institutionalized Nigeria, Britain imposed a federal constitution in 1954 designed to balance sharp regional divisions and to prevent undemocratic power concentration by any one group. In the late 1950s, as France pushed out its African colonies, in Nigeria, "the Secretary of State for the Colonies refused to set a date [for independence] until regional self-government had been tested and other problems, especially the related questions of minority fears and the demand for new states, had been resolved" (Sklar and Whitaker 1966, 51). In India, Nigeria, and many other cases, Britain introduced elections well before independence but installed increasingly comprehensive reforms as independence became more likely.

This pattern contrasts starkly with France, the largest non-British colonizer. Despite implementing uniform electoral reforms in all its African colonies shortly after World War II, France planned to retain power for the long-term until circumstances changed in the late 1950s, after failures in Vietnam and Algeria had "progressively infected all French political life" (Young 1970, 471). Consequently, only two years after every French African colony except Guinea had voted to remain within the French colonial sphere, France simultaneously granted independence to all 14 of its Sub-Saharan African colonies with a population over 100,000. Similarly, Belgium quickly retreated from Africa after rioting in Leopoldville in 1959, granting independence to the Congo in 1960 and to Rwanda and Burundi in 1962. By contrast, British colonialism in Africa ended in stages throughout the 1950s and 1960s.

Table 2 assesses the effects of Britain's calculated independence timing. If Britain tended to hold onto its colonies longer to secure higher democracy levels, then it should be true that if Britain had let go of its colonies earlier, they would have not have enjoyed the relative democratic inheritance documented throughout the paper. Although British colonies held a democratic advantage relative to non-British colonies throughout the first half of the 20th century, this advantage grew precipitously in the last few years of colonial rule (see Appendix Figure A.1). The dependent variable in Table 2 is a "counterfactual" democracy measure at independence. For non-British colonies, this variable takes the value of the country's V-Dem

polyarchy score in the first full year of independence. For British colonies, this variable takes the value of the colony’s polyarchy score either five (Columns 1 and 2) or one year before independence (Columns 3 and 4). These regressions assess whether, had British counterfactually granted independence to its colonies earlier than it factually did—perhaps by following France’s path of pushing all its colonies out in a single year—whether they would still have enjoyed a democratic advantage at independence. Strikingly, given the robust positive correlations between British colonialism and democracy in the first year of independence demonstrated throughout the paper (see Appendix Table A.6 for the original specifications using V-Dem), the coefficient estimate flips to negative and significant for the five-year counterfactual and is insignificant with an inconsistent sign in the one-year counterfactual. This suggests strongly that Britain’s concerted democracy promotion in the *immediate* lead-up to independence was crucial for generating its colonies’ relative democratic inheritance, as opposed to longer-term factors.

Table 2: British Colonialism and “Counterfactual” Democracy Level at Independence

	DV: “Counterfactual” V-Dem level at independence			
	Br. cols.: V-Dem 5 yrs. before		Br. cols.: V-Dem 1 yr. before	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
British colony	-0.0691** (0.0345)	-0.0993*** (0.0346)	0.0209 (0.0373)	-0.00454 (0.0382)
Countries	65	61	65	61
R-squared	0.060	0.223	0.005	0.104
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES

Notes: Table 2 summarizes a series of OLS regressions by presenting coefficient estimates, and robust standard error estimates clustered by country in parentheses. Columns 2 and 4 control for the same standard democracy covariates as in Table 1, Panel A. The sample in every specification consists of post-1945 decolonization cases. *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

5.2 Avoiding Violent Power Transfers

Another aspect of the British government’s flexible approach to decolonization was that it usually ceded power before pressure for independence engendered violent rebellion. The rarity of major rebellions in British colonies contrasted with France’s heavy-handed policies in Vietnam after Japan departed and its view that Algeria was an integral part of France—similar to how Portugal viewed its African colonies. Where these violent rebellions succeeded, they limited the colonizer’s power to set the terms and timing of independence by increasing the costs of remaining in the colony and by creating powerful alternative claimants to state power. In this situation, independence arrangements resembled a negotiated surrender more than an exercise in constitution-making. These treaties tended to hand power to the former guerrilla movement in a hasty or disorganized fashion, and these rebel groups tended to establish authoritarian regimes (Wantchekon

and Garcia-Ponce 2015, 9).

One consequence of Britain’s more flexible decolonization policies was that it faced fewer major revolts in its colonies after World War II than other powers. Within our sample, 28 percent of non-British colonies experienced major decolonization violence versus 6 percent of British colonies. Even when the British did face such rebellions, as in Malaysia and Kenya, they successfully avoided handing over power to rebels through a combination of successful counterinsurgency and granting opportunities to non-violent nationalist groups. The variable does not score any violent takeovers in British colonies in our sample, compared to three French, three Portuguese, and Dutch Indonesia.¹² The absence of guerrilla takeovers in British colonies spared its new states “a potentially potent source of antidemocratic pressure” (Diamond 1988, 9).

Appendix Table A.21 assesses the democratic implications of guerrilla takeovers. Columns 1 and 2 examine the guerrilla takeover correlation in isolation, with and without covariates. They show that this factor is negative and significantly correlated with democracy levels at independence, roughly the same magnitude of the coefficients for British colonialism shown throughout the paper. Columns 3 and 4 re-run these specifications while adding the British colonial dummy. Because no British colonies are coded as having guerrilla takeovers, British colonies and (non-British) guerrilla takeover countries are being compared to non-British non-guerrilla takeover countries. Both variables are statistically significant, although the Britain coefficient is somewhat attenuated from previous regressions, about 12%. Although the absence of guerrilla takeovers in British colonies cannot by itself explain the Britain effect at independence, it appears to be one contributing factor to British colonies’ more favorable democratic inheritance.

5.3 Explaining Divergent Decolonization Policies

Two factors appear particularly important for explaining Britain’s better-planned decolonization policies. First, Britain itself was more democratic than most other decolonizing powers, consistent with existing research showing that democratic powers are more likely to spread democracy than are dictatorial powers. Narizny (2012, 362) argues that Britain tended to promote a liberal state-society relationship in its colonies

¹²The sample does not include South Yemen because its subsequent merger with North Yemen does not allow comparisons in the post-Cold War period. Additionally, Zimbabwe gained independence from a rogue white settler government rather than directly from Britain.

to advantage British firms. More broadly, Gunitsky (2014, 569-71) argues that democratic great powers seek to expand their trade and patronage networks by democratizing client states, hence shifting the institutional preferences of domestic actors and coalitions, although the present argument departs somewhat from Boix's (2011, 815) claim that democratic powers only seek to export democracy to wealthier states where they expect democracy to be stable. Whereas existing research focuses mainly on post-independence Western influence, we suggest that a similar phenomenon occurred during post-World War II decolonization—part of the Cold War period often thought to be a low tide for international democracy promotion. Across empires, the United States, Belgium, and Netherlands were also stably democratic, whereas Portugal and Spain were both authoritarian until the end of the decolonization era. France, although never fully authoritarian, went through a less democratic period during the 1950s and 1960s when Charles de Gaulle revised the constitution to personalize power after gaining office following a military revolt in Algeria.

Second, the political power of social groups that favored continued colonial rule—in particular, European settlers and business interests—were weaker in Britain. French citizens in Algeria could vote in French elections and their lobby often held the balance of power in unstable Fourth Republic governments. They successfully frustrated any moves towards decolonization until the late 1950s (Marshall 1973). Investors with interests in the colonies composed another pressure group that favored limiting devolution. France protected firms in its colonies against international competition (Kahler 1984) and Belgium's largest company, the Societe Generale de Belgique, controlled 60 percent of the Congo's economy (Peemans 1975, 182). By contrast, although pro-colonial interests were present in Britain, the country possessed a less powerful pro-colonial lobby than did other colonial powers (Spruyt 2005). For example, in Rhodesia, the British government pressured European settlers to grant broader rights to Africans, and in 1968 overcame pro-settler forces in the House of Lords to impose economic sanctions on the rogue settler regime (Coggins 2006).

Appendix Table A.22 supports two empirical implications of colonizers' divergent democratization commitments. Panel A examines the metropole's *polity2* score in each country's year of independence. Panel B uses the Manifesto Project's (Gabel and Huber 2000) measure of the degree to which metropolitan political parties' manifestos mentioned decolonization and anti-imperialism, a proxy for the power of colonial lobbies. Higher levels of metropole democracy and heightened political party attention to decolonization are each significantly correlated with ex-colonies' *polity2* scores at independence (Columns 1 and 2). These

factors also somewhat attenuate the British colonialism effect at independence, with the coefficient estimates ranging from 27 to 41 percent lower than in regressions that omit both intervening factors but use the same sample.

6 Mechanisms II: Why the Effect Declined Over Time

Although these decolonization factors bequeathed ex-British colonies with a more established electoral framework, they did not create the types of cultural or structural changes that would have endowed ex-British colonies with higher underlying demand for democracy. The decolonization thesis anticipates two contributors to mean reversion over time. First, and most directly implied by the theory, British colonies should experience mean reversion in the form of democratic reversals after independence because rulers should have been able to easily overthrow foreign-imposed electoral frameworks. Second, post-independence international shocks should contribute to mean reversion by disrupting authoritarian regime equilibria inherited at independence in non-British colonies and facilitating their democratization. We demonstrate that, empirically, both of these trends occurred—contradicting long-run cultural or institutional explanations of British colonialism and democracy.

6.1 Post-Independence Longitudinal Trends

Figure 1 depicted two key longitudinal trends in democracy since independence, complementing the major cross-sectional patterns discussed above. First, although both British and non-British ex-colonies experienced democratic decline within the first years of independence, this pattern is stronger among ex-British colonies. Average *polity2* score fell by more than twice as much in former British colonies compared to others in the six years after independence, 2.7 points compared to 1.3. After 15 years of independence, non-British colonies had average *polity2* scores only 0.1 less than at independence, whereas the average score in British colonies had fallen by 3.8 points.

Second, ex-British colonies have not benefitted from international trends toward democratization in the 1980s and 1990s as strongly as have other countries. In the three decades following the initial wave of democratic reversals, former British colonies have almost an identical level of democracy as they did a

decade after independence—compared to a 1.5 point increase among other countries. Because many countries in the sample gained independence in the early 1960s, the period of 30-to-35 years after independence roughly corresponds to the peak of the “Third Wave” in the mid-1990s.

Tabular data in Appendix Table A.4 display a similar pattern. Over half of the British democracies at independence have had average *polity2* scores less than 6 since 1991. Furthermore, not a single ex-British colony that was not democratic at independence has experienced an average *polity2* scores of at least 6 since 1991—compared to 16 percent of non-British colonies.

Table 3 assesses these trends statistically by estimating a series of dynamic panel models. The basic model estimated is:

$$polity2_{it} = \beta_i + \gamma_t + \theta polity2_{it-1} + \rho Ind.Years_{it} + \delta BritishColony_i \times Ind.Years_{it} + \beta X_{it} + \epsilon_{it}, \quad (2)$$

where *polity2_{it}* is the *polity2* score for country *i* in year *t*, *polity2_{it-1}* is the lagged dependent variable, δ is the main parameter of interest, *Ind.Years* is the number of years since independence, *X_{it}* is a vector of time-varying covariates that differs across the specifications, β_i is a vector of country fixed effects, and γ_t is a vector of year fixed effects. The unit and time fixed effects account for the confounding influence of time invariant heterogeneity among countries and global shifts in democracy promotion over time. Regarding additional technical details, these models do not estimate the direct effect of *BritishColony* because it is perfectly collinear with the vector of country fixed effects. Because dynamic panel models with unit fixed effects create the possibility of Nickell bias, Appendix Table A.23 instead uses Arellano-Bond dynamic panel models that instrument for the lagged variables and demonstrates similar findings for the interaction terms. Finally, every model uses country-clustered standard errors.

