

Did British Colonialism Promote Democracy? Divergent Inheritances and Diminishing Legacies*

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Abstract

Many scholars have argued that British colonial rule promoted post-independence democracy, but there has been considerable debate over the robustness of this result and its causes. We show that this relationship follows a strong temporal pattern. Although former British colonies were considerably more democratic than other countries immediately following independence, subsequent convergence in democracy levels has eliminated these differences in the post-Cold War period. Neither pre-colonial traits, geographical and policy variation among British colonies, nor post-colonial influences drive these results, while existing British colonialism-democracy theories do not provide a compelling explanation for change over time. We argue that divergent policy approaches to decolonization by European powers contributed to this pattern.

Keywords: Democracy, Colonialism

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1 Introduction

What explains cross-national variation in democracy? This central question of political science is especially relevant for the numerous countries that gained independence after World War II. Although many of these countries have authoritarian governments, numerous others have experienced pluralistic government—some for long periods, some for only short spells—despite lacking the structural factors such as high income per capita, European settlers, and strong civil societies often touted as causes of democracy.

To explain this variation, many scholars have examined legacies from the colonial period. This focus appears pertinent when considering that most countries outside of Europe inherited their political institutions directly from the colonial state, and that considerable evidence demonstrates colonial institutions have influenced a wide variety of social and economic outcomes (Acemoglu et al. 2001, 2002; Engerman and Sokoloff 2011; Lindberg and Smith 2014).

A central debate within the literature on colonial causes of democracy concerns whether the identity of the colonizer matters, and has usually focused on the specific question: Did British colonialism promote democracy? Political science research has produced mixed conclusions. Early arguments and evidence championed a positive British democratic legacy (Emerson 1960; Huntington 1984; Bollen and Jackman 1985; Weiner 1987; Lipset et al. 1993), and scholars routinely control for a British colonial rule dummy in cross-national democracy regressions. However, many more recent statistical studies do not replicate the beneficial British effect (Hadenius 1992; Barro 1999; Przeworski et al. 2000; Woodberry 2012), although Bernhard et al. (2004) and Olsson (2009) provide exceptions. Complementing these inconsistent empirical results, several prominent recent studies have moved beyond analyzing colonizer identity to instead examine other aspects of the colonial or pre-colonial era such as Protestant missionaries (Woodberry 2012; Lankina and Getachew 2012), pre-colonial state development and colonial-era European settlers (Hariri 2012), or broader mea-

sures of indirect/direct rule (Lange 2004, 2009). The literature on economic development features a similar debate, with support for the importance of colonizer identity (La Porta et al. 1998; Grier 1999; Lee and Schultz 2012; Mahoney 2010) countered by arguments that other aspects of colonial rule were more important (Acemoglu et al. 2001; Engerman and Sokoloff 2011).

This paper provides evidence that British colonial rule does indeed matter for democracy levels even when accounting for alternative colonial and pre-colonial effects. However, the British legacy cannot properly be understood without scrutinizing how the effect changes over time. Although British colonial rule tended to bequeath a positive democratic inheritance at independence, this legacy has diminished over time. Former British colonies were dramatically more democratic than other ex-colonies immediately following independence. In countries' first full year of independence, the average difference is over six points on the standard 20-point *polity2* scale. However, this difference was transient, as there is no discernible difference in democracy levels between ex-British and non-former British colonies since 1991. This paper seeks to explain this previously unnoticed temporal pattern.

We first perform a variety of statistical tests to demonstrate the existence and robustness of this pattern. Cross-sectional models estimate a moderately large association between British rule and democracy among all post-independence years, but this correlation is shown to be much stronger at independence—and is completely absent in a post-1991 sample. This result is robust to adding standard set of democracy covariates, to changing democracy measures, to expanding the sample to include the entire period since 1800, and to controlling for compelling alternative explanations studied in previous research. Intriguingly, the findings qualify existing prominent posited historical causes of democracy. These temporally contingent findings also hold among many subsets of the British empire, including short and indirectly ruled British colonies. Furthermore, we show only an implausibly large amount of bias from unobserved covariates could explain away the estimated effect at independence. Finally, claims that omitted variables explain the finding have difficulty

identifying factors that—in addition to covarying with colonizer identity—strongly covary with democracy levels at independence *but not* several decades afterwards.

The second part of the paper examines the mechanisms by which differences during the decolonization era help to explain divergent inheritances and diminishing legacies. Focusing on the importance of decolonization builds off a smaller strand of the existing historical literature (Smith 1978; Kahler 1984; Spruyt 2005) and contrasts with existing prominent political science theories focused on long-term cultural or institutional factors. British governments were more willing to allow a gradual transition to colonial rule than other major colonial powers, and one more tailored to local circumstances. Consequently, Britain was more likely to hold competitive elections prior to independence and avoided successful anti-colonial revolutions that ended European rule in many other countries. However, these differences emerged from contingent arrangements, as opposed to higher underlying societal demand for democracy. Evidence from time series regressions demonstrate patterns of (1) democratic reversals shortly after independence in ex-British colonies and (2) greater democratic gains by non-former British colonies several decades after independence, as “Third Wave” international influences engendered liberalization of decolonization-induced dictatorships. Neither pattern is well-explained by existing long-term cultural or institutional accounts of British colonialism, but are consistent with our argument that mean reversion gradually undermined the short-term effects of decolonization.

This paper provides three broader important contributions to the colonialism literature that the conclusion elaborates upon. First, our evidence rejects recent arguments in the colonialism-democracy literature that colonizer identity does not matter. Not only can the effects of British colonialism not be reduced to the type of people that populated British colonies (e.g., British settlers, Protestant missionaries), but many factors emphasized in the recent literature receive less consistent support than the British colonial legacy. Second, we show that these new findings in part follow from examining multiple samples and periods, rather than a single and potentially unrepresentative time

period and/or sample. This supports the idea that a disaggregated analysis is crucial for understanding colonial legacies. Finally, the results provide insights into studying international democracy promotion and externally controlled institution-building.

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, they also share a common shortcoming: none can explain why the effect of British colonialism should have been strongly positive at independence *and* should have dramatically 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 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 Aber-

nethy 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 in accounting for change over time—especially because, as shown below, British colonies did tend 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 long periods of times, 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) provide 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 rights to colonial subjects prior to World War II (Owolabi 2015). This is closely related 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 the African and Middle Eastern colonies that gained independence after 1945). However, similar to cultural and institutional arguments, these theories do not carry obvious implications for changes over time in the strength of the Britain effect. 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 the 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 countries (minus Europe and neo-Europes) 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 and economic institutions 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 various time periods and country samples. We examine correlations among all post-independence years, the first full year of independence, and only post-1991 years. Disaggregating time periods provides an important advantage of our study relative to 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 from 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: the set of former colonies that gained independence from a Western European country between World War II and 1980, and the set all non-European countries. The former sample is relatively large (73 countries) and groups together countries that are similar in the sense of experiencing decolonization around the same time. This also ensures that when examining long-term effects in the post-Cold War era (a commonly studied period in colonialism studies, e.g., Acemoglu et al. 2001; Hariri 2012), countries have experienced post-colonial periods of roughly similar length. The post-1945 independence sample also allevi-

ates concerns about causally heterogeneous colonizer effects—given the “wave” of decolonization in this period—and concerns that highly unrepresentative colonies such as “neo-European” settler colonies (United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand) drive the results.¹

However, to demonstrate that the temporally contingent Britain effect does not depend upon this particular sample, we re-run every cross-sectional result in Tables 1 to 3 with a sample of all non-European countries (including never-colonized countries). As with analyzing correlations in different time periods, evaluating different samples distinguishes the present analysis from recent colonial legacy articles (e.g., Woodberry 2012; Hariri 2012; Owolabi 2015). These results for all non-European countries show that including the bulk of the former Spanish empire and neo-Britains do not substantively change the findings for British colonialism, whereas comparing results from the two samples carries important implications for some other prominent colonialism-democracy hypotheses.

3.2 Data

Colonizer identity. We follow standard definitions of overseas colonialism to measure British colonialism. Some cases are complicated because Britain exerted minimal internal control (Arabian peninsula colonies), were ruled for a very short period of time (Middle Eastern Mandate territories colonized after World War I), or were transferred after World War II (former Italian colonies). We use Wahman, Teorell, and Hadenius’ (2013) data, which code the former two categories but not the latter as British colonies. However, we show that our results do not hinge on including Middle Eastern countries in the British empire—and, in fact, this coding decision biases against finding a positive Britain-democracy correlation at independence.