Columns 1 and 2 of Table 3 show a general positive trend over time in democracy levels among non-British colonies (p-value in Column 1 is 0.128), but also that ex-British colonies have experienced less pronounced gains, as evidenced by the negative and statistically significant interaction term between British colonialism and years since independence. Columns 3 and 4 analyze the first six years of independence and demonstrate a statistically significant negative marginal effect of years since independence for British colonies, which indicates a decline in their democracy levels. Finally, the post-six independence year sample in Columns 5 and 6 reveals similar findings as the full temporal sample: other ex-colonies gained in democracy levels

Table 3: British Colonialism and Democracy: Time Series Results

	Dependent variable: <i>polity2</i> score					
	All years	All years	1st 6 yrs. post-indep.	1st 6 yrs. post-indep.	After 6 yrs. post-indep.	After 6 yrs. post-indep.
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Years since indep.	0.0123 (0.00802)	0.0212** (0.0105)	0.108 (0.114)	-0.0714 (0.147)	0.0151*** (0.00357)	0.0185* (0.00940)
Br. col.*Years since indep.	-0.0133** (0.00518)	-0.0123** (0.00553)	-0.399** (0.187)	-0.470** (0.204)	-0.0122** (0.00595)	-0.0122** (0.00582)
Country-years	3,811	3,668	431	407	3,380	3,261
Countries	73	70	73	69	73	70
R-squared	0.850	0.850	0.448	0.474	0.856	0.857
LDV	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Country FE	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Year FE	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES
Marginal effects						
Post Ind. Years Br. colony=1	-0.000979 (0.00787)	0.00893 (0.0112)	-0.291** (0.126)	-0.542*** (0.208)	0.00296 (0.00455)	0.00631 (0.00993)
Post Ind. Years Br. colony=0	0.0123 (0.00802)	0.0212** (0.0105)	0.108 (0.114)	-0.0714 (0.147)	0.0151*** (0.00357)	0.0185* (0.00940)

Notes: Table 3 summarizes a series of dynamic time series regressions (described in Equation 2) by presenting coefficient estimates for the main variables of theoretical interest, and country-clustered standard error estimates in parentheses. The other coefficient estimates are suppressed for expositional clarity. The bottom panel presents marginal effect estimates calculated from the same models. Every specification includes a lagged dependent variable, country fixed effects, and year fixed effects. The even-numbered columns additionally control for the three time-varying standard democracy covariates in Table 1, Panel A. The sample in every specification consists of post-1945 decolonization cases. *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

whereas former British colonies did not.

6.2 Democratic Reversals Shortly After Independence

The decolonization thesis directly anticipates the democratic reversals shortly after independence demonstrated in Table 3. Because the bulk of democratic reforms occurred just prior to independence (see Table 2 and Appendix Figure A.1)—and therefore tended not to engender deep structural changes in society—it should have been relatively easy to overthrow foreign-imposed institutions after Britain left. Table 4 shows that domestic factors—military coups or incumbent consolidation—caused democratic reversal in all 10 British ex-colonies that were democratic at independence but had suffered a reversal before the Third Wave (see Appendix Table A.4), as opposed to external regime-changing factors like British intervention or rebel victory in a post-colonial civil war that would lie outside the scope of a decolonization-based theory. Table 4 also shows evidence of similar domestic causes of authoritarianism in cases that resemble but do not quite meet the scope conditions in Appendix Table A.4 of British democratic reversal cases. In most cases, the reversals occurred within a decade of independence. In contrast to our decolonization thesis, domestically

triggered democratic reversals shortly after independence are inconsistent with long-term institutional and cultural mechanisms, which predict long-term democratic persistence.

Table 4: Reversal Events in Failed British-Colonized Democracies

British democratic reversal cases				
<i>Country</i>	<i>Indep. year</i>	<i>Reversal year</i>	<i>Event</i>	
Burma	1948	1958	Military coup	
Sri Lanka	1948	1978	Consolidation	
Sudan	1956	1958	Military coup	
Malaysia	1957	1969	Consolidation	
Nigeria	1960	1966	Military coup	
Sierra Leone	1961	1967	Military coup	
Uganda	1962	1966	Military coup	
Gambia	1965	1994	Military coup	
Lesotho	1966	1970	Consolidation	
Fiji	1970	1987	Military coup	
Related cases				
<i>Country</i>	<i>Indep. year</i>	<i>Reversal year</i>	<i>Event</i>	<i>Notes</i>
Somalia	1960	1969	Military coup	Somalia gained independence from Britain (after Italian colonization) and experienced democracy at independence followed by a coup.
Botswana	1966	1966	Consolidation	Botswana's <i>polity2</i> score has never dropped below 6, but is coded by many (e.g., Geddes et al. 2014) as undemocratic since independence because of the persistent dominance of the BDP, i.e., they have used British elections to help consolidate authoritarian rule.
Zimbabwe	1980	1980	Consolidation	Zimbabwe's <i>polity2</i> score was only 4 at independence but had high executive constraints from decades of autonomous European rule, and ZANU provides another case of authoritarian consolidation.

Notes: Data from Polity IV and Geddes et al.'s (2014) dataset and codebook.

A final implication of this focus on democratic reversals after independence is that the decolonization mechanisms assessed in Tables A.21 and A.22 should correlate weakly with post-1991 democracy levels. Appendix Table A.24 supports this implication. In contrast to existing arguments that revolutionary takeovers tend to engender highly durable authoritarian regimes, the coefficient estimate for guerrilla takeover at independence is small in magnitude and null in the post-1991 period (Panel A). Metropole democracy score exhibits a similar pattern (Panel B). The coefficient estimate for colonizer manifesto diminishes by 58 percent in Column 1 between the independence and post-1991 samples (Panel C). Although the estimate remains statistically significant, a handful of colonies in the small empires (U.S., Dutch, Belgian) drive the result (results available upon request).

7 Conclusion

Although many scholars have argued that British colonial rule promoted post-independence democracy, there has been considerable debate over the robustness of this result and its causes. We provide novel evidence that the relationship follows a strong temporal pattern. Former British colonies were considerably

more democratic than other countries immediately following independence, but subsequent convergence in democracy levels has largely eliminated these differences in the post-Cold War period. Pre-colonial traits, other colonial influences, and post-colonial factors cannot account for this pattern. Departing from conventional political science theories, we argue for the importance of divergent policy approaches to decolonization by European powers. Britain more consistently treated democratic elections as a prerequisite for gaining independence, leading to higher initial levels of democracy. However, in many British colonies these policies did not reflect differences in social or institutional support for democracy, leading to mean reversion and convergence over time.

These findings force a rethinking of which colonial legacies are most important for democracy and why. The effects of British colonial rule cannot be reduced to the types of people that populated British colonies, such as European settlers (Acemoglu et al. 2001; Hariri 2012) or Protestant missionaries (Woodberry 2012; Lankina and Getachew 2012), contrary to the recent emphasis in the colonialism literature. But the results also modify triumphalist narratives of British superiority common in popular accounts of comparative development (e.g., Ferguson 2012) as well as more nuanced arguments focused on long-term structural changes induced by British colonialism. This should influence additional discussion of how and why British colonialism mattered.

One promising avenue for future research on this topic is to more thoroughly examine heterogeneity within the British empire in the context of the time-varying effects highlighted here. We showed some evidence in Table A.15 that colonies experiencing direct British rule may have enjoyed more persistent democratic advantages. Related, only three of the 13 British or related colonies listed in Table 4 as experiencing democratic reversals after independence were ruled directly, perhaps because directly ruled colonies experienced beneficial reforms earlier. However, important issues remain for establishing convincing evidence of heterogeneous effects. Table A.15 only provided support for durable democratic effects among colonies coded as direct using Lange's (2009) customary courts variable (and even that estimate was not robust to adding controls), whereas British colonies with either metropolitan legal institutions or long colonial rule were no more democratic in the 1990s and 2000s than comparable countries in other empires. Additionally, Britain strategically chose where to rule directly, creating selection effects that must be addressed in order to be able to interpret results that relate to heterogeneous effects.

More broadly, the present findings carry implications for understanding the efficacy of international democ-

racy promotion. Even studies that have examined Western democracy promotion outside the Cold War era, such as Boix (2011), Narizny (2012), and Gunitsky (2014), have mainly focused on over-time variation in the international climate rather than within-era comparisons of countries. The results here show that nearly all of the democratic variation among post-colonial nations during the “second wave” of democracy can be explained by British colonialism—because essentially all non-British colonies were non-democratic at independence (see Appendix Table A.4). However, despite the more concerted effort by Britain to promote democracy within its empire, these cases also highlight the frequent shortcomings of international democracy promotion. Although outsiders can create democratic institutions in otherwise unpromising contexts, the effects of these interventions may only be short-term unless they are accompanied by deeper structural changes that in effect increase societal demand for democracy.

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A.1 Data Description and Statistics

Table A.1: Countries in Post-1945 Decolonization Sample

Country	W.Eu. indep. yr.	Br. col.	Country	W.Eu. indep. yr.	Br. col.
Lebanon	1943	NO	Somalia	1960	NO
Jordan	1946	YES	Togo	1960	NO
Philippines	1946	NO	Kuwait	1961	YES
Syria	1946	NO	Sierra Leone	1961	YES
Bhutan	1947	YES	Tanzania	1961	YES
India	1947	YES	Algeria	1962	NO
Pakistan	1947	YES	Burundi	1962	NO
Israel	1948	YES	Jamaica	1962	YES
Myanmar	1948	YES	Rwanda	1962	NO
Sri Lanka	1948	YES	Trinidad & Tobago	1962	YES
Indonesia	1949	NO	Uganda	1962	YES
Libya	1951	NO	Kenya	1963	YES
Cambodia	1953	NO	Malawi	1964	YES
Laos	1954	NO	Zambia	1964	YES
Vietnam	1954	NO	Gambia	1965	YES
Morocco	1956	NO	Singapore	1965	YES
Sudan	1956	YES	Zimbabwe	1965	YES
Tunisia	1956	NO	Botswana	1966	YES
Ghana	1957	YES	Guyana	1966	YES
Malaysia	1957	YES	Lesotho	1966	YES
Guinea	1958	NO	Equatorial Guinea	1968	NO
Benin	1960	NO	Mauritius	1968	YES
Burkina Faso	1960	NO	Swaziland	1968	YES
Cameroon	1960	NO	Fiji	1970	YES
C.A.R.	1960	NO	Bahrain	1971	YES
Chad	1960	NO	Qatar	1971	YES
Congo	1960	NO	U.A.E.	1971	YES
Congo, D.R.	1960	NO	Guinea-Bissau	1974	NO
Cote d'Ivoire	1960	NO	Angola	1975	NO
Cyprus	1960	YES	Cape Verde	1975	NO
Gabon	1960	NO	Comoros	1975	NO
Madagascar	1960	NO	Mozambique	1975	NO
Mali	1960	NO	Papua New Guinea	1975	NO
Mauritania	1960	NO	Suriname	1975	NO
Niger	1960	NO	Djibouti	1977	NO
Nigeria	1960	YES	Solomon Islands	1978	YES
Senegal	1960	NO			

Notes: Table A.1 lists every country in the post-1945 decolonization sample. Lebanon is included because it gained independence among the same World War II forces that caused other colonies to gain independence in the 1940s. In a handful of cases, the first year of Polity IV data does not begin until several years after the independence year, in which case the first Polity IV year is used as the year of independence in our dataset: India 1949, Tunisia 1958, Ghana 1959, Kuwait 1962, Zimbabwe 1969. Independence year data from Hensel (2014).

Table A.2: Data Sources Not Described in Paper

Variable	Notes and description	Source
<i>Standard democracy covariates</i>		
Ethnic fractionalization	Computed as 1-Herfindahl index of ethnic group shares.	Alesina et al. (2003)
Muslim percentage of population	Measured in 1980.	La Porta et al. (1999)
GDP per capita	Logged annual GDP per capita. We use Penn World Table (Feenstra et al. 2013) data and impute estimates from linear regressions using Maddison (2008) in years of missing Penn World Table data. Missing values pre-1950 and post-2011 are imputed from the country's score in 1950 and 2011, respectively.	Feenstra et al. (2013), Maddison (2008)
Population	Logged annual population. We use Penn World Table (Feenstra et al. 2013) data and impute estimates from linear regressions using Maddison (2008) in years of missing Penn World Table data. Missing values pre-1950 and post-2011 are imputed from the country's score in 1950 and 2011, respectively.	Feenstra et al. (2013), Maddison (2008)
Oil and gas production	Logged annual oil and gas production per capita.	Ross (2013)
<i>Alternative historical explanations</i>		
European settlers	To capture Acemoglu et al.'s (2001) and Hariri's (2012) hypotheses about European settlers, we use the log of European population share at the date closest to independence with available data.	Easterly and Levine (2016)
State antiquity	A territory's combined years with government above local level. Following Hariri (2012), state antiquity is calculated in 1500.	Bockstette et al. (2002)
Protestant missionaries	Number of Protestant missionaries per 10,000 people in 1923.	Woodberry (2012)
Settler mortality	Log of estimated settler mortality. Note that the sample in Panel B of Appendix Table A.12 is somewhat larger than the sample in Acemoglu et al. (2001) because they do not include in their core sample some countries for which they have settler mortality data, such as never-colonized Afghanistan	Acemoglu et al. (2001)
Population density	Log population per square kilometer in 1500.	Acemoglu et al. (2002)
Neolithic transition	Thousands of years elapsed as of 2000 that a territory transitioned to agricultural production (the unit of analysis is modern country boundaries).	Putterman and Trainor (2006)
Colonial onset year	Year that a Western European country initially colonized the territory. This variable is inherently missing for never-colonized countries.	Olsson (2009)
Geographic variables	Indicator for landlocked countries, indicator for islands, distance to a coast, latitude.	Woodberry (2012)
Rainfall	Average precipitation is the long-term average in depth (over space and time) of annual precipitation in the country, measured in millimeters per year.	World Bank (2016)
Secondary education	Percentage of the population with some secondary education (averaged between 1960 and 1985).	Woodberry (2012)
Literacy	Following Owolabi (2015), we code adult literacy rates from United Nations (1980) for the year closest to 1960 with available data.	United Nations (1980)
<i>Decolonization variables</i>		
Guerrillas inherit state	Fearon and Laitin's (2003) dataset provided a candidate list of conflicts. We consulted secondary sources to assess whether the group involved in violence gained control of the state at independence. Those cases are coded as 1, all others are 0.	Fearon and Laitin (2003), secondary sources
Colonizer anti-colonial manifesto	We averaged party-election-level data across all party-elections between 1945 and 1960, excluding political parties that never held office during this period. These scores reflect the power of colonial lobbies, with party commitment to decolonization much higher in Britain and Holland than in Belgium or France. This variable is not coded for Portuguese or Spanish colonies, where political parties were illegal, or for Italian colonies that were ruled as trustee states after World War II.	Gabel and Huber (2000)

Table A.3: Summary Statistics

<i>Post-1945 independence countries</i>			
Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	N
polity2	-1.501	6.617	3825
British colony	0.468	0.499	3825
Ethnic frac.	0.576	0.237	3825
Muslim %	35.963	38.15	3825
ln(Oil & gas/capita)	1.985	3.089	3825
ln(GDP/cap)	7.805	1.16	3681
ln(Pop.)	15.47	1.672	3825
ln(Eu. pop. %)	-2.298	2.272	3825
State antiquity in 1500	0.299	0.313	3333
Protestant missionaries	0.734	1.129	3825
ln(Settler mortality)	5.277	1.227	1687
Population density in 1500	5.285	6.75	2742
Years since Neolithic transition	4.358	2.537	3673
Colonial onset year	1818.645	126.849	3771
Secondary Education	8.964	8.817	2535
Literacy in 1960	30.374	25.178	3504
Distance to Coast	339.084	321.418	3825
Island	0.195	0.396	3825
Landlocked	0.22	0.414	3825
Latitude	15.392	10.296	3825
Precipitation	992.914	745.344	3825
(Precipitation) ²	1541270.831	1858844.619	3825
British direct rule	0.128	0.334	3825
British indirect rule	0.35	0.477	3825
Metropolitan legal institutions	0.129	0.335	3825
Colonial duration	140.495	125.841	3771
Middle East	0.127	0.333	3825
Sub-Saharan Africa	0.538	0.499	3825
Communist Bloc	0.052	0.222	3825
French Community	0.179	0.383	3825
NATO Base	0.124	0.33	3825
Guerrillas inherit state	0.092	0.289	3825
Colonizer Polity	8.202	3.1	3825
Colonizer Anti-Colonial Manifesto	0.973	0.419	3506
<i>All non-European countries since 1800</i>			
Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	N
polity2	-1.225	6.586	11088
British colony	0.246	0.431	11088
Ethnic frac.	0.481	0.247	11071
Muslim %	25.619	38.316	11071
ln(European settlers)	-0.866	3.513	11088
State antiquity in 1500	0.309	0.342	10122
Protestant missionaries	0.484	0.796	10395
ln(Settler mortality)	4.513	1.038	7810
ln(Pop. density in 1500)	0.65	1.743	10593
Years since Neolithic transition	4.485	2.504	10849
Colonial onset year	1693.384	163.368	8554
Island	0.157	0.363	11088
Landlocked	0.189	0.392	11088
Latitude	19.196	14.209	11088
Precipitation	1025.876	688.001	11022
(Precipitation) ²	1525724.483	1635237.11	11022
British direct rule	0.106	0.308	11088
British indirect rule	0.14	0.347	11088
Metropolitan legal institutions	0.108	0.31	11088
Colonial duration	153.32	134.116	10957
Middle East	0.13	0.336	11088
Sub-Saharan Africa	0.221	0.415	11088
Communist Bloc	0.078	0.268	11088
French Community	0.031	0.174	11088
NATO Base	0.136	0.343	11088

A.2 Robustness Checks for Table 1

A similar pattern as shown in Figure 1 holds when examining tabular data. Table A.4 divides ex-colonies into four categories based on their post-independence democratic experience. “Democratic consolidation” countries had a *polity2* score of at least 6 at independence and an average *polity2* score of at least 6 between 1991 and 2012. “Failed post-colonial democracies” had a *polity2* score of at least 6 at independence but an average *polity2* score less than 6 between 1991 and 2012. “Late democratizers” had a *polity2* score of at less than 6 at independence but an average *polity2* score of at least 6 between 1991 and 2012. Finally, “never democratizes” countries had *polity2* scores below 6 at independence and in the 1991 through 2012 period. Table A.4 exhibits two main patterns. First, over half of British colonies were democratic at independence, compared to only one non-British colony—Somalia, which Britain administered for 15 years after World War II. However, fewer than half of these British democracies were also consistently democratic throughout the Third Wave. Second, British colonies have benefitted less from international democracy promotion. Whereas six non-British colonies that were authoritarian at independence became fully democratic by or during the Third Wave, no British colonies that were undemocratic at independence were stable democracies during the Third Wave.

Table A.4: Cross-Tabulation of Regime Trajectories

Democracy in 1st year?	British colony	Non-British	Regime trajectory	British colony	Non-British
Yes	18 (51%)	1 (3%)	Democratic consolidation	8 (44%)	0 (0%)
			Democratic reversion	10 (56%)	1 (100%)
No	17 (49%)	36 (97%)	Late democratizer	0 (0%)	6 (16%)
			Never democratizes	17 (100%)	31 (84%)

Table A.5: Alternative Covariates for Table 1: Region and Year FE

Dependent variable: <i>polity2</i> score						
Panel A. Sample: post-1945 independence countries						
	All years		First yr. indep.		Post-1991	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
British colony	2.585** (1.020)	3.511*** (1.156)	5.731*** (1.443)	7.974*** (2.570)	0.714 (1.147)	1.268 (1.286)
Country-years	3,825	3,825	73	73	1,734	1,734
R-squared	0.203	0.194	0.321	0.581	0.200	0.048
Region FE	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO
Year FE	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES
Panel B. Sample: all non-European countries						
	All years		First yr. indep.		Post-1991	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
British colony	4.364*** (1.060)	4.295*** (1.347)	5.954*** (1.197)	7.339** (2.935)	0.822 (0.992)	0.439 (1.169)
Country-years	11,088	11,088	129	129	3,147	3,147
R-squared	0.256	0.183	0.344	0.552	0.294	0.017
Region FE	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO
Year FE	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES

Notes: Table A.5 summarizes a series of OLS regressions by presenting coefficient estimates for British colonialism, and country-clustered robust standard error estimates in parentheses. The other coefficient estimates are suppressed for expositional clarity. In Panel A, the odd-numbered columns control for the following region fixed effects: Sub-Saharan Africa, Middle East and North Africa, and the rest of Asia. Small (mostly island) countries not in any of these regions compose the omitted basis category. In Panel B, the odd-numbered columns control for a slightly different set of region fixed effects to account for the broader global sample: Sub-Saharan Africa, Middle East and North Africa, the rest of Asia, North and South America, and Oceania. Small (mostly island) countries not in any of these regions compose the omitted basis category. In both panels, the even-numbered columns do not include the region fixed effects but do control for year fixed effects. *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

Table A.6 alters the measurement of the dependent variable, democracy. Because of the limited time samples of Cheibub et al.’s (2013) and V-Dem’s democracy measures relative to Polity IV, we only present results for the post-1945 decolonization sample (democracy at independence is unavailable for most early colonizers in V-Dem and Cheibub et al.). One consideration for interpreting Table A.6 is that Cheibub et al.’s (2013) binary democracy measure biases against finding a positive Britain effect immediately after independence. To be coded as a democracy, they require a country to have at least one democratic turnover in government. Therefore, countries such as Uganda and Sudan that had free and fair elections at independence—and, correspondingly, a high *polity2* score—are not coded as democracies at independence by Cheibub et al. because in each country the military overthrew the first post-independence regime before a democratic turnover occurred. Also, note that the coefficient estimates in Panel A are logged odds ratios.

Table A.6: Alternative Democracy Measures

Panel A. DV: Cheibub et al. democracy, post-1945 independence countries						
	All years		First yr. indep.		Post-1991	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
British colony	1.079*** (0.407)	0.761* (0.394)	1.148** (0.570)	1.081* (0.651)	0.576 (0.446)	0.190 (0.527)
Country-years	3,390	3,264	73	69	1,299	1,246
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES
Panel B. DV: V-Dem polyarchy, post-1945 independence countries						
	All years		First yr. indep.		Post-1991	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
British colony	0.106** (0.0420)	0.0508 (0.0367)	0.112*** (0.0415)	0.0869** (0.0378)	0.0586 (0.0482)	-0.0187 (0.0479)
Country-years	3,523	3,379	68	64	1,550	1,479
R-squared	0.061	0.161	0.105	0.308	0.018	0.100
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES

Notes: Table A.6 summarizes a series of logit regressions (Panel A) and OLS regressions (Panel B) by presenting coefficient estimates for British colonialism, and country-clustered robust standard error estimates in parentheses. The other coefficient estimates are suppressed for expositional clarity. The odd-numbered columns only control for British colonialism and the even-numbered columns additionally control for the standard democracy covariates used in Table 1, Panel A: logged annual GDP per capita, logged annual population, logged annual oil and gas production per capita, Muslim percentage of the population, and ethnic fractionalization. *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

Most of the results in this paper follow the existing literature by focusing on aggregate democracy scores. However, there are many hybrid regimes that combine certain features commonly associated with democracy—such as elections—without others, such as checks and balances or widespread political participation. It is possible that British colonialism more strongly affected some aspects of democracy than others, although we do not have strong theoretical views for which. Table A.7 examines the relationship between British colonialism and four theoretical concepts considered integral to democracy: constraints on the executive, electoral competition, liberal democratic freedoms, and political participation. Despite the variety of differing concepts used, the results are mostly similar to those in Table 1. British colonialism is strongly associated with higher levels of the democratic components immediately after independence, but weaker in the post-1991 period. Intriguingly, many of the correlations for contestation components of democracy remain somewhat strong even post-1991, whereas there is no systematic relationship for political participation (Panel F). This could perhaps capture stronger British effects on norms of representation and parliamentary constraints on the executive, as argued by Emerson (1960, 232) and Abernethy (2000, 367), or perhaps reflect shifting international norms over time toward full representation in all countries (Miller 2015). This could potentially be useful to analyze further in future research.