¹Owolabi (2015, 45) discusses additional advantages of studying a post-1945 independence sample. Fails and Krieckhaus (2010) show that empirical support for some colonial legacy hypotheses depends almost entirely on the neo-Europes.

Democracy. We use the standard *polity2* variable from the Polity IV dataset (Marshall and Gurr 2014) to measure democracy. The appendix provides robustness checks using Cheibub et al.’s (2013) update of Przeworski et al.’s (2000) binary democracy variable and Coppedge et al.’s (2016) polyarchy measure from the VDEM dataset. Although coding democracy scores at independence may seem to be an error-prone process, 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.

Table A.1 details the various covariates used below. Table A.2 provides summary statistics for all the variables.

4 Statistical Evidence for a Time-Varying British Legacy

This section presents 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 varies across specifications.

Regression results consistently support a temporally contingent relationship between British colonialism and democracy: the correlation was strong at independence but weak in the post-Cold War era. This result is robust to adding a standard set of democracy covariates, to changing democracy measures, to controlling for variables posited in research suggesting that Britain simply selected better colonies, and to examining either a post-1945 decolonization sample or all non-European countries. These temporally contingent findings also hold among many subsets of the British em-

pire, including short and indirectly ruled British colonies. Furthermore, only a remarkably large amount of bias from unobserved covariates could explain away the estimated effect at independence, and any allegations that omitted variables can explain away the temporally heterogeneous pattern must identify factors that—in addition to covarying with colonizer identity—strongly covary with democracy levels at independence *but not* several decades afterwards.

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 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: 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.² The Britain coefficient is also statistically significant in Columns 1 and 2 of Table A.3, Panels A and B, which re-runs these models with 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.

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, as shown below, the coefficient estimate in the full temporal

²Seven of the 73 countries in the core sample are missing GDP per capita data, 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.

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 Col.	3.577*** (1.147)	2.189** (1.042)	6.238*** (1.444)	5.996*** (1.786)	1.253 (1.279)	0.293 (1.419)
Ethnic frac.		-2.720 (2.340)		-1.692 (2.601)		-0.479 (3.196)
Muslim %		-0.0373*** (0.0132)		-0.0376* (0.0191)		-0.0324** (0.0160)
ln(GDP/cap)		1.358** (0.664)		1.220 (1.358)		0.575 (0.927)
ln(Pop.)		0.800** (0.388)		0.796 (0.519)		0.315 (0.488)
ln(Oil & gas/capita)		-0.492** (0.243)		-0.877* (0.467)		-0.558* (0.290)
Country-years	3,903	3,462	73	66	1,734	1,484
R-squared	0.073	0.190	0.214	0.368	0.011	0.143

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 Col.	4.439*** (1.256)	4.570*** (1.062)	6.529*** (1.182)	6.377*** (1.102)	0.470 (1.175)	0.252 (0.970)
Muslim %		-0.0544*** (0.00798)		-0.0454*** (0.0124)		-0.0788*** (0.0119)
Ethnic frac.		-1.690 (1.460)		-0.685 (1.836)		-1.443 (2.017)
Country-years	11,052	11,052	123	123	3,063	3,063
R-squared	0.085	0.194	0.242	0.324	0.001	0.230

Notes: Table 1 summarizes a series of OLS regressions by presenting coefficient estimates, and country-clustered robust standard error estimates in parentheses. The coefficient estimate for the constant is suppressed for expositional clarity. *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

sample is not robustly statistically significant using every democracy measure (Table A.3, Panel D, Column 2) nor across across all types of British colonies (Table 3). The estimated effect in Panel B is somewhat larger because of the influence of the four historically exceptional neo-Europes.

The remainder of Table 1 disaggregates the Britain effect into different time periods. Columns 3 and 4 present results for each country's first full year of independence. The Britain coefficient estimate in Panel A is roughly 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.3, Panel A, Columns 3 and 4) 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 even higher in Panel B.

Are these results driven by unobserved factors? The large size of the coefficient estimate at independence and the high degree of coefficient stability between Columns 3 and 4 in both panels suggests that only a large amount of bias from unobserved variables could explain away the result for the initial period after independence. Altonji et al. (2005) provide a method for formalizing this intuition, which calculates how much larger the bias from unobserved covariates would have to be than the bias from observed covariates—the latter of which can be estimated by comparing the coefficient estimates in Columns 3 and 4—to drive the coefficient estimate to 0. For Panel A, the bias from unobservables would have to be a remarkable 25 times larger in magnitude than the bias from observables to explain away the positive coefficient estimate, with an even larger figure of 42 times for Panel B. Thus, even without being able to exploit natural experimental variation, it appears likely that British colonial rule did indeed exert a positive causal effect on democracy levels at independence—especially considering the many additional robustness checks presented below.

However, if we instead examine the period since 1991, the results are quite different. The coefficient estimates in Columns 5 and 6 of Table 1 are not consistent in sign, 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 estimate in the post-Cold War era, i.e., identify factors that covary with British colonialism and a short-term *but not* long-term positive democracy effect.

Several robustness checks reinforce these findings. Panels C and D of Appendix Table A.3 demon-

strate that this result is robust to using Cheibub’s (2013) update of Przeworski et al.’s (2000) binary democracy variable and to using VDEM’s polyarchy measure, rather than *polity2*. Nor do the chosen date cutoffs seem to affect the findings. Panels E and F of Table A.3 demonstrate that the coefficient estimates from Columns 3 and 4 of Table 1 remain strongly statistically significant 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, the findings from Columns 5 and 6 of Table 1 are qualitatively unchanged when defining “recent” years as either all post-30 years of independence or only 2012, rather than the post-1991 period (Columns 3 through 6 of Table A.3, Panel D).

Overall, ex-British colonies inherited more democratic polities but this positive legacy diminished over time to become indistinguishable from zero.

4.2 Selecting Better Colonies?

Recent research has focused on colonial-era or pre-colonial factors other than British colonization as predictors of democracy. Table 2 and Appendix Tables A.4, A.5, and A.6 evaluate prominent alternative historical accounts. These tables generate two main takeaways. First, alternative historical accounts do not explain away the Britain 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.

Panels A and B of Table 2 assess the European settlers thesis, 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 (contrary to Acemoglu et al.'s 2001 and Hariri's 2012 hypothesis that European settlers transplanted representative institutions from their home countries). In addition, the lack of a result in Panel A suggest that the results are driven by comparing early independence cases in the New World to later decolonizing Old World countries—a concerning pattern, given the many differences besides European settlers that distinguish these areas of the world.³

The state antiquity thesis, evaluated in Panels C and D, 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, but not at independence. The sign of the estimated effect is positive in all first year of independence specifications, contrary to the hypothesis that longer state history should hinder democracy. And even for the two specifications in which the hypothesis receives support, the coefficient estimate diminishes considerably in magnitude and loses statistical significance when adding additional covariates (Panel D, Columns 2 and 6). Appendix Table A.4 demonstrates similar results as in Panels A through D of Table 2 when controlling for related pre-colonial or early colonial factors:

³Although the post-1945 sample provides a somewhat stringent test for the European settlers hypothesis because most of the major settler colonies were in the New World, there were numerous politically influential settler minority populations in Africa and in late-decolonizing plantation colonies.