Table A.7: Subcomponents of Democracy

Panel A. DV: Polity IV executive constraints, post-1945 independence countries						
	All years		First yr. indep.		Post-1991	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
British colony	6.469*** (1.760)	5.381** (2.252)	8.910** (3.901)	8.621** (4.044)	7.675*** (2.657)	5.541* (3.139)
Country-years	3,858	3,709	73	69	1,752	1,679
R-squared	0.030	0.035	0.063	0.141	0.035	0.050
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES
Panel B. DV: Polity IV executive constraints, all non-European countries						
	All years		First yr. indep.		Post-1991	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
British colony	3.842*** (0.764)	4.002*** (0.721)	6.452*** (2.033)	6.922*** (2.264)	3.589** (1.387)	3.724** (1.430)
Country-years	11,088	11,071	129	127	3,147	3,130
R-squared	0.011	0.016	0.038	0.058	0.009	0.032
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES
Panel C. DV: Polity IV electoral competition, post-1945 independence countries						
	All years		First yr. indep.		Post-1991	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
British colony	6.402*** (1.813)	5.304** (2.281)	9.417** (3.925)	9.399** (4.065)	6.921** (2.768)	4.903 (3.268)
Country-years	3,858	3,709	73	69	1,752	1,679
R-squared	0.028	0.033	0.070	0.137	0.027	0.040
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES
Panel D. DV: Polity IV electoral competition, all non-European countries						
	All years		First yr. indep.		Post-1991	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
British colony	3.032*** (0.945)	3.240*** (0.871)	5.796*** (2.098)	6.265*** (2.309)	3.029** (1.479)	3.093** (1.520)
Country-years	11,055	11,038	129	127	3,147	3,130
R-squared	0.007	0.016	0.030	0.047	0.006	0.030
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES
Panel E. DV: V-Dem liberalism, post-1945 independence countries						
	All years		First yr. indep.		Post-1991	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
British colony	0.116*** (0.0355)	0.0699** (0.0305)	0.116*** (0.0323)	0.0959*** (0.0319)	0.0858* (0.0431)	0.0120 (0.0418)
Country-years	3,523	3,379	68	64	1,550	1,479
R-squared	0.105	0.221	0.171	0.307	0.050	0.173
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES
Panel F. DV: V-Dem political participation, post-1945 independence countries						
	All years		First yr. indep.		Post-1991	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
British colony	0.0680** (0.0270)	0.0271 (0.0229)	0.0709*** (0.0236)	0.0537** (0.0226)	0.0399 (0.0322)	-0.0146 (0.0309)
Country-years	3,523	3,379	68	64	1,550	1,479
R-squared	0.060	0.177	0.129	0.304	0.020	0.114
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES

Notes: Table A.7 summarizes a series of OLS regressions by presenting coefficient estimates for British colonialism, and country-clustered robust standard error estimates in parentheses. The other coefficient estimates are suppressed for expositional clarity. The even-numbered columns in Panels A, C, E, and F additionally control for the standard democracy covariates used in Table 1, Panel A. The even-numbered columns in Panels B and D additionally control for the standard democracy covariates used in Table 1, Panel B. The dependent variables are Polity IV's executive constraints index (Panels A and B), Polity IV's political competition index (Panels C and D), V-Dem's liberal democracy index (Panel E), and V-Dem's political participation index (Panel F). *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

Table A.8 considers different cutoffs for “early” and “late” periods after independence. Columns 3 and 4 in Panel B, which contains the full non-European sample, exclude countries that were never colonized by Western Europe because counting years since independence for these countries (which, in the dataset, is coded as years since the first year with Polity IV) is inherently arbitrary. One of the 35 years after independence specifications in the full sample retains statistical significance at 10% (Table A.8, Panel B, Column 4). This specification still provides evidence of convergence because the coefficient estimate is 65% smaller than the corresponding regression in the first year of independence. However, this finding shows that evidence of convergence is somewhat weaker when adding in 19th century Spanish countries, which tended to be highly undemocratic decades after independence in part because, for these countries, 35 years after independence does not coincide with Third Wave democratization forces (which is why the post-1991 comparison, as in Table 1, is more meaningful). Notably, the evidence for convergence 35 years after independence among all colonized countries is considerably stronger after adding year fixed effects to account for country-invariant time shocks such as the Third Wave (results available upon request), where the coefficient estimates diminish even more and are not statistically significant.

Table A.8: Alternative “Early” and “Late” Post-Colonial Periods

Dependent variable: <i>polity2</i> score						
Panel A. Sample: post-1945 independence countries						
	First Six Years Since Independence		35 years after independence		2012	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
British colony	5.649*** (1.381)	6.347*** (1.423)	0.905 (1.520)	0.0956 (1.700)	0.763 (1.376)	0.746 (1.685)
Observations	438	414	73	70	73	70
R-squared	0.176	0.318	0.005	0.178	0.004	0.149
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES
Panel B. Sample: all non-European countries						
	First Six Years Since Independence		35 years after independence		2012	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
British colony	5.882*** (1.122)	5.877*** (1.038)	2.057 (1.274)	2.132* (1.193)	0.712 (1.189)	0.623 (1.044)
Observations	776	766	101	101	128	126
R-squared	0.198	0.291	0.029	0.112	0.003	0.180
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES
Sample	Full	Full	Only colonized	Only colonized	Full	Full

Notes: Table A.8 summarizes a series of OLS regressions by presenting coefficient estimates for British colonialism, and country-clustered robust standard error estimates in parentheses. The other coefficient estimates are suppressed for expositional clarity. The even-numbered columns in Panel A additionally control for the standard democracy covariates used in Table 1, Panel A: logged annual GDP per capita, logged annual population, logged annual oil and gas production per capita, Muslim percentage of the population, and ethnic fractionalization. The even-numbered columns in Panel B additionally control for the standard democracy covariates used in Table 1, Panel B: Muslim percentage of the population and ethnic fractionalization.

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

Table A.9: Interactive Effects of British Colonialism and Time

Dependent variable: <i>polity2</i> score				
Panel A. Sample: post-1945 independence countries				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
British colony	5.370*** (1.556)	5.593*** (1.489)	8.066*** (2.320)	9.039*** (2.050)
Years since indep.	0.122*** (0.0266)	0.135*** (0.0310)		
British Colony*Years since indep.	-0.0755* (0.0399)	-0.103** (0.0425)		
Years since 1945			0.143*** (0.0275)	0.151*** (0.0289)
British Colony*Years since 1945			-0.113** (0.0430)	-0.153*** (0.0424)
Observations	3,825	3,681	3,825	3,681
R-squared	0.117	0.222	0.132	0.242
Covariates?	NO	YES	NO	YES
Panel B. Sample: all non-European countries w/in 35 yrs. indep.				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
British colony	6.304*** (1.519)	6.872*** (1.553)	9.507*** (3.069)	11.50*** (2.486)
Years since indep.	0.0799** (0.0386)	0.107** (0.0457)		
British Colony*Years Since Indep.	-0.134*** (0.0503)	-0.180*** (0.0532)		
Years Since 1945			0.102** (0.0506)	0.108** (0.0444)
British Colony*Years Since 1945			-0.164* (0.0825)	-0.242*** (0.0697)
Observations	2,467	2,344	2,467	2,344
R-squared	0.100	0.216	0.118	0.247
Covariates?	NO	YES	NO	YES
Sample	Only colonized	Only colonized	Full	Full

Notes: Table A.9 summarizes a series of OLS regressions by presenting coefficient estimates for the coefficients of theoretical interest, and country-clustered robust standard error estimates in parentheses. The other coefficient estimates are suppressed for expositional clarity. For reasons discussed for Table A.8, non-colonized countries are excluded for the years since independence results (Panel B, Columns 1 and 2). Additionally, the time period for the full sample is restricted to the first 35 years of independence (the cutoff used in Figure 1) to make the early decolonization cases comparable with the post-1945 decolonization sample. The even-numbered columns in Panel A additionally control for the standard democracy covariates used in Table 1, Panel A: logged annual GDP per capita, logged annual population, logged annual oil and gas production per capita, Muslim percentage of the population, and ethnic fractionalization. The even-numbered columns in Panel B additionally control for the standard democracy covariates used in Table 1, Panel B: Muslim percentage of the population and ethnic fractionalization. Years since 1945 attains negative values for years prior to 1945. *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

A.3 Alternative Historical Explanations

Table A.10: Alternative Historical Explanations, Post-1945 Independence Cases

Dependent variable: <i>polity2</i> score						
Panel A. European settlers						
	All years		First yr. indep.		Post-1991	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
British colony	3.688*** (1.118)	2.501** (1.081)	6.322*** (1.422)	6.543*** (1.679)	1.752 (1.265)	0.361 (1.396)
ln(Eu. pop. %)	0.161 (0.257)	0.0156 (0.262)	0.0302 (0.299)	-0.313 (0.299)	0.459 (0.291)	0.281 (0.319)
Country-years	3,825	3,681	73	69	1,734	1,663
R-squared	0.074	0.169	0.218	0.385	0.039	0.154
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES
Panel B. State antiquity in 1500						
	All years		First yr. indep.		Post-1991	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
British colony	5.418*** (1.125)	4.177*** (1.098)	8.726*** (1.339)	8.163*** (1.661)	3.367*** (1.244)	1.754 (1.360)
State antiquity in 1500	-0.192 (1.697)	-0.0824 (2.165)	1.962 (1.985)	4.482 (3.011)	-2.367 (1.993)	-2.994 (3.128)
Country-years	3,333	3,246	62	60	1,471	1,423
R-squared	0.170	0.219	0.427	0.450	0.102	0.149
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES
Panel C. Protestant missionaries						
	All years		First yr. indep.		Post-1991	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
British colony	2.885** (1.174)	2.332** (1.048)	5.253*** (1.548)	6.400*** (1.594)	0.795 (1.299)	-0.0189 (1.345)
Protestant missionaries	0.923** (0.460)	0.487 (0.637)	1.387*** (0.410)	1.329*** (0.491)	0.595 (0.461)	0.171 (0.697)
Country-years	3,825	3,681	73	69	1,734	1,663
R-squared	0.093	0.173	0.276	0.410	0.024	0.146
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES

Notes: Table A.10 summarizes a series of OLS regressions by presenting coefficient estimates for the main variables of theoretical interest, and country-clustered robust standard error estimates in parentheses. The other coefficient estimates are suppressed for expositional clarity. The even-numbered columns additionally control for the standard democracy covariates used in Table 1, Panel A. *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

Table A.11: Alternative Historical Explanations, all non-European Countries

Dependent variable: <i>polity2</i> score						
Panel A. European settlers						
	All years		First yr. indep.		Post-1991	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
British colony	4.752*** (0.925)	4.830*** (0.881)	6.442*** (1.157)	6.387*** (1.114)	0.861 (1.039)	0.637 (0.955)
ln(European settlers)	0.626*** (0.101)	0.426*** (0.116)	0.221 (0.139)	0.0398 (0.149)	0.855*** (0.148)	0.556*** (0.161)
Country-years	11,088	11,071	129	127	3,147	3,130
R-squared	0.198	0.236	0.239	0.302	0.169	0.279
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES
Panel B. State antiquity in 1500						
	All years		First yr. indep.		Post-1991	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
British colony	5.513*** (1.077)	5.671*** (0.990)	8.446*** (1.064)	8.308*** (1.057)	1.544 (1.108)	1.293 (1.036)
State antiquity in 1500	-3.603*** (1.162)	-2.070 (1.276)	-0.400 (1.361)	0.846 (1.503)	-4.755*** (1.658)	-2.602 (1.938)
Country-years	10,122	10,122	112	112	2,763	2,763
R-squared	0.179	0.221	0.393	0.410	0.082	0.183
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES
Panel C. Protestant missionaries						
	All years		First yr. indep.		Post-1991	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
British colony	1.510 (1.060)	2.466** (0.963)	4.900*** (1.355)	5.125*** (1.321)	-0.976 (1.186)	-0.284 (1.014)
Protestant missionaries	1.360*** (0.431)	0.700 (0.427)	1.526*** (0.365)	1.177*** (0.405)	0.901** (0.419)	0.0135 (0.425)
Country-years	10,395	10,395	121	121	2,980	2,980
R-squared	0.053	0.130	0.274	0.306	0.020	0.201
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES

Notes: Table A.10 summarizes a series of OLS regressions by presenting coefficient estimates for the main variables of theoretical interest, and country-clustered robust standard error estimates in parentheses. The other coefficient estimates are suppressed for expositional clarity. The even-numbered columns additionally control for the standard democracy covariates used in Table 1, Panel B. *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

Table A.12: Additional Pre-Colonial and Early Colonial Alternative Explanations

Dependent variable: <i>polity2</i> score						
Panel A: Settler mortality, post-1945 independence countries						
	All years		First yr. indep.		Post-1991	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
British colony	6.014*** (1.256)	6.226*** (1.336)	10.01*** (1.884)	10.52*** (1.679)	3.331** (1.528)	3.187* (1.745)
ln(Settler mortality)	-0.297 (0.440)	0.0705 (0.678)	0.0236 (0.781)	-1.368 (1.394)	0.0724 (0.631)	0.422 (0.916)
Country-years	1,687	1,641	30	29	725	703
R-squared	0.242	0.280	0.566	0.657	0.088	0.098
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES
Panel B: Settler mortality, all non-European countries						
	All years		First yr. indep.		Post-1991	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
British colony	4.511*** (1.043)	4.952*** (0.923)	8.359*** (1.257)	8.236*** (1.322)	-0.166 (1.172)	0.130 (0.984)
ln(Settler mortality)	-1.748*** (0.335)	-1.452*** (0.351)	-0.853 (0.513)	-0.923 (0.568)	-1.405*** (0.425)	-1.007** (0.459)
Country-years	7,810	7,810	79	79	1,961	1,961
R-squared	0.234	0.264	0.520	0.527	0.083	0.186
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES
Panel C: 1500 Population density, post-1945 independence countries						
	All years		First yr. indep.		Post-1991	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
British colony	4.430*** (1.160)	3.957*** (1.218)	8.282*** (1.437)	8.052*** (1.738)	2.025 (1.356)	1.607 (1.596)
ln(Pop. density in 1500)	0.0233 (0.0865)	0.0290 (0.0894)	0.0557 (0.0739)	0.147 (0.118)	-0.0703 (0.0990)	-0.0431 (0.119)
Country-years	2,742	2,694	52	51	1,246	1,222
R-squared	0.118	0.143	0.424	0.455	0.036	0.040
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES
Panel D: 1500 Population density, all non-European countries						
	All years		First yr. indep.		Post-1991	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
British colony	3.827*** (1.053)	4.321*** (0.922)	6.022*** (1.248)	6.062*** (1.142)	-0.377 (1.165)	-0.159 (0.990)
ln(Pop. density in 1500)	-0.836*** (0.300)	-0.458* (0.232)	-0.163 (0.317)	0.184 (0.345)	-0.914** (0.359)	-0.361 (0.308)
Country-years	10,593	10,593	118	118	2,906	2,906
R-squared	0.129	0.216	0.216	0.289	0.050	0.258
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES

Table A.12, continued

Dependent variable: <i>polity2</i> score						
Panel E. Date of agricultural transition, post-1945 independence countries						
	All years		First yr. indep.		Post-1991	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
British colony	3.892*** (1.122)	2.926*** (1.031)	6.568*** (1.472)	7.213*** (1.621)	2.073* (1.215)	0.542 (1.287)
Years since Neolithic transition	-0.170 (0.321)	-0.127 (0.304)	-0.236 (0.399)	0.128 (0.367)	-0.526 (0.342)	-0.375 (0.372)
Country-years	3,673	3,564	69	66	1,639	1,591
R-squared	0.086	0.198	0.229	0.394	0.062	0.190
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES
Panel F. Date of agricultural transition, all non-European countries						
	All years		First yr. indep.		Post-1991	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
British colony	4.302*** (1.084)	4.596*** (0.999)	6.402*** (1.157)	6.355*** (1.117)	0.559 (1.099)	0.472 (0.992)
Years since Neolithic transition	-0.764*** (0.161)	-0.430** (0.209)	-0.476* (0.242)	-0.225 (0.283)	-0.878*** (0.230)	-0.382 (0.260)
Country-years	10,849	10,849	122	122	3,006	3,006
R-squared	0.174	0.220	0.272	0.305	0.111	0.237
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES
Panel G. Colonial onset date, post-1945 independence countries						
	All years		First yr. indep.		Post-1991	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
British colony	3.064*** (1.037)	2.558*** (0.816)	6.076*** (1.467)	7.210*** (1.603)	0.865 (1.160)	0.233 (1.129)
Colonial onset year	-0.0180*** (0.00390)	-0.0173*** (0.00418)	-0.00858 (0.00601)	-0.00713 (0.00711)	-0.0196*** (0.00356)	-0.0206*** (0.00368)
Country-years	3,771	3,627	72	68	1,724	1,653
R-squared	0.185	0.265	0.235	0.399	0.178	0.309
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES
Panel H. Colonial onset date, all non-European countries						
	All years		First yr. indep.		Post-1991	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
British colony	5.637*** (1.012)	5.442*** (0.947)	6.458*** (1.219)	6.369*** (1.219)	1.372 (0.965)	1.063 (0.893)
Colonial onset year	-0.0141*** (0.00238)	-0.00967*** (0.00285)	-0.00563* (0.00327)	-0.00164 (0.00371)	-0.0219*** (0.00261)	-0.0173*** (0.00308)
Country-years	8,554	8,537	105	103	2,586	2,569
R-squared	0.187	0.214	0.242	0.295	0.292	0.344
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES

Notes: Table A.12 summarizes a series of OLS regressions by presenting coefficient estimates for the main variables of theoretical interest, and country-clustered robust standard error estimates in parentheses. The other coefficient estimates are suppressed for expositional clarity. The even-numbered columns in Panels A, C, E, and G additionally control for the standard democracy covariates used in Table 1, Panel A: logged annual GDP per capita, logged annual population, logged annual oil and gas production per capita, Muslim percentage of the population, and ethnic fractionalization. The even-numbered columns in Panels B, D, F, and H additionally control for the standard democracy covariates used in Table 1, Panel B: Muslim percentage of the population and ethnic fractionalization. Table A.2 describes the variables and their sources.

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

Table A.13 only uses the post-1945 independence sample because the secondary education variable that Woodberry uses is averaged between 1960 and 1985 and therefore is measured well after independence for early decolonizers. Similarly, the literacy variable (following that used in Owolabi 2015) is measured in the 1960s.

Table A.13: Human Capital

Dependent variable: <i>polity2</i> score						
Panel A. Secondary education, post-1945 independence countries						
	All years		First yr. indep.		Post-1991	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
British colony	2.780** (1.271)	1.903 (1.240)	6.020*** (1.817)	5.516** (2.073)	0.440 (1.610)	-1.285 (1.659)
Secondary Education	0.127 (0.0949)	0.162 (0.112)	0.0233 (0.111)	0.111 (0.130)	0.0301 (0.0972)	0.0382 (0.133)
Country-years	2,535	2,413	48	45	1,149	1,078
R-squared	0.090	0.197	0.192	0.362	0.004	0.167
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES
Panel B. Literacy, post-1945 independence countries						
	All years		First yr. indep.		Post-1991	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
British colony	2.070* (1.150)	1.581 (1.138)	5.255*** (1.699)	5.381*** (1.775)	-0.273 (1.447)	-0.779 (1.382)
Literacy in 1960	0.0938*** (0.0229)	0.110*** (0.0323)	0.0817*** (0.0291)	0.127*** (0.0288)	0.0847*** (0.0266)	0.110*** (0.0387)
Country-years	3,504	3,417	66	64	1,581	1,533
R-squared	0.203	0.254	0.359	0.478	0.117	0.222
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES

Notes: Table A.13 summarizes a series of OLS regressions by presenting coefficient estimates for the main variables of theoretical interest, and country-clustered robust standard error estimates in parentheses. The other coefficient estimates are suppressed for expositional clarity. The even-numbered columns additionally control for the standard democracy covariates used in Table 1, Panel A: logged annual GDP per capita, logged annual population, logged annual oil and gas production per capita, Muslim percentage of the population, and ethnic fractionalization. *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

Table A.14 controls for three geographical covariates from Woodberry (2012)—dummy for island nations, dummy for landlocked countries, and latitude—and rainfall and rainfall squared, as evaluated in Haber (2012).

Table A.14: Geography

Dependent variable: <i>polity2</i> score						
Panel A. Post-1945 independence countries						
	All years		First yr. indep.		Post-1991	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
British colony	2.918*** (0.954)	2.383** (0.974)	6.000*** (1.388)	6.826*** (1.618)	0.758 (1.097)	0.191 (1.181)
Island	5.476*** (1.490)	4.774*** (1.618)	2.167 (1.666)	1.971 (1.708)	5.925*** (1.607)	5.444*** (1.710)
Landlocked	-0.855 (1.219)	-1.970 (1.247)	-1.100 (1.721)	-1.339 (1.650)	0.0175 (1.547)	-2.059 (1.605)
Latitude	0.0166 (0.0650)	0.0141 (0.0657)	0.0407 (0.100)	0.115 (0.106)	-0.0405 (0.0707)	-0.0164 (0.0808)
Precipitation	0.00435* (0.00254)	-8.88e-07 (0.00258)	0.00589* (0.00333)	0.00368 (0.00339)	0.00548** (0.00257)	-0.000426 (0.00248)
(Precipitation) ²	-1.59e-06* (8.31e-07)	-3.48e-07 (8.61e-07)	-1.53e-06 (1.05e-06)	-7.01e-07 (1.14e-06)	-2.28e-06*** (7.78e-07)	-4.64e-07 (8.33e-07)
Country-years	3,825	3,681	73	69	1,734	1,663
R-squared	0.210	0.255	0.322	0.435	0.208	0.277
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES
Panel B. All non-European countries						
	All years		First yr. indep.		Post-1991	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
British colony	4.812*** (1.185)	4.369*** (1.058)	6.047*** (1.158)	5.942*** (1.192)	0.548 (1.070)	0.0967 (1.025)
Island	2.240** (1.090)	1.791* (1.066)	2.353* (1.333)	1.864 (1.343)	3.073** (1.421)	2.343 (1.483)
Landlocked	-1.171 (0.884)	-1.404 (0.902)	0.425 (1.180)	-0.000516 (1.194)	-0.938 (1.251)	-1.641 (1.235)
Latitude	0.0114 (0.0405)	-0.00450 (0.0383)	-0.0135 (0.0394)	-0.0141 (0.0379)	0.0379 (0.0448)	0.0178 (0.0412)
Precipitation	0.00619*** (0.00177)	0.000551 (0.00220)	0.00342 (0.00231)	0.000243 (0.00303)	0.0103*** (0.00212)	0.00428 (0.00275)
(Precipitation) ²	-1.79e-06** (7.37e-07)	-5.43e-08 (8.51e-07)	-6.50e-07 (8.75e-07)	3.43e-07 (1.07e-06)	-3.33e-06*** (7.54e-07)	-1.56e-06 (9.91e-07)
Country-years	11,022	11,005	128	126	3,122	3,105
R-squared	0.188	0.223	0.319	0.336	0.205	0.264
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES

Notes: Table A.14 summarizes a series of OLS regressions by presenting coefficient estimates for the main variables of theoretical interest, and country-clustered robust standard error estimates in parentheses. The other coefficient estimates are suppressed for expositional clarity. The even-numbered columns in Panel A additionally control for the standard democracy covariates used in Table 1, Panel A: logged annual GDP per capita, logged annual population, logged annual oil and gas production per capita, Muslim percentage of the population, and ethnic fractionalization. The even-numbered columns in Panel B additionally control for the standard democracy controls used in Table 1, Panel B: Muslim percentage of the population and ethnic fractionalization.