Table 2: Alternative Historical Explanations, Post-1945 Independence Sample

Dependent variable: <i>polity2</i> score						
	All years		First yr. indep.		Post-1991	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Panel A. European settlers, post-1945 independence countries						
British Col.	3.743*** (1.117)	2.224** (1.085)	6.252*** (1.431)	5.685*** (1.880)	1.752 (1.265)	0.543 (1.464)
ln(Eu. pop. %)	0.160 (0.257)	0.0309 (0.266)	0.0143 (0.301)	-0.299 (0.301)	0.459 (0.291)	0.256 (0.327)
Observations	3,903	3,462	73	66	1,734	1,484
R-squared	0.076	0.190	0.214	0.377	0.039	0.150
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES
Panel B. European settlers, all non-European countries						
British Col.	4.709*** (0.951)	4.744*** (0.918)	6.626*** (1.164)	6.335*** (1.116)	0.952 (1.048)	0.633 (0.958)
ln(Eu. pop. %)	0.638*** (0.103)	0.439*** (0.123)	0.199 (0.143)	-0.0648 (0.156)	0.867*** (0.152)	0.543*** (0.162)
Observations	11,052	11,052	123	123	3,063	3,063
R-squared	0.200	0.234	0.252	0.325	0.172	0.284
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES
Panel C. State antiquity in 1500, post-1945 independence countries						
British Col.	5.487*** (1.117)	3.831*** (1.155)	8.671*** (1.345)	7.346*** (1.900)	3.367*** (1.244)	2.187 (1.465)
State antiquity in 1500	-0.200 (1.685)	0.663 (2.221)	2.059 (1.996)	5.419* (3.011)	-2.367 (1.993)	-3.131 (3.246)
Observations	3,400	3,047	62	57	1,471	1,265
R-squared	0.174	0.243	0.421	0.449	0.102	0.161
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES
Panel D. State antiquity in 1500, all non-European countries						
British Col.	5.616*** (1.066)	5.767*** (0.979)	8.577*** (1.055)	8.355*** (1.045)	1.587 (1.118)	1.316 (1.040)
State antiquity in 1500	-3.602*** (1.162)	-2.041 (1.282)	0.681 (1.462)	2.611 (1.608)	-4.535*** (1.679)	-2.111 (1.958)
Observations	10,049	10,049	108	108	2,696	2,696
R-squared	0.184	0.227	0.400	0.439	0.078	0.185
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES
Panel E. Protestant missionaries, post-1945 independence countries						
British Col.	2.920** (1.170)	2.005* (1.048)	5.206*** (1.552)	5.556*** (1.770)	0.795 (1.299)	0.224 (1.447)
Protestant missionaries	0.947** (0.456)	0.539 (0.643)	1.380*** (0.411)	1.288** (0.493)	0.595 (0.461)	0.161 (0.725)
Observations	3,903	3,462	73	66	1,734	1,484
R-squared	0.096	0.196	0.272	0.401	0.024	0.143
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES
Panel F. Protestant missionaries, all non-European countries						
British Col.	1.414 (1.118)	2.327** (1.083)	4.952*** (1.391)	5.290*** (1.351)	-1.012 (1.215)	-0.249 (1.038)
Protestant missionaries	1.412*** (0.468)	0.752 (0.475)	1.413*** (0.381)	0.949** (0.447)	0.916* (0.469)	-0.0225 (0.463)
Observations	10,371	10,371	117	117	2,913	2,913
R-squared	0.053	0.128	0.264	0.315	0.018	0.208
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES

Notes: Table 2 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, and E 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, and F additionally control for the standard democracy covariates used in Table 1, Panel B: Muslim percentage of the population and ethnic fractionalization. *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

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 the date of colonial conquest.

The Protestant missionary hypothesis also cannot explain away the Britain effect—and itself appears to follow a similar temporal pattern. In both the Panel E and F samples, the hypothesis receives some but not consistent support in all years, strong support at independence, and there is no consistent effect post-1991. Additional theorizing is needed to explain this temporally contingent pattern, considering that 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. Tables A.5 and A.6 show that two related human capital explanations also cannot explain away the Britain effect, secondary education and literacy, nor can geographic factors for which Woodberry (2012) controls.

Two important 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 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 2 findings for British colonialism are quite similar.

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

4.3 Heterogeneity Within the British Empire

Another possible concern with the Table 1 results is that because the British empire exhibited diverse forms of rule, it is uninformative to consider British colonialism as a whole. Certainly, the British Empire was notable for the cultural and geographic diversity of the areas it ruled and for the variety of institutional forms adopted to rule them. A variety of British bureaucracies—such as the Colonial Office, India Office, the Foreign Office, and various for-profit corporations—established their own local institutions and followed divergent policies toward local inhabitants and traditional authorities. If the effects of British colonialism were concentrated only in colonies that received a specific institutional inheritance, it would be strong evidence of the importance of these institutions rather than factors common to all British colonies.

We demonstrate instead that the pattern holds across diverse British colonies. Table 3 examines various types of heterogeneity and demonstrates broad support for the temporally contingent finding across diverse colonies. It examines the post-1945 decolonization sample, although Appendix Table A.7 demonstrates that the results are qualitatively identical when using all non-European countries. Panel A incorporates Lange’s (2004) measure of the directness of British rule. It codes 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. Panel B disaggregates British colonialism using a related variable, Owolabi’s (2015) measure of whether colonial subjects possessed political rights equivalent to metropolitan

citizens’.

The results show that, consistent with existing theory, British colonialism exerted more beneficial effects on democracy at independence in areas that were directly ruled or enjoyed metropolitan rights (Columns 3 and 4 of Panels A and B). However, it is somewhat remarkable that the coefficient estimate is also substantively large and statistically significant for both indirectly ruled and non-metropolitan rights areas, since existing pro-Britain theories do not anticipate indirectly ruled countries also enjoying higher levels of democracy at independence. Additionally, as above, these relationships weaken considerably in the post-1991 sample. Indirectly ruled British colonies and British colonies without metropolitan rights exhibit a negative correlation with democracy, and even the directly ruled or metropolitan rights British colonies do not exhibit a robustly statistically significant relationship.

Another measure of direct British rule proposed in the literature is time spent as a British colony, which may have provided greater exposure to “good” British institutions. Panel C disaggregates British colonies into long British rule (at least 80 years, the median in our sample) and short British rule (less than 80 years). Both types of British colonies exhibit a positive short-term effect on democracy. Intriguingly, whereas long British rule positively correlates with post-1991 democracy—perhaps reflecting superior opportunities for democratic consolidation in these areas—short British rule exerts a negative association. This finding is more consistent with existing theories that British colonial rule positively impacted some but not all of its colonies. However, once again, existing such theories do not anticipate the positive estimated effect at independence for briefly ruled British colonies.

We also consider two sample alterations. Many accounts of British colonial rule, such as Lange (2009, 53) and Abernethy (2000, 410), mention Britain’s Middle Eastern colonies as being atypical of the rest of the British Empire. The colonies were either ruled extremely indirectly by local

Table 3: Heterogeneity within the British Empire

Dependent variable: <i>polity2</i> score						
Panel A: Direct vs. indirect British rule						
	All years		First yr. indep.		Post-1991	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
British direct rule	7.916*** (1.714)	6.254** (2.482)	10.56*** (1.503)	11.01*** (2.292)	4.942** (1.979)	2.533 (3.257)
British indirect rule	1.967 (1.238)	1.626 (1.022)	4.741*** (1.675)	5.350*** (1.758)	-0.0305 (1.368)	-0.529 (1.246)
Country-years	3,903	3,387	73	66	1,734	1,436
R-squared	0.149	0.231	0.282	0.432	0.072	0.201
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES
Panel B: Metropolitan British rights vs. not						
	All years		First yr. indep.		Post-1991	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Br w/ metropolitan rights	9.603*** (1.480)	10.59*** (2.082)	10.27*** (1.624)	11.14*** (2.756)	6.686*** (1.549)	7.121** (2.901)
Br w/o metropolitan rights	1.782 (1.151)	1.524 (0.960)	5.043*** (1.653)	5.685*** (1.716)	-0.354 (1.339)	-0.566 (1.227)
Country-years	3,903	3,387	73	66	1,734	1,436
R-squared	0.191	0.290	0.265	0.414	0.124	0.254
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES
Panel C: Long vs. short British rule						
	All years		First yr. indep.		Post-1991	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Long British rule	7.460*** (1.240)	6.046*** (1.535)	8.601*** (1.660)	8.085*** (2.221)	5.001*** (1.345)	4.254** (1.776)
Short British rule	0.0481 (1.272)	0.386 (1.061)	4.006** (1.958)	5.399*** (1.944)	-2.295 (1.447)	-2.178* (1.252)
Country-years	3,903	3,387	73	66	1,734	1,436
R-squared	0.222	0.270	0.270	0.395	0.183	0.290
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES
Panel D: Exclude Middle East						
	All years		First yr. indep.		Post-1991	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
British Col.	4.332*** (1.110)	3.588*** (1.088)	8.234*** (1.348)	8.425*** (1.576)	1.998 (1.231)	0.715 (1.484)
Country-years	3,409	2,967	64	58	1,532	1,274
R-squared	0.112	0.168	0.392	0.463	0.030	0.082
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES
Panel E: Only Africa						
	All years		First yr. indep.		Post-1991	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
British Col.	2.441** (1.152)	1.632 (1.123)	7.682*** (1.787)	7.889*** (1.882)	0.435 (1.551)	-1.352 (1.448)
Country-years	2,097	1,987	41	41	981	900
R-squared	0.039	0.072	0.366	0.396	0.002	0.095
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES

Notes: Table 3 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.