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

A.4 Heterogeneity Within the British Empire

Table A.15: Heterogeneity Within the British Empire: Measures of Direct Rule

Dependent variable: <i>polity2</i> score. Sample: post-1945 decolonization countries						
Panel A: Direct vs. indirect British rule (colonial court cases)						
	All years		First yr. indep.		Post-1991	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
British direct rule	7.835*** (1.750)	6.740*** (2.213)	10.61*** (1.498)	11.26*** (2.004)	4.942** (1.979)	4.022 (2.981)
British indirect rule	1.944 (1.240)	1.273 (1.077)	4.794*** (1.671)	5.526*** (1.754)	-0.0305 (1.368)	-0.627 (1.314)
Country-years	3,825	3,681	73	69	1,734	1,663
R-squared	0.145	0.224	0.287	0.434	0.072	0.189
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES
Panel B: Metropolitan legal rights						
	All years		First yr. indep.		Post-1991	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
British colony	1.717 (1.167)	1.939* (0.974)	5.011*** (1.713)	6.501*** (1.663)	-0.250 (1.348)	0.121 (1.253)
Metropolitan legal institutions	6.821*** (0.734)	8.585*** (1.060)	4.473 (3.363)	5.105 (3.814)	7.333*** (1.645)	8.895*** (1.400)
Br. col.*Metro. legal	1.161 (1.915)	-0.668 (2.170)	0.864 (3.966)	-0.255 (4.415)	-0.121 (2.424)	-1.721 (2.601)
Country-years	3,825	3,681	73	69	1,734	1,663
R-squared	0.204	0.282	0.264	0.418	0.163	0.266
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES
Marginal effects						
British colony Metro. legal=1	2.878* (1.519)	1.271 (1.977)	5.875 (3.577)	6.246 (4.252)	-0.371 (2.014)	-1.600 (2.550)
British colony Metro. legal=0	1.717 (1.167)	1.939* (0.974)	5.011*** (1.713)	6.501*** (1.663)	-0.250 (1.348)	0.121 (1.253)
Panel C: Length of colonial rule						
	All years		First yr. indep.		Post-1991	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
British colony	1.919 (1.658)	1.157 (1.236)	4.404* (2.396)	5.933*** (2.498)	0.0761 (1.831)	-0.628 (1.582)
Colonial duration	0.0139*** (0.00352)	0.0125*** (0.00308)	0.00238 (0.00569)	0.00254 (0.00649)	0.0170*** (0.00486)	0.0179*** (0.00425)
Br. col.*Col. duration	0.00794 (0.00795)	0.00947 (0.00768)	0.0116 (0.0121)	0.00864 (0.0144)	0.00530 (0.00739)	0.00540 (0.00709)
Country-years	3,771	3,627	72	68	1,724	1,653
R-squared	0.191	0.274	0.244	0.403	0.181	0.311
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES
Marginal effects						
British colony Col. dur.=151 yrs.	3.118*** (1.023)	2.587*** (0.805)	6.154*** (1.461)	7.238*** (1.620)	0.877 (1.143)	0.188 (1.123)
British colony Col. dur.=65 yrs.	2.435* (1.290)	1.773* (0.905)	5.158*** (1.834)	6.495*** (1.879)	0.421 (1.471)	-0.276 (1.299)

Notes: See notes to Table A.10 (Panels A, C, E).

Table A.15 presents results for three measures of the directness or intensity of British rule. In Panel A, we code a British colony as experiencing direct British rule if less than 20 percent of its court cases in the 1950s were heard in customary courts, whereas British indirect rule composes the remaining British colonies (Lange 2004). There is a natural break in Lange's variable around 20 percent. It is not possible to run an interaction term with Lange's continuous variable because this variable is not coded outside the British empire. Panel B controls for Owolabi's (2015) dichotomous measure of whether colonial subjects possessed legal rights equivalent to metropolitan citizens', and for an interaction term between this variable and British colonialism. It states the marginal effect estimates for British colonialism conditional on whether or not the colony had metropolitan legal institutions. Panel C controls for Olsson's (2009) length of colonial rule variable and for an interaction term with British colonialism. It presents marginal effects

estimates for British colonialism conditional on the 25 percentile of the length of colonial rule in the sample (65 years) and the 75 percentile (151 years).

Across the different direct rule measures, the patterns resemble those in Table 1. With the exception of metropolitan legal rule colonies,¹³ all types of British colonies exhibit a statistically significant democratic advantage at independence. Given the existing literature, these findings are unsurprising for directly ruled colonies. However, existing arguments do not anticipate this result for indirectly ruled colonies, which did not tend to inherit the “good” British culture and institutions.

Additionally, all types of British colonies exhibit evidence of convergence over time. Excepting British colonies with few indigenous court cases (the direct rule measure in Panel A), the coefficient estimates for the marginal effect of British colonialism are small in magnitude and statistically insignificant in the post-1991 period. For directly ruled British colonies measured using Lange’s (2009) variable, the coefficient estimate diminishes by 53% between Columns 3 and 5 in Panel A (and 64% percent between Columns 4 and 6). However, at least when excluding controls, the direct rule measure remains statistically significant. This yields suggestive evidence that directly ruled British colonies retained some systematic democratic advantages even in the post-Cold War period. The conclusion discusses possible complementarities between our theory and existing accounts that highlight the benefits of direct British rule.

Table A.16 disaggregates the results by two theoretically relevant world regions.¹⁴ Many accounts of British colonial rule, such as Lange (2009, 53) and Abernethy (2000, 410), mention Britain’s Middle Eastern colonies as atypical of the rest of the British empire. The colonies were either ruled indirectly by local monarchs with minimal colonial interference (Bahrain, UAE, Qatar, Kuwait) or were acquired as mandates after World War I and only briefly experienced colonial rule (Iraq, Jordan, and Israel). Predictably, given the prevalence of authoritarianism in the region, Panel A shows that at independence the marginal estimated effect of British colonialism is even higher outside the Middle East than among all countries. However, the coefficient estimate in the post-1991 sample remains small and statistically insignificant. This demonstrates that the weak post-1991 correlation in Table 1 is not an artifact of coding certain Middle Eastern countries as belonging to the British empire.

Panel B disaggregates countries by whether or not they are in Sub-Saharan Africa. This region provides a hard test of the colonizer influence hypothesis because Britain’s African colonies tended to experience short durations of colonial rule, and were poorly institutionalized and characterized by systems of rule that denied full legal rights to large sections of the population (Mamdani 1996). By contrast, most cases frequently cited as examples of positive British institutional legacies, such as India and the Caribbean nations, are outside of Africa (Diamond 1988, 6). However, the estimated short-term effect of British colonialism is in fact larger in Africa than among all post-1945 independence countries, and yields the same pattern of strong short-term but not long-term effects—contrary to Huntington’s (1984, 206) assertion that British colonialism had no effect in Africa. Instead, the results suggest that African cases are

¹³Although the coefficient estimate for the marginal effect of British colonialism is relatively large among metropolitan legal rule colonies, the few number of non-British metropolitan rule countries in the present sample render the estimate imprecise and statistically insignificant. Only two non-British colonies with Polity IV data had metropolitan legal institutions.

¹⁴Recall that Appendix Table A.5 adds a full set of region fixed effects to the Table 1 specifications. Table A.16 instead examines heterogeneity when isolating individual and theoretically relevant world regions.

Table A.16: Heterogeneity Within the British Empire: World Regions

Dependent variable: <i>polity2</i> score. Sample: post-1945 decolonization countries						
Panel A: Middle East						
	All years		First yr. indep.		Post-1991	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
British colony	4.026*** (1.140)	2.799** (1.203)	8.061*** (1.403)	8.205*** (1.597)	1.819 (1.251)	0.0234 (1.499)
Middle East	0.657 (3.201)	-0.160 (1.888)	7.635*** (1.326)	7.934*** (2.480)	-4.169 (4.204)	-3.225 (2.753)
Br. col.*Mid. East	-4.000 (4.639)	-1.888 (3.447)	-15.56*** (3.677)	-12.88** (4.868)	-0.240 (5.287)	2.037 (3.795)
Country-years	3,825	3,681	73	69	1,734	1,663
R-squared	0.082	0.174	0.339	0.439	0.057	0.152
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES
Marginal effects						
British colony Mid. East=1	0.0264 (4.496)	0.911 (2.977)	-7.500** (3.399)	-4.673 (4.427)	1.579 (5.137)	2.060 (3.377)
British colony Mid. East=0	4.026*** (1.140)	2.799** (1.203)	8.061*** (1.403)	8.205*** (1.597)	1.819 (1.251)	0.0234 (1.499)
Panel B: Sub-Saharan Africa						
	All years		First yr. indep.		Post-1991	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
British colony	3.969** (1.982)	4.447** (1.696)	3.684 (2.423)	6.343*** (2.227)	2.311 (2.194)	2.082 (2.407)
Africa	-0.0708 (1.212)	1.277 (1.685)	-2.615 (1.709)	-3.007 (1.921)	1.793 (1.687)	2.368 (2.524)
Br. col.*Africa	-1.621 (2.292)	-3.581 (2.153)	3.998 (3.014)	0.468 (2.894)	-1.876 (2.683)	-3.265 (2.795)
Country-years	3,825	3,681	73	69	1,734	1,663
R-squared	0.069	0.186	0.223	0.402	0.018	0.161
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES
Marginal effects						
British colony Africa=1	2.348** (1.151)	0.866 (1.316)	7.682*** (1.793)	6.811*** (2.075)	0.435 (1.543)	-1.183 (1.504)
British colony Africa=0	3.969** (1.982)	4.447** (1.696)	3.684 (2.423)	6.343*** (2.227)	2.311 (2.194)	2.082 (2.407)

Notes: See notes to Table A.10 (Panels A, C, E).

influential for the effect estimate at independence, which implies that a coherent theory for explaining divergent inheritances and diminishing legacies must help to explain variation within that region.