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

monarchs with very little colonial interference (Bahrain, UAE, Qatar, Kuwait) or were acquired as mandates after World War I and therefore only briefly experienced colonial rule (Iraq, Jordan, and Israel). Panel D of Table 3 tests the effects of British colonialism in a sample that excludes all Middle Eastern countries. Predictably, given the prevalence of authoritarianism in the region, these models yield a higher estimated short-term effect of British colonialism than does Table 1. 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 E of Table 3 assesses a sample that consists only of African countries. This is 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 of the 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.

In sum, these results consistently demonstrate that the short-term positive effect of British colonialism extends across a wide variety of colonial experiences and geographical regions. This includes areas where the institutional legacies of British rule have frequently been characterized as weak or even negative.

4.4 Additional Robustness Checks: Postcolonial Influence and Disaggregating European Colonizers

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.8). Second, we disaggregate non-British colonies by their colonizer, showing that the results are not driven by any single non-British colonizer (Table A.9).

5 Mechanisms, Part 1: Explaining the Beneficial British Legacy at Independence

What explains this temporally contingent effect? Existing mainstream political science theories on colonialism and democracy do not anticipate the strong short-term yet weak long-term effect of British rule. The remainder of the paper presents an alternative perspective and suggestive statistical evidence that integrates Britain's relatively gradual and flexible approach to decolonization into traditional arguments. This 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.

Having established that the core temporally contingent pattern holds across diverse samples, the remainder of the paper only analyzes the post-1945 decolonization sample for three reasons. First, to explain change over time, it is important that countries gained independence within the same epoch so that years since independence roughly align with calendar years and shifts in the international climate for democracy promotion—a key component of explaining why the effect has declined over time. Related, second, the modes of Western European colonial rule and decolonization among their older, primarily New World colonies was very different than for their more recent, primarily Old World colonies. Rather than attempt to provide a more general explanation for highly heterogeneous cases in the space of a single paper, we aim to provide an adequate explanation for the large number of colonies that gained independence after World War II. Finally, as a practical matter, much of the colonial-era data we use below is unavailable for early decolonization cases. These reasons perhaps account for why most cross-national studies of colonial legacies only examine the post-World War II period (e.g., Woodberry 2012; Hariri 2012; and Owolabi 2015 among

recent articles).

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. 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 an inflexible opposition to independence. These decolonization differences—which stemmed in part from Britain's relatively high level of democracy and less entrenched colonial lobby—enabled British colonies to benefit from democratic advantages gained earlier in the colonial era as they gained independence. Statistical evidence shows that several intervening factors suggested by the theory attenuate the Britain coefficient estimate in the first year of independence.

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. 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, but 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. This required developing political parties, such as the Congress Party, that provided a foundation for democratic contestation at independence.

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 increasingly likely.

This pattern contrasts starkly with France. 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. Failures in Vietnam and Algeria had “progressively infected all French political life” (Young 1970, 471) and greatly diminished France’s bargaining leverage with its remaining colonies. Consequently, only two years after every French African colony except Guinea had voted to remain within the French colonial sphere, France 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.

Tailoring independence and experiencing a longer period of colonial elections created the possibility for democracy among British colonies at independence by supplying an electoral framework. By contrast, hastily implemented democratic reforms at the conclusion of colonial rule could not produce even short-term democracy. In the Belgian Congo, for instance, the first national elections occurred one month before independence and the first local elections only three years previously. Many French colonies had experienced a longer period of elections, but France’s about-face toward colonial rule in the late 1950s implied that it did not tailor individual colonies’ independence

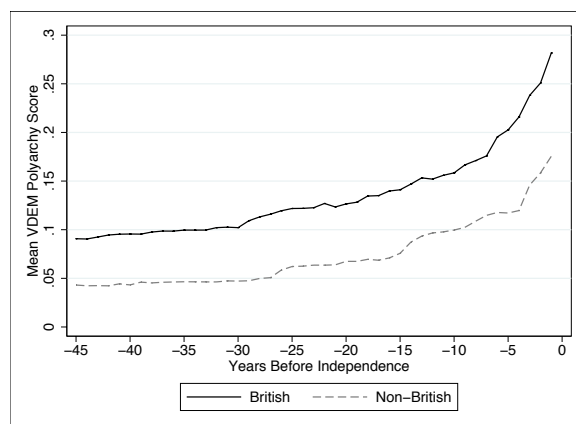
timing according to democratic readiness.

We provide two types of evidence of tailored decolonization and greater democracy promotion in British colonies, before examining the correlation between decolonization factors and post-colonial democracy in Section 5.4. Figure 1 compares VDEM polyarchy scores in British and non-British colonies indexed by years prior to achieving independence. The figure exhibits two main patterns. First, British colonies in our sample were consistently more democratic than other colonies throughout the 20th century, and Appendix Table A.10 demonstrates these differences are statistically significant.⁴ This pattern to some extent supports earlier arguments, such as Weiner's (1987), that British democratic advantages extended deep into the colonial era. However, in early years it is somewhat difficult to speak of "democracy" in British 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% 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.

The second main pattern in Figure 1 is that British colonies became dramatically more democratic during the decolonization era, and that their democratic advantage relative to other colonies also increased. Table A.10 shows that the coefficient estimate in the last year of colonial rule is 72% larger than 30 years before. Scrutinizing this enhanced British effect just prior to independence highlights the importance of Britain's calculated independence timing. Had Britain counterfactually granted independence an average of seven years 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 all of its African empire in 1960.

⁴However, the Britain line is somewhat biased upwards relative to our core sample because VDEM excludes many highly authoritarian British Middle Eastern colonies.

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



Notes: The vertical axis in Figure 1 shows the average VDEM polyarchy score for British colonies and for other countries in our sample, averaged across the number of years before a particular colony achieved independence.

Table 4 provides evidence of democratic prerequisites for independence from the British empire from a slightly different perspective by endogenizing the year of independence. It demonstrates that Britain was indeed more likely to grant independence to more democratic colonies. The basic specification in Column 1 estimates a Cox proportional hazard model in which the dependent variable takes a value of 0 in all post-1945 years that a country was still under colonial rule, 1 in the year of independence, and is set to missing in all pre-1945 years and all years after independence. It controls for annual VDEM polyarchy score, British colonialism, and an interaction term. The positive and statistically significant interaction term demonstrates that higher levels of democracy more strongly predict the onset of independence in British colonies compared to others. Column 2 shows that this result is robust to controlling for polyarchy lagged 20 years, hence demonstrating that the time period closer to independence—i.e., decolonization—is important even after accounting for base democracy levels.

Table 4: Colonial Democracy and Independence from the British Empire

	Dependent variable: Independence	
	(1)	(2)
VDEM polyarchy	0.120 (0.997)	1.868 (1.167)
British Col.	-0.811 (0.645)	-0.453 (0.554)
British*VDEM	3.632** (1.456)	3.259** (1.324)
Lagged VDEM 20 yrs.		-8.057** (3.378)
Colony-years	1,411	1,315

Notes: Table 4 summarizes a series of Cox proportional hazard models by presenting coefficient estimates, and robust standard error estimates clustered by country in parentheses. *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

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. Where these 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, the arrangements for independence 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. Examples include the French handover of Vietnam to the Viet Minh in 1954, the French handover of Algeria to the FLN in 1962, and Portugal’s surrender to rebel groups in all three of its mainland African colonies in 1975. These guerrilla movements 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 the other powers. Within our sample, 28 percent of colonies not under British control experienced major decolonization violence versus 6 percent of

British colonies.⁵ 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 absence of guerrilla takeovers in British colonies spared its new states “a potentially potent source of antidemocratic pressure” (Diamond 1988, 9). The guerrilla takeover variable used in the regressions below does not score any violent takeovers in British colonies in our sample, compared to three French, three Portuguese, and Dutch Indonesia.⁶

5.3 Explaining Divergent Decolonization Policies

Although we do not provide a systematic explanation for *why* Britain pursued different decolonization policies, we briefly review two factors that likely impacted Britain’s better-planned decolonization policies. These factors may be relevant for elucidating conditions under which international actors attempt to promote democracy, a topic the conclusion discusses.

First, Britain itself was more democratic than most other decolonizing powers. Existing research suggests that democratic powers are more likely to spread democracy than are dictatorial powers (Boix 2011; Narizny 2012; Gunitsky 2014). Several colonizers—including Britain, the United States, Belgium, and the Netherlands—were stable democracies throughout the 20th century period of decolonization (and much of the previous periods as well) and should thus be expected to prefer to establish democratic successor regimes. Several other colonizers, however, were not. Spain ceded its African colonies in the 1960s under the Franco regime, and lost its American colonies under an authoritarian monarchy. Portugal, after years of stable authoritarian rule, decolonized during a post-revolution period of political and social instability while ruled by an unelected junta. France, though never fully authoritarian, went through a less democratic period during the 1950s

⁵Figures calculated from Fearon and Laitin’s (2003) civil war dataset.

⁶South Yemen is not included because its subsequent merger with North Yemen does not allow comparisons with the post-Cold War period.

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 1981, 388) 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).

5.4 Empirically Assessing Decolonization Mechanisms at Independence

Table 5 suggests that these mechanisms can help to account for democracy levels at independence. Panel A controls for the mediating variables of VDEM polyarchy score five years before independence and a dummy variable for guerrilla takeover. Both are statistically significantly associated with democracy levels in the first year of independence, as demonstrated in Columns 1 (no covariates) and 2 (includes standard democracy covariates from Table 1). Guerrilla seizure of the state, in particular, is associated with more than a six-point drop in average *polity2* score, which is roughly the difference between the British and French ex-colonies at independence. Columns 3 and 4 add a British colonial dummy. Although the effect of British colonial rule remains positive and statistically significant, compared to regressions without the two intervening variables (but using the same sample; results available upon request), the effect size diminishes by roughly 30%. This provides

suggestive evidence that these aspects of negotiated decolonization drive at least some portion of the British effect.

Table 5: Assessing Negotiated Decolonization Mechanisms in First Year of Independence

Dependent variable: <i>polity2</i> score first yr. indep.				
Panel A. Elections and Guerrillas				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
VDEM polyarchy 5 yrs. before indep.	23.14*** (4.971)	20.14** (7.612)	18.41*** (5.421)	14.85* (7.431)
Guerrillas inherit state	-4.886** (2.016)	-6.343** (2.540)	-2.730 (1.862)	-4.188* (2.214)
British Col.			4.959*** (1.672)	4.734** (2.022)
Countries	60	53	60	53
R-squared	0.291	0.343	0.401	0.432
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES
Panel B. Colonizer Democracy				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Colonizer <i>polity2</i>	0.858*** (0.204)	0.819*** (0.222)	0.471*** (0.169)	0.385** (0.165)
British Col.			4.564*** (1.648)	5.077*** (1.803)
Countries	73	66	73	66
R-squared	0.170	0.313	0.250	0.400
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES
Panel C. Decolonization Manifestos				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Colonizer Anti-Colonial Manifesto	7.280*** (1.639)	6.698*** (2.131)	4.113*** (1.189)	2.027* (1.143)
British Col.			3.539** (1.536)	5.047*** (1.542)
Countries	66	59	66	59
R-squared	0.196	0.354	0.227	0.406
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES

Notes: Table 5 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. Temporally, the sample in each column consists only of each countries' first year of independence. *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

Panels B and C test some of the suggestions about the causes of Britain's more flexible decolonization processes by including two measures of the metropole's commitment to democracy and

to decolonization. Panel B examines the metropole's *polity2* score in each country's year of independence. Britain, Belgium, Holland, and the U.S. are coded as consistently democratic, Spain and Portugal are consistently authoritarian, and France is coded as a mixed regime during the de Gaulle years. Panel C uses the Manifesto Project's measure of the degree to which metropolitan political parties' manifestos mentioned decolonization and anti-imperialism (Gabel and Huber 2000). We averaged Gabel and Huber's (2000) 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 Holland and Britain than in Belgium or France.

The results support theoretical expectations. 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 in Panels B and C). These factors also attenuate the British colonialism effect somewhat, with the coefficient estimates ranging from 22 to 44 percent lower than in the respective Table 1 regression (Columns 3 and 4 in Panels B and C).

6 Mechanisms, Part 2: Explaining Why the Effect Declined Over Time

Although these decolonization factors bequeathed ex-British colonies with a more established electoral framework, they did not transform society to endow ex-British colonies with higher underlying demand for democracy via cultural or other structural factors inherently better suited for democracy. The decolonization thesis anticipates two contributors to mean reversion over time. First, British colonies should experience mean reversion in the form of democratic reversals after independence because rulers should have been able to overthrow foreign-imposed electoral frameworks relatively easily. Second, mean reversion should increase democracy levels in non-British colonies over time, in particular during periods of instability for decolonization-generated author-

itarian regimes. We demonstrate that, empirically, both of these trends occurred. The evidence is mostly incompatible with long-run cultural or institutional explanations, although those theories do account for a handful of anomalous post-1945 independence cases in which there is evidence of British colonialism restructuring society.

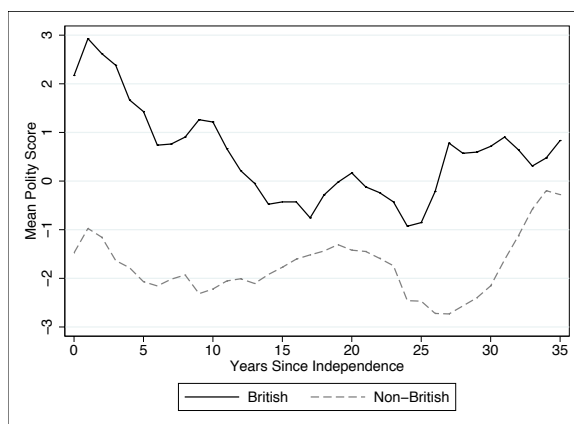
6.1 Two Longitudinal Trends

Figure 2 illustrates two key temporal trends that account for the declining effect over time by plotting the average *polity2* score for ex-British and non-former British colonies against years since each country gained independence. It contains the first 35 years of independence because this is the longest time period that enables a constant sample of countries. First, although both groups of countries 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 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 (Huntington 1993). Tabular data in Appendix Table A.11 display a similar pattern.

Table 6 assesses these trends statistically by estimating a series of dynamic panel models. The

Figure 2: 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 our sample, averaged across the number of years since a particular country achieved independence.

basic model estimated is:

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

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, β_i is a vector of country fixed effects, $Ind.Years$ is the number of years since independence, and X_{it} is a vector of time-varying covariates that varies across the different specifications. Every model uses panel-adjusted standard errors. These models do not estimate the direct effect of *BritishColony* because it is perfectly collinear with the vector of country fixed effects. Year fixed effects are not included because they would make the time trend coefficients uninterpretable. Because dynamic panel models with unit fixed effects create the possibility of Nickell bias, Appendix Table A.12 instead uses Arellano-Bond dynamic panel models that instrument for the lagged variables and demonstrates similar findings.

Table 6, Column 1 demonstrates a positive trend in year-to-year changes in democracy score over

time⁷ but also that ex-British colonies have experienced less pronounced gains. Column 2 adds time-varying standard democracy covariates used in Table 1 and produces similar results.