Table A.17: Table A.15 Specifications with all non-European Countries

Dependent variable: <i>polity2</i> score. Sample: all non-European countries						
Panel A: Direct vs. indirect British rule (colonial court cases)						
	All years		First yr. indep.		Post-1991	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
British direct rule	8.747*** (1.444)	8.108*** (1.241)	10.20*** (1.081)	9.769*** (1.105)	4.164** (1.644)	2.845* (1.490)
British indirect rule	1.294 (1.160)	1.986* (1.013)	4.418*** (1.478)	4.641*** (1.392)	-1.465 (1.263)	-1.074 (1.061)
Country-years	11,088	11,071	129	127	3,147	3,130
R-squared	0.164	0.249	0.288	0.349	0.056	0.248
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES
Panel B: Metropolitan legal rights						
	All years		First yr. indep.		Post-1991	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
British colony	0.683 (1.055)	1.534 (0.968)	4.798*** (1.467)	5.159*** (1.397)	-1.971 (1.241)	-1.398 (1.108)
Metropolitan legal institutions	6.004*** (0.730)	5.369*** (0.468)	4.229 (3.273)	3.496 (3.447)	5.642*** (1.623)	4.017*** (1.209)
Br. col.*Metro. legal	3.524** (1.426)	2.400* (1.251)	1.086 (3.692)	0.702 (3.811)	2.479 (2.151)	1.642 (1.790)
Country-years	11,088	11,071	129	127	3,147	3,130
R-squared	0.217	0.281	0.284	0.336	0.123	0.278
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES
Marginal effects						
British colony Metro. legal institutions=1	4.207*** (0.959)	3.934*** (0.764)	5.885* (3.388)	5.862 (3.549)	0.508 (1.757)	0.244 (1.369)
British colony Metro. legal institutions=0	0.683 (1.055)	1.534 (0.968)	4.798*** (1.467)	5.159*** (1.397)	-1.971 (1.241)	-1.398 (1.108)
Panel C: Length of colonial rule						
	All years		First yr. indep.		Post-1991	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
British colony	3.412* (1.788)	2.879* (1.536)	5.813*** (2.067)	5.276*** (1.993)	-0.223 (1.697)	-0.963 (1.439)
Colonial duration	0.0136*** (0.00279)	0.00771** (0.00313)	0.00690* (0.00365)	0.00135 (0.00423)	0.0201*** (0.00444)	0.0129*** (0.00439)
Br. col.*Col. duration	0.00873 (0.00824)	0.0129* (0.00741)	0.00474 (0.0105)	0.00841 (0.0105)	0.00334 (0.00723)	0.00787 (0.00629)
Country-years	10,953	10,940	126	125	3,114	3,101
R-squared	0.196	0.248	0.273	0.322	0.185	0.309
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES
Marginal effects						
British colony Col. dur.=259 yrs.	5.673*** (1.318)	6.230*** (1.212)	7.041*** (1.548)	7.454*** (1.541)	0.641 (1.113)	1.075 (1.001)
British colony Col. dur.=44 yrs.	3.796** (1.519)	3.448*** (1.300)	6.022*** (1.705)	5.646*** (1.632)	-0.0763 (1.451)	-0.617 (1.230)

Notes: Table A.17 summarizes a series of OLS regressions by presenting coefficient estimates for the main variables of theoretical interest, and country-clustered robust standard error estimates in parentheses. The other coefficient estimates are suppressed for expositional clarity. The even-numbered columns additionally control for the standard democracy covariates used in Table 1, Panel B: Muslim percentage of the population and ethnic fractionalization. *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

Table A.18: Table A.16 Specifications with all non-European Countries

Dependent variable: <i>polity2</i> score. Sample: all non-European countries						
Panel A: Middle East						
	All years		First yr. indep.		Post-1991	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
British colony	5.557*** (1.181)	5.641*** (1.086)	7.874*** (1.096)	7.818*** (1.105)	1.588 (1.138)	1.020 (1.077)
Middle East	-3.988*** (1.007)	-0.998 (1.107)	-2.109 (2.342)	-0.751 (2.569)	-5.409** (2.420)	-1.536 (2.480)
Br. col.*Mid. East	-4.357* (2.405)	-4.861** (1.901)	-6.803* (3.583)	-6.765* (3.449)	-3.106 (3.123)	-2.919 (2.739)
Country-years	11,088	11,071	129	127	3,147	3,130
R-squared	0.173	0.223	0.334	0.363	0.119	0.242
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES
Marginal effects						
British colony Mid. East=1	1.199 (2.095)	0.781 (1.539)	1.071 (3.411)	1.052 (3.244)	-1.519 (2.908)	-1.899 (2.523)
British colony Mid. East=0	5.557*** (1.181)	5.641*** (1.086)	7.874*** (1.096)	7.818*** (1.105)	1.588 (1.138)	1.020 (1.077)
Panel B: Sub-Saharan Africa						
	All years		First yr. indep.		Post-1991	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
British colony	5.547*** (1.560)	5.935*** (1.202)	6.359*** (1.563)	6.589*** (1.347)	0.244 (1.591)	0.373 (1.197)
Africa	-0.702 (0.687)	0.245 (0.846)	0.0690 (1.108)	0.246 (1.217)	-2.006* (1.114)	-1.866 (1.390)
British colony*Africa	-3.146 (1.928)	-4.303** (1.657)	-0.0393 (2.365)	-0.650 (2.319)	0.650 (2.168)	-0.423 (1.836)
Country-years	11,088	11,071	129	127	3,147	3,130
R-squared	0.106	0.218	0.226	0.302	0.018	0.238
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES
Marginal effects						
British colony Africa=1	2.402** (1.133)	1.632 (1.170)	6.320*** (1.775)	5.938*** (1.914)	0.894 (1.472)	-0.0491 (1.444)
British colony Africa=0	5.547*** (1.560)	5.935*** (1.202)	6.359*** (1.563)	6.589*** (1.347)	0.244 (1.591)	0.373 (1.197)

Notes: Table A.18 summarizes a series of OLS regressions by presenting coefficient estimates for the main variables of theoretical interest, and country-clustered robust standard error estimates in parentheses. The other coefficient estimates are suppressed for expositional clarity. The even-numbered columns additionally control for the standard democracy covariates used in Table 1, Panel B: Muslim percentage of the population and ethnic fractionalization. *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

A.5 Additional Robustness Checks

Superpower rivalry strongly impacted regime dynamics during the Cold War, the time period during which nearly every country in the post-1945 decolonization sample gained independence. It is possible, although unlikely, that Britain colonized territories that would have tended to form international alliances favorable for democracy promotion at independence regardless of their European colonizer. Although this consideration is probably more appropriately theorized as a mechanism rather than as an alternative explanation, we provide statistical evidence that it does not drive any of the results.

Three major differences, both highly correlated with colonizer origin, stand out as being both testable and potentially important. First, British colonies appear less likely than other countries to be ruled by communist or Soviet-backed regimes, which in turn appear to be less likely to be democratic than other countries. Second, compared to other colonial powers, France conducted a highly interventionist policy in its former African colonies. France often supported dictators sympathetic to French strategic and economic interests, for example, sending in soldiers to reverse a successful coup in Gabon in 1964 to restore a preferred dictator. Third, countries in which colonizers retained military bases may have faced less pressure to democratize than other nations.

Table A.19 shows that the effects of all these post-colonial factors are relatively small, and that none of them qualitatively change the estimated effect of British colonialism. Panel A includes dummies for countries under Soviet influence (operationalized as countries that were at any time full or observer members of COMECON) and countries with a strong French influence (operationalized as countries that joined de Gaulle's French Community at independence). Since both factors are potentially endogenous to democracy levels (since dictators might find either of these clubs more attractive) this represents a very favorable test for finding evidence of post-colonial influence. However, neither factor has a statistically significant relationship with democracy, although the estimated effect of communist influence is negative and moderately large at independence—and, perhaps surprisingly, negative and larger in magnitude after the Cold War ended than before. The estimated effects of British colonialism on post-independence democracy are somewhat smaller than the Table 1 estimates, but remain consistently statistically significant.

Panel B of Table A.19 tests another version of the post-independence influence hypothesis: some colonial powers retained military bases in their former colonies, which both increased their interest in these countries and increased their ability to influence their politics, although it is not necessarily clear if this would positively or negatively affect democracy. We constructed a dummy variable for whether a foreign military power had base facilities (as distinct from a training mission) in the countries at independence. These countries appear to be little different than the rest of the sample, and their inclusion does not alter the estimated effects of British colonialism from Table 1.

Another plausible hypothesis about colonialism is that British-colonized countries are more democratic because of the influence of the Commonwealth of Nations, though many dictatorships were also members of this organization. Because nearly all British colonies in the sample joined the Commonwealth of Nations (and those that did not, chiefly in the Middle East, were not randomly selected), it is impossible to separate the influence of this organization from the overall influence of British colonialism. However, there is no clear reason why the influence of the Commonwealth would change so dramatically over time.

Table A.19: Post-Independence Colonizer Influence

Dependent variable: <i>polity2</i> score						
Panel A. Cold War Alliances, post-1945 independence countries						
	All years		First yr. indep.		Post-1991	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
British colony	3.360** (1.291)	2.565** (1.189)	5.438*** (1.642)	5.980*** (1.753)	1.242 (1.476)	0.0752 (1.563)
Communist Bloc	-1.408 (1.379)	-3.118 (2.057)	-2.905 (2.110)	-4.188 (2.680)	-3.151 (2.440)	-4.954* (2.881)
French Community	-0.0618 (0.979)	1.093 (1.178)	-1.597 (1.594)	-1.240 (1.947)	0.938 (1.470)	1.475 (1.602)
Country-years	3,825	3,681	73	69	1,734	1,663
R-squared	0.073	0.184	0.230	0.394	0.030	0.187
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES
Panel B. Cold War alliances, all non-European countries						
	All years		First yr. indep.		Post-1991	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
British colony	4.388*** (1.207)	4.667*** (1.001)	6.271*** (1.181)	6.290*** (1.104)	0.156 (1.156)	-0.0848 (0.956)
Communist Bloc	-1.678 (1.381)	-0.0811 (1.152)	1.143 (2.692)	1.806 (2.658)	0.207 (2.978)	0.410 (1.764)
French Community	-2.712 (1.804)	-4.538*** (1.699)	-4.545 (2.974)	-5.698* (2.907)	-6.680* (3.468)	-8.461*** (2.933)
Country-years	11,088	11,071	129	127	3,147	3,130
R-squared	0.103	0.214	0.241	0.321	0.043	0.288
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES
Panel C. Military bases, post-1945 independence countries						
	All years		First yr. indep.		Post-1991	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
British colony	3.609*** (1.155)	2.646** (1.058)	6.167*** (1.476)	6.846*** (1.628)	1.320 (1.305)	0.302 (1.364)
NATO Base	1.136 (1.783)	1.328 (1.308)	-1.712 (2.290)	-0.694 (2.002)	0.901 (1.975)	1.880 (1.454)
Country-years	3,825	3,681	73	69	1,734	1,663
R-squared	0.074	0.173	0.225	0.377	0.013	0.155
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES
Panel D. Military bases, all non-European countries						
	All years		First yr. indep.		Post-1991	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
British colony	4.154*** (1.206)	4.356*** (1.025)	6.307*** (1.190)	6.316*** (1.119)	0.364 (1.156)	0.204 (0.984)
NATO Base	1.711 (1.362)	1.531 (1.148)	0.451 (1.399)	0.509 (1.252)	0.739 (1.601)	0.567 (1.455)
Country-years	11,088	11,071	129	127	3,147	3,130
R-squared	0.094	0.205	0.227	0.302	0.003	0.223
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES

Notes: Table A.19 summarizes a series of OLS regressions by presenting coefficient estimates for the main variables of theoretical interest, and country-clustered robust standard error estimates in parentheses. The other coefficient estimates are suppressed for expositional clarity. The even-numbered columns in Panels A and C additionally control for the standard democracy covariates used in Table 1, Panel A: logged annual GDP per capita, logged annual population, logged annual oil and gas production per capita, Muslim percentage of the population, and ethnic fractionalization. The even-numbered columns in Panels B and D additionally control for the standard democracy covariates used in Table 1, Panel B: Muslim percentage of the population and ethnic fractionalization. *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

Table 1 contrasted British colonies with the quite heterogeneous excluded category of “non-British colonies.” Perhaps very low levels of post-colonial democracy among a single non-British power drives the result, in which case we would be estimating a “not French” or “not Portuguese” effect rather than a truly pro-British effect. Table A.20 examines this possibility more closely by presenting results from models that include a full set of other European colonizer dummies (French, Portuguese, Spanish, U.S., Dutch, Belgian, Italian) with British colonies composing the excluded category. The differences in average democracy level relative to British colonies in the year after independence are consistently significantly lower for all of the main rival empires: French, Portuguese, Spanish, and Belgian. It is difficult to interpret the coefficient estimates for the U.S. (Philippines) and the Netherlands (Indonesia, Suriname) because they each colonized so few territories. For the main non-British empires, the differences at independence weaken somewhat in the full temporal sample, and have mostly dissipated after 1991—reinforcing the Table 1 pattern.

Table A.20: Disaggregating European Powers

Dependent variable: <i>polity2</i> score						
Panel A. Post-1945 independence countries						
	All years		First yr. indep.		Post-1991	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
French colony	-4.105*** (1.165)	-3.008*** (1.085)	-6.983*** (1.570)	-7.144*** (1.862)	-1.985 (1.359)	-0.992 (1.356)
Portuguese colony	-0.762 (1.820)	0.0604 (1.658)	-8.843*** (1.509)	-9.669*** (1.813)	2.107 (2.269)	2.258 (2.033)
Spanish colony	-6.379*** (1.040)	-5.988*** (2.082)	-9.343*** (1.283)	-11.57*** (1.738)	-6.445*** (1.046)	-4.376 (2.921)
U.S. colony	2.870*** (1.040)	-0.762 (1.761)	-0.343 (1.283)	-3.992** (1.773)	6.722*** (1.046)	4.823** (2.030)
Dutch colony	-0.711 (1.965)	0.673 (2.383)	0.157 (2.271)	-0.537 (2.015)	2.576* (1.328)	4.550*** (1.696)
Belgian colony	-4.260*** (1.234)	-4.971*** (1.576)	-5.010*** (1.796)	-7.727*** (1.999)	-1.501 (2.049)	-2.764 (2.835)
Italian colony	-4.611** (2.048)	-0.0733 (1.731)	-2.343 (5.400)	-0.151 (5.984)	-3.938 (2.538)	-0.0453 (1.790)
Country-years	3,825	3,681	73	69	1,734	1,663
R-squared	0.106	0.197	0.279	0.445	0.082	0.198
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES
Panel B. All non-European countries						
	All years		First yr. indep.		Post-1991	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
French colony	-2.557** (1.004)	-2.149** (0.979)	-4.688*** (1.215)	-4.010*** (1.247)	-1.761 (1.145)	-0.733 (1.212)
Portuguese colony	-0.251 (1.223)	-2.000 (1.448)	-6.511*** (1.071)	-8.126*** (1.133)	3.135 (1.967)	1.739 (1.817)
Spanish colony	0.681 (1.110)	-1.577 (1.302)	-3.333*** (1.071)	-5.317*** (1.200)	4.899*** (1.300)	2.449* (1.381)
U.S. colony	4.288*** (0.885)	2.128* (1.183)	1.889** (0.869)	0.328 (1.174)	6.783*** (0.784)	4.302*** (1.117)
Dutch colony	0.777 (1.852)	0.740 (1.319)	2.389 (2.021)	1.774 (1.497)	2.763** (1.068)	2.740*** (0.679)
Belgian colony	-2.832** (1.107)	-4.812*** (1.218)	-2.778* (1.502)	-4.642*** (1.386)	-1.417 (1.908)	-3.518* (1.927)
Italian colony	-3.148 (1.975)	1.004 (1.982)	-0.111 (5.184)	3.490 (5.378)	-3.666 (2.416)	1.290 (2.618)
Country-years	11,088	11,071	129	127	3,147	3,130
R-squared	0.031	0.131	0.131	0.242	0.121	0.258
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES

Notes: Table A.20 summarizes a series of OLS regressions by presenting coefficient estimates for the main variables of theoretical interest, and country-clustered robust standard error estimates in parentheses. The other coefficient estimates are suppressed for expositional clarity. The even-numbered columns in Panel A additionally control for the standard democracy covariates used in Table 1, Panel A: logged annual GDP per capita, logged annual population, logged annual oil and gas production per capita, Muslim percentage of the population, and ethnic fractionalization. The even-numbered columns in Panel B additionally control for the standard democracy covariates used in Table 1, Panel B: Muslim percentage of the population and ethnic fractionalization.

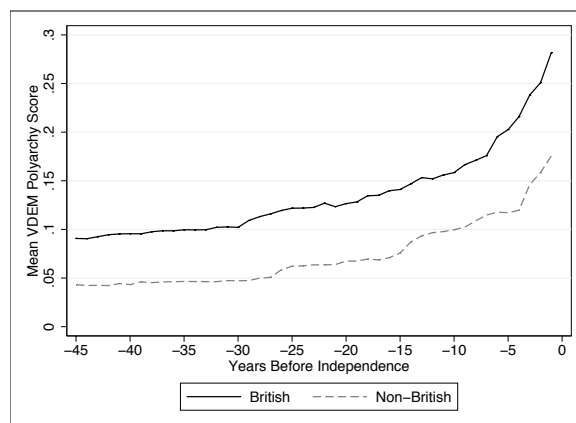
*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

A.6 Additional Tables and Figures for Mechanisms Sections

Appendix Figure A.1 compares V-Dem polyarchy scores in British and non-British colonies, indexed by years prior to achieving independence. V-Dem data, unlike Polity IV, is available in many pre-independence years. The figure exhibits two main patterns. First, British colonies in our sample were consistently more democratic than other colonies throughout the 20th century, although the Britain line is somewhat biased upward relative to our core sample because V-Dem excludes many highly authoritarian British Middle Eastern colonies. This pattern is consistent with earlier arguments such as Weiner’s (1987) that British democratic advantages extended deep into the colonial era. However, this first takeaway also requires a qualification. To properly interpret long-term advantages, it is crucial to analyze the absolute level of democracy among British colonies rather than only the difference from other colonies. Forty-five years before independence, not only is the mean polyarchy score very low among British colonies, but only two colonies featured franchises of at least 10 percent of the colonial population. Even Jamaica, the colony with the highest polyarchy score at this time, had a lower polyarchy score than the *average* polyarchy score among British colonies one year before independence. Thus, despite the advantage relative to non-British colonies earlier in the colonial era, considerable reforms were still required during decolonization to help explain the large number of British colonies that became democratic by independence (see Appendix Table A.4).

The second main pattern in Figure A.1 is that British colonies became dramatically more democratic during the decolonization era and their democratic advantage relative to other colonies increased. The difference in the last year of colonial rule is 72 percent larger than 30 years before. Table 2 shows the importance of Britain’s more calculated decolonization strategy for explaining its colonies’ relative democratic advantage at independence. Had Britain counterfactually granted independence an average of even one year earlier than it actually did, then British colonies would not have enjoyed a democratic advantage prior to independence. Similarly, France could have conceivably promoted higher levels of democracy in its colonies had it not liquidated almost its entire African empire in 1960.

Figure A.1: British Colonies Versus Other Colonies, by Years Before Independence



Notes: The vertical axis in Figure A.1 shows the average V-Dem polyarchy score for British colonies and for other countries in the post-1945 decolonization sample, averaged across the number of years before a particular colony achieved independence.

Table A.21: Guerrilla Takeovers and Democracy at Independence

DV: <i>polity2</i> score in first year of indep.				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Guerrillas inherit state	-6.554*** (1.392)	-7.618*** (1.821)	-3.567** (1.403)	-3.818** (1.766)
British colony			5.633*** (1.498)	6.068*** (1.692)
Countries	73	69	73	69
R-squared	0.082	0.244	0.240	0.398
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES

Notes: Table A.21 summarizes a series of OLS regressions by presenting coefficient estimates, and robust standard error estimates clustered by country in parentheses. Columns 2 and 4 control for the same standard democracy covariates as in Table 1, Panel A, and Appendix Table A.2 describes the guerrilla takeover variable. The sample in every specification consists of post-1945 decolonization cases. *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

Table A.22: Assessing Cross-Imperial Policy Differences

Dependent variable: <i>polity2</i> score in first yr. indep.				
Panel A. Colonizer Democracy				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Colonizer <i>polity2</i>	0.899*** (0.213)	0.926*** (0.212)	0.516*** (0.175)	0.508*** (0.176)
British colony			4.390*** (1.635)	5.030*** (1.784)
Countries	73	69	73	69
R-squared	0.188	0.330	0.260	0.415
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES
Panel B. Decolonization Manifestos				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Colonizer Anti-Colonial Manifesto	7.352*** (1.636)	7.487*** (1.983)	4.145*** (1.197)	3.769** (1.508)
British colony			3.585** (1.534)	4.433** (1.690)
Countries	66	62	66	62
R-squared	0.200	0.373	0.232	0.421
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES

Notes: See notes to Table A.10 (Panels A, C, E). Columns 2 and 4 control for the same standard democracy covariates as in Table 1, Panel A, and Appendix Table A.2 describes the colonizer anti-colonial manifesto data. The sample in every specification consists of post-1945 decolonization cases.

Table A.23: British Colonialism and Democracy: Arellano-Bond Time Series Results

Dependent variable: <i>polity2</i> score						
	All years	All years	1st 6 yrs. post-indep.	1st 6 yrs. post-indep.	After 6 yrs. post-indep.	After 6 yrs. post-indep.
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Post Ind. Years	0.0225*** (0.00535)	0.0418*** (0.00944)	-0.0488 (0.0776)	-0.223* (0.116)	0.0252*** (0.00452)	0.0455*** (0.0116)
Post Ind. Years*British Col.	-0.0167** (0.00653)	-0.0141** (0.00710)	-0.267* (0.149)	-0.379** (0.177)	-0.0122* (0.00645)	-0.00811 (0.00745)
Country-years	3,733	3,593	364	343	3,369	3,250
Number of countries	73	70	73	69	73	70
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES
Marginal effects						
Post Ind. Years British colony=1	0.006 (0.004)	0.028*** (0.004)	-0.316** (0.138)	-0.603*** (0.233)	0.013*** (0.005)	0.037** (0.015)
Post Ind. Years British colony=0	0.0225*** (0.00535)	0.0418*** (0.00944)	-0.0488 (0.0776)	-0.223* (0.116)	0.0252*** (0.00452)	0.0455*** (0.0116)

Notes: Table A.23 summarizes a series of Arellano-Bond dynamic time series regressions by presenting coefficient estimates for the main variables of theoretical interest, and robust standard error estimates in parentheses. Given the large T in Columns 1, 2, 5, and 6, the Arellano-Bond estimator is considerably less precise than the model used in Table 3 because the number of orthogonality conditions to satisfy increases at a rate of $\frac{T \cdot (T-1)}{2}$ (Alvarez and Arellano 2003). The bottom panel presents marginal effect estimates calculated from the same model and standard errors. Every model includes country fixed effects and the IV estimates for one period of the lagged dependent variable. The even-numbered columns additionally control for the three time-varying standard democracy covariates in Table 1, Panel A. *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

Table A.24: Assessing Negotiated Decolonization Mechanisms Post-1991

DV: <i>polity2</i> score. Years: post-1991				
Panel A. Guerrilla takeover at independence				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Guerrillas inherit state	-1.205 (1.504)	-0.0862 (1.606)	-0.596 (1.586)	-0.0724 (1.653)
British colony			1.141 (1.349)	0.0331 (1.376)
Country-years	1,734	1,663	1,734	1,663
R-squared	0.003	0.145	0.011	0.145
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES
Panel B. Colonizer democracy				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Colonizer Polity	0.0566 (0.174)	-0.116 (0.186)	-0.0803 (0.230)	-0.165 (0.235)
British colony			1.554 (1.571)	0.656 (1.636)
Country-years	1,734	1,663	1,734	1,663
R-squared	0.001	0.149	0.012	0.150
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES
Panel C. Decolonization manifestos				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Colonizer Anti-Colonial Manifesto	3.115** (1.357)	2.804* (1.410)	4.181*** (0.947)	4.312*** (1.099)
British colony			-1.197 (1.258)	-1.942 (1.238)
Country-years	1,567	1,496	1,567	1,496
R-squared	0.044	0.151	0.048	0.162
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES

Notes: Table A.24 summarizes a series of OLS regressions by presenting coefficient estimates for the main variables of theoretical interest, and country-clustered robust standard error estimates in parentheses. The even-numbered columns additionally control for the standard democracy covariates used in Table 1, Panel A. The sample in every specification consists of post-1945 decolonization cases and, temporally, only post-1991 country-years. *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

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