Table 6: 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)
Post Ind. Years	0.0240*** (0.00262)	0.0340*** (0.00733)	-0.117 (0.0788)	-0.202* (0.115)	0.0238*** (0.00312)	0.0311*** (0.00869)
Post Ind. Years*British Col.	-0.0115*** (0.00363)	-0.0101** (0.00424)	-0.183* (0.110)	-0.313** (0.127)	-0.00989** (0.00416)	-0.00789 (0.00482)
Country-years	3,815	3,356	441	395	3,374	2,961
R-squared	0.843	0.837	0.372	0.374	0.850	0.844
Country FE and LDV	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES
Marginal effects						
Post Ind. Years British Col.= 1	0.013*** (0.004)	0.024*** (0.004)	-0.300** (0.134)	-0.515* (0.265)	0.014*** (0.004)	0.023** (0.009)
Post Ind. Years British Col.= 0	0.024*** (0.004)	0.034*** (0.008)	-0.117 (0.082)	-0.202 (0.139)	0.024*** (0.005)	0.031*** (0.009)

Notes: Table 6 summarizes a series of dynamic time series regressions (described in Equation 2) by presenting coefficient estimates for the main variables of theoretical interest, and panel-corrected standard error estimates in parentheses. The other coefficient estimates are suppressed for expositional clarity. Every model includes country fixed effects and a lagged dependent variable. The even-numbered columns additionally control for the three time-varying standard democracy covariates in Table 1, Panel A: logged annual GDP per capita, logged annual population, logged annual oil and gas production per capita. *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

The remaining specifications demonstrate the temporal contingency of these findings. The marginal effects component of Columns 3 and 4 demonstrates that British colonies exhibited a statistically significant decline in democracy levels in the first six years of independence. Although the trend for all countries was anti-democratic during this period, it is substantially larger in British colonies than in other countries. By contrast, the pattern after the first six years of independence resembles

⁷This finding represents the apparent discrepancy between the graphical evidence in Figure 2 and the regressions in Table 6, because Figure 2 does not exhibit a strong positive time trend in democracy levels. Including the lagged dependent variable in the time series regressions tracks trends in democratic changes relative to preceding years, rather than trends in the variable itself.

the full-sample pattern. Former British colonies gained in democracy levels over time, but not by as much as other ex-colonies (although the conditioning impact of British colonialism on the effect of post-independence years is not statistically significant when covariates are added).

6.2 Democratic Reversals Shortly After Independence

The decolonization thesis anticipates democratic reversals shortly after independence. Because the bulk of democratic reforms occurred just prior to independence (see Figure 1 and Table A.10), it should have been relatively easy to overthrow the foreign-imposed institutions after Britain left. Nigeria and Malaysia exemplify two modal paths: military overthrow and using elections as an authoritarian institution, respectively. Whereas Nigeria's British-imposed federal constitution established electoral contestation and fostered temporary inter-ethnic compromise at independence, co-ethnic military officers of the junior partner in government led a coup in 1966 because they feared losing power amidst heightened tension regarding whether Nigeria should have a federal or unitary constitution. Britain had created electoral institutions but did not solve the underlying ethnic tensions stemming from dramatically divergent historical experiences in Nigeria's different regions. In Malaysia, the hegemonic ruling party UMNO has perpetuated the tradition of colonial elections, but it consolidated power within a decade of independence and has suppressed any resemblance of free and fair electoral competition. Once-democratic British institutions could also be used for authoritarian rule.

By contrast, democratic reversals shortly after independence are inconsistent with long-term institutional and cultural mechanisms. These theories predict long-term democratic persistence and therefore do not anticipate democratic reversals immediately after independence.

6.3 How the “Third Wave” Broke Authoritarian Equilibria in Non-British Colonies

If British colonies were distinguished at independence mainly because of decolonization-induced differences, then non-British colonies should not be sharply disadvantaged in the long term with re-

gard to having cultures less suited for democracy or lower societal demand for democratic reforms. It also seems plausible that big international changes should facilitate mean reversion for non-British colonies by providing stimuli for liberalization that were not present during decolonization. Mozambique and Angola provide suggestive examples. Rebels seized control of the government in both countries at independence in 1975 after long decolonization wars with Portugal. These countries fit the general pattern in Table 5 of undemocratic guerrilla regimes at independence. However, intense Cold War rivalries in these countries reached a detente in the late 1980s (Reno 2011, 76), which fostered a lasting liberalization of Mozambique's formerly one-party regime in the 1990s (Manning 2005) and (briefly) free and fair parliamentary elections in Angola in 1992 (Fituni 1995, 152). The effect of the end of the Cold War on liberalizing decolonization-induced dictatorships is therefore consistent with the diminishing British colonial legacy over time.⁸

By contrast, long-term cultural and institutional theories would seemingly anticipate ex-British colonies to experience, if anything, *more* pronounced gains during the Third Wave because these theories posit that ex-British colonies should have superior cultural preconditions for democracy.

6.4 Empirically Assessing Decolonization Mechanisms After the Cold War

Did decolonization factors only exhibit short-term effects? Appendix Table A.13 demonstrates that the intervening factors from Table 5 correlate weakly with post-1991 democracy levels. In contrast to existing arguments that revolutionary takeovers tend to engender highly durable authoritarian regimes (Levitsky and Way 2013), the sign of the coefficient estimate for guerrilla takeover at independence is not consistent in sign in the post-1991 period and is never statistically significant

⁸The literature on Third Wave democratization too voluminous to cite comprehensively here, although Bratton and van de Walle (1997), Dunning (2004), and Levitsky and Way (2010) provide important arguments relating the changed international environment and democratization. Intriguingly, colonial legacies are essentially absent from this literature, which provides a potentially intriguing area for future research.

(Panels A and B). Metropole democracy score exhibits a similar pattern (Panel C). The coefficient estimate for colonizer manifesto diminishes by 57% in Column 1 between the independence and post-1991 samples (Panel D). Although the estimate remains statistically significant, a handful of colonies in the small empires (U.S., Dutch, Belgian) drive the result. The correlation loses statistical significance when excluding those empires (Panel E). Finally, the coefficient estimate for democracy score five years before independence diminishes by 35% (compare Panel A, Column 1 in Tables 5 and A.13) but remains statistically significant in the post-Cold War era. However, this association is largely driven by a small number of colonies that experienced democratic reforms early in the colonial period. After dummied out the five British colonies with the highest polyarchy scores 20 years before independence—Mauritius, Trinidad and Tobago, Zimbabwe, Sri Lanka, Jamaica; plus Dutch Suriname, which had the highest polyarchy score in the sample 20 years before independence—the coefficient estimate for polyarchy score five years before independence drops even more sharply and is never statistically significant (see Table A.13, Panel B).

Although we argue that most British colonies achieved greater democracy at independence because of temporary rather than long-term advantages, these pre-independence elections results demonstrate why the two arguments are not mutually exclusive. The five British colonies dummied out in Panel B of Table A.13 are consistent with existing arguments that British colonialism only promoted durable democracy when it enabled civil society development (as Rueschemeyer et al. 1992 discuss for the British Caribbean) or granted long-term colonial autonomy (Bilinski 2015 presents statistical evidence and case studies for Sri Lanka and Jamaica). However, empirically, few British colonies received these long-term advantages.

7 Conclusion

Many scholars have argued that British colonial rule promoted post-colonial democracy, but there has been considerable debate over the robustness of this result and its causes. We showed that this relationship follows a strong temporal pattern. Although former British colonies are considerably more democratic than other countries immediately following independence, subsequent convergence in democracy levels has eliminated these differences in the post-Cold War period. Neither alternative colonial-era hypotheses, pre-colonial traits, nor post-colonial influences drive these results, which hold across diverse subsets of British colonies. Nor do existing British colonialism-democracy theories provide a compelling explanation of change over time. Considerable evidence suggests that divergent policy approaches to decolonization by European powers contributed to this short-term effect.

These findings generate three broader implications. First, the current paper's focus on different samples and time periods provides a possible template for other studies of colonial legacies, whether studying democracy or other outcomes such as economic development (Engerman and Sokoloff 2011; Acemoglu et al. 2001). Most theories about colonial factors implicitly or explicitly posit long-term effects, and often authors only study time periods well after independence. But assessing short-term effects is also crucial for assessing theories, at least absent a mechanism positing only increasing returns over time. Whereas Protestant missionaries were shown to follow a similar temporal trend as British colonialism—strong correlation with democracy at independence, weak several decades afterwards—European settlers and state antiquity demonstrated the opposite trend. These results carry important implications for theory evaluation. Additionally, because Western Europe decolonized in two main periods that were highly correlated with global location—most Old World colonies in the 19th century, most New World colonies after World War II—results that rely entirely on comparing one period to the other raise questions regarding how plausible

are the counterfactual comparisons. Studying different samples of colonies can yield crucial insights.

Second, these results modify triumphalist narratives of British superiority (e.g., Ferguson 2012) while also demonstrating that British colonial rule is important even when considering recent prominent alternative colonial-era explanations for democracy (Woodberry 2012; Lankina and Getachew 2012; Hariri 2012). The results therefore reject recent arguments that colonizer identity was unimportant, at least in the short term.

Third, the findings carry useful implications for international democracy promotion. Recent studies have consistently demonstrated the importance of Western European democratic influence for broader democracy promotion (Boix 2011; Narizny 2012; Gunitsky 2014). The post-colonial experience, however, shows that although outsiders can create democratic institutions in otherwise unpromising contexts, the effects of these interventions may decline over time (Fearon and Laitin 2004; Krasner 2004).

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Online Appendix

Table A.1: Data Sources Not Described in Paper

Variable	Notes and description	Source
<i>Standard democracy covariates</i>		
Ethnic fractionalization	Computed as one minus the Herfindahl index of ethnic group shares.	Alesina (2003)
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)
Muslim percentage of population	Measured in 1980.	La Porta et al. (1999)
Oil and gas production	Logged annual oil and gas production per capita	Ross (2013)
Population	Logged annual population. We use Maddison's (2008) dataset because it has superior coverage of GDP and of population in the 1950s and 1960s than do other datasets. Missing values pre-1950 and post-2009 are imputed from the country's score in 1950 and 2009, respectively.	Maddison (2008)
<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 independence from Easterly and Levine's dataset.	Easterly and Levine (2016)
Geographic variables	Indicator for landlocked countries, indicator for islands, distance to a coast, latitude.	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)
Protestant missionaries in colonial era	Number of Protestant missionaries per 10,000 people in 1923.	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)
State antiquity	A territory's combined years with government above local level. Following Hariri (2012), state antiquity is calculated in 1500.	Putterman (2008)
<i>Heterogeneity within the British Empire</i>		
Length of British colonial rule	Calculated by taking the difference between Hensel's (2014) independence year and Ertan, Fiszbein, and Putterman's (2016) colonial onset year.	Hensel (2014); Ertan, Fiszbein, and Putterman (2016)
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

Table A.2: Summary Statistics

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	N
<i>Post-1945 independence countries</i>			
<i>polity2</i>	-1.468	6.625	3903
British Col.	0.479	0.5	3903
Ethnic frac.	0.576	0.237	3714
Muslim %	35.975	38.145	3851
ln(Oil & gas/capita)	1.967	3.08	3892
ln(GDP/capita)	7.391	0.961	3388
ln(Population)	8.554	1.655	3703
ln(European settlers)	0.367	0.566	3903
State antiquity in 1500	0.298	0.313	3400
Protestant missionaries	0.736	1.131	3903
Secondary Education	9.004	8.888	2589
Island	0.197	0.398	3903
Landlocked	0.219	0.414	3903
Latitude	15.537	10.017	3903
Precipitation	995.800	746.124	3903
(Precipitation) ²	1548176.355	1861640.49	3903
VDEM polyarchy 5 yrs. before indep.	0.158	0.124	3187
Guerrillas inherit state	0.092	0.289	3903
Colonizer <i>polity2</i>	8.276	3.084	3903
Colonizer Anti-Colonial Manifesto	0.974	0.419	3577
<i>All non-European countries</i>			
<i>polity2</i>	-1.236	6.586	11275
British Col.	0.253	0.435	11177
Ethnic frac.	0.479	0.247	11270
Muslim %	25.966	38.42	11270
ln(Eu. pop. %)	-0.98	3.511	11400
State antiquity in 1500	0.309	0.343	10258
Protestant missionaries	0.488	0.802	10589
Secondary Education	10.622	8.473	7904
Island	0.16	0.366	11289
Landlock	0.195	0.396	11289
Latitude	19.569	11.373	10700
Precipitation	1024.456	690.424	11222
(Precipitation) ²	1526153.922	1641669.268	11222

One consideration for interpreting Table A.3 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 notable, the alternative democracy measures in Panels C and D do not contain long enough time samples to permit studying democracy at independence for early decolonizers.

Table A.3: Robustness Checks for Table 1

Panel A. Region and Year FE, post-1945 independence countries. DV: <i>polity2</i> score						
	All years		First yr. indep.		Post-1991	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
British Col.	2.631**	3.574***	5.663***	7.156**	0.714	1.268
	(1.013)	(1.153)	(1.449)	(3.084)	(1.147)	(1.286)
Country-years	3,903	3,903	73	73	1,734	1,734
R-squared	0.206	0.193	0.318	0.552	0.200	0.048
Region FE	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO
Year FE	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES
Panel B. Region and Year FE, all non-European countries. DV: <i>polity2</i> score						
	All years		First yr. indep.		Post-1991	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
British Col.	4.525***	4.161***	6.432***	9.129***	1.036	0.475
	(1.066)	(1.391)	(1.179)	(2.402)	(1.002)	(1.179)
Observations	11,052	11,052	123	123	3,063	3,063
R-squared	0.238	0.178	0.346	0.612	0.271	0.019
Region FE	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO
Year FE	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES
Panel C. DV: Binary democracy measure, post-1945 independence countries						
	All years		First yr. indep.		Post-1991	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
British Col.	1.089***	0.757**	1.148**	1.244*	0.576	0.0854
	(0.407)	(0.380)	(0.570)	(0.726)	(0.446)	(0.509)
Country-years	3,411	3,124	73	66	1,299	1,174
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES
Panel D. DV: VDEM polyarchy measure, post-1945 independence countries						
	All years		First yr. indep.		Post-1991	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
British Col.	0.106**	0.0506	0.105**	0.0771**	0.0586	-0.0131
	(0.0417)	(0.0362)	(0.0416)	(0.0383)	(0.0482)	(0.0479)
Country-years	3,590	3,156	66	59	1,550	1,325
R-squared	0.061	0.203	0.095	0.306	0.018	0.172
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES
Panel E. Alternative Date Windows, post-1945 independence countries. DV: <i>polity2</i> score						
	First Six Years		More than 30 Years		2012	
	Since Independence		Since Independence			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
British Col.	5.907***	5.528***	2.018	0.719	0.929	1.955
	(1.336)	(1.422)	(1.359)	(1.483)	(1.361)	(1.829)
Observations	510	423	1,652	1,433	73	65
R-squared	0.192	0.326	0.026	0.153	0.007	0.132
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES
Panel F. Alternative Date Windows, all non-European countries. DV: <i>polity2</i> score						
	First Six Years		More than 30 Years		2012	
	Since Independence		Since Independence			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
British Col.	4.596**	4.699***	5.180***	5.294***	0.713	0.579
	(1.782)	(1.745)	(1.452)	(1.153)	(1.204)	(1.048)
Country-years	1,052	1,052	7,115	7,115	123	123
R-squared	0.117	0.165	0.099	0.211	0.003	0.185
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES

Notes: Table A.3 summarizes a series of OLS regressions (Panels A, B, D, and E) and logit regressions (Panel C) 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 additionally control for a set of 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 additionally 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 Panels A and B, the even-numbered columns do not include the region fixed effects but do control for year fixed effects. In Panels C, D, and E, 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. *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

Table A.4: 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 Col.	6.044***	5.962***	10.01***	10.05***	3.331**	2.581
	(1.250)	(1.361)	(1.884)	(1.784)	(1.528)	(1.749)
ln(Settler mortality)	-0.289	0.373	0.0236	-0.955	0.0724	0.781
	(0.440)	(0.700)	(0.781)	(1.579)	(0.631)	(0.914)
Country-years	1,697	1,650	30	29	725	703
R-squared	0.244	0.277	0.566	0.626	0.088	0.109
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 Col.	4.611***	5.064***	8.691***	8.479***	-0.150	0.197
	(1.046)	(0.919)	(1.245)	(1.333)	(1.183)	(0.982)
ln(Settler mortality)	-1.719***	-1.420***	-0.758	-0.899	-1.401***	-1.002**
	(0.335)	(0.350)	(0.510)	(0.574)	(0.428)	(0.459)
Country-years	7,746	7,746	77	77	1,936	1,936
R-squared	0.238	0.271	0.554	0.580	0.083	0.193
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 Col.	4.518***	3.767***	8.215***	8.153***	2.025	0.938
	(1.154)	(1.132)	(1.446)	(1.706)	(1.356)	(1.550)
ln(Pop. density in 1500)	0.0208	0.0379	0.0530	0.140	-0.0703	-0.0319
	(0.0851)	(0.0843)	(0.0744)	(0.107)	(0.0990)	(0.115)
Country-years	2,800	2,570	52	50	1,246	1,099
R-squared	0.122	0.177	0.415	0.482	0.036	0.070
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 Col.	3.913***	4.393***	6.157***	6.217***	-0.376	-0.186
	(1.049)	(0.915)	(1.246)	(1.124)	(1.174)	(0.991)
ln(Pop. density in 1500)	-0.832***	-0.454*	0.177	0.573	-0.936**	-0.388
	(0.301)	(0.232)	(0.372)	(0.349)	(0.374)	(0.315)
Country-years	10,526	10,526	114	114	2,839	2,839
R-squared	0.132	0.221	0.219	0.331	0.051	0.268
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES

Table A.4, 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 Col.	3.956*** (1.119)	2.643*** (0.968)	6.503*** (1.479)	6.535*** (1.674)	2.073* (1.215)	0.101 (1.180)
Years since Neolithic transition	-0.180 (0.321)	-0.213 (0.307)	-0.226 (0.398)	-0.0336 (0.387)	-0.526 (0.342)	-0.549 (0.349)
Country-years	3,747	3,313	69	64	1,639	1,392
R-squared	0.089	0.225	0.224	0.382	0.062	0.257
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 Col.	4.216*** (1.116)	4.494*** (1.048)	6.417*** (1.166)	6.365*** (1.118)	0.552 (1.108)	0.461 (0.993)
Years since Neolithic transition	-0.763*** (0.162)	-0.439** (0.217)	-0.457* (0.242)	-0.148 (0.274)	-0.883*** (0.234)	-0.351 (0.262)
Country-years	10,825	10,825	118	118	2,939	2,939
R-squared	0.172	0.216	0.273	0.326	0.113	0.244
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 Col.	3.279*** (0.982)	2.596*** (0.824)	6.142*** (1.421)	6.525*** (1.658)	1.103 (1.116)	0.428 (1.059)
Colonial onset year	-0.0259*** (0.00420)	-0.0249*** (0.00591)	-0.0148** (0.00599)	-0.0121** (0.00588)	-0.0270*** (0.00355)	-0.0285*** (0.00623)
Country-years	3,903	3,387	73	66	1,734	1,436
R-squared	0.212	0.296	0.259	0.403	0.197	0.338
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 Col.	6.303*** (1.062)	5.966*** (0.991)	8.289*** (1.100)	8.046*** (1.130)	2.498*** (0.940)	2.250** (0.879)
Colonial onset year	-0.0121*** (0.00246)	-0.00726** (0.00308)	-0.00508* (0.00279)	-0.00205 (0.00327)	-0.0228*** (0.00279)	-0.0199*** (0.00381)
Country-years	7,905	7,905	88	88	2,203	2,203
R-squared	0.186	0.209	0.428	0.444	0.321	0.343
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES

Notes: Table A.4 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.
*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

Unlike the other robustness checks for Tables 1 through 3, Table A.5 only uses the post-1945 independence sample. This is for practical reasons. 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) is measured in the 1960s.

Table A.5: 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 Col.	2.817** (1.259)	1.340 (1.209)	6.020*** (1.817)	4.679* (2.323)	0.440 (1.610)	-1.262 (1.696)
Secondary Education	0.128 (0.0918)	0.159 (0.112)	0.0233 (0.111)	0.0904 (0.131)	0.0301 (0.0972)	0.0571 (0.141)
Observations	2,589	2,238	48	42	1,149	948
R-squared	0.093	0.229	0.192	0.377	0.004	0.157
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 Col.	2.112* (1.143)	1.529 (1.113)	5.182*** (1.707)	5.072*** (1.784)	-0.273 (1.447)	-1.132 (1.358)
Literacy in 1960	0.0945*** (0.0227)	0.101*** (0.0343)	0.0823*** (0.0292)	0.117*** (0.0296)	0.0847*** (0.0266)	0.103** (0.0408)
Country-years	3,575	3,214	66	62	1,581	1,362
R-squared	0.208	0.243	0.354	0.444	0.117	0.222
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES

Notes: Table A.5 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.6 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.6: 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 Col.	2.931*** (0.941)	2.034** (0.986)	5.888*** (1.400)	6.108*** (1.844)	0.735 (1.101)	0.500 (1.245)
Island	5.429*** (1.486)	4.904*** (1.649)	2.091 (1.671)	2.240 (1.781)	5.923*** (1.631)	5.545*** (1.710)
Landlocked	-0.873 (1.225)	-1.813 (1.245)	-0.964 (1.743)	-0.733 (1.706)	0.0292 (1.552)	-2.201 (1.659)
Latitude	0.0264 (0.0694)	0.0169 (0.0674)	0.0595 (0.109)	0.122 (0.115)	-0.0283 (0.0776)	-0.0153 (0.0830)
Precipitation	0.00454* (0.00264)	-0.000936 (0.00260)	0.00631* (0.00353)	0.00280 (0.00335)	0.00565** (0.00270)	-0.000379 (0.00259)
(Precipitation) ²	-1.62e-06* (8.60e-07)	-1.20e-08 (8.81e-07)	-1.64e-06 (1.09e-06)	-3.77e-07 (1.13e-06)	-2.30e-06*** (8.19e-07)	-4.51e-07 (8.59e-07)
Observations	3,903	3,462	73	66	1,734	1,484
R-squared	0.214	0.277	0.320	0.419	0.207	0.282
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 Col.	2.801** (1.077)	2.668*** (0.994)	5.977*** (1.239)	5.747*** (1.261)	-0.00581 (1.090)	-0.407 (1.039)
Island	2.209** (1.071)	1.948* (1.076)	2.993** (1.340)	3.009** (1.327)	2.818* (1.551)	2.433 (1.541)
Landlock	-0.722 (0.879)	-0.894 (0.887)	0.392 (1.205)	0.0179 (1.211)	-0.659 (1.266)	-1.468 (1.277)
Latitude	0.00243 (0.0354)	-0.0242 (0.0376)	0.0433 (0.0532)	0.0470 (0.0525)	0.0434 (0.0554)	0.0177 (0.0559)
Precipitation	0.00472*** (0.00173)	0.000657 (0.00239)	0.00542** (0.00230)	0.00294 (0.00287)	0.0104*** (0.00220)	0.00448 (0.00286)
(Precipitation) ²	-1.13e-06 (7.42e-07)	2.60e-08 (8.92e-07)	-1.33e-06* (7.86e-07)	-6.11e-07 (9.39e-07)	-3.31e-06*** (7.79e-07)	-1.69e-06* (9.90e-07)
Observations	10,396	10,396	118	118	2,938	2,938
R-squared	0.127	0.150	0.327	0.337	0.205	0.256
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES

Notes: Table A.6 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 non-time varying standard democracy controls used in Table 1, Panel B: Muslim percentage of the population and ethnic fractionalization.

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

Table A.7: Table 3 Specifications with all non-European Countries

Dependent variable: <i>polity2</i> score						
Panel A: Direct vs. indirect British rule						
	All years		First yr. indep.		Post-1991	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
British direct rule	8.744*** (1.424)	8.146*** (1.231)	10.00*** (1.092)	9.421*** (1.117)	4.182** (1.644)	2.854* (1.490)
British indirect rule	1.084 (1.210)	1.760 (1.118)	4.216*** (1.487)	4.535*** (1.384)	-1.447 (1.263)	-1.062 (1.061)
Observations	11,275	11,145	128	126	3,155	3,136
R-squared	0.164	0.246	0.270	0.338	0.056	0.249
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES
Panel B: Metropolitan British rights vs. not						
	All years		First yr. indep.		Post-1991	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Br w/ metropolitan rights	10.12*** (0.882)	9.273*** (0.850)	9.815*** (1.145)	8.899*** (1.169)	6.034*** (1.124)	4.143*** (1.133)
Br w/o metropolitan rights	0.449 (1.094)	1.290 (1.054)	4.499*** (1.469)	4.966*** (1.384)	-2.088* (1.237)	-1.479 (1.103)
Observations	11,275	11,145	128	126	3,155	3,136
R-squared	0.211	0.274	0.259	0.321	0.111	0.273
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES
Panel C: Long vs. short British rule						
	All years		First yr. indep.		Post-1991	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Long British rule	8.681*** (1.011)	8.150*** (0.890)	8.819*** (1.233)	8.225*** (1.233)	4.879*** (1.015)	3.595*** (0.964)
Short British rule	0.310 (1.442)	1.152 (1.332)	4.139** (1.635)	4.658*** (1.517)	-2.940** (1.375)	-2.248* (1.201)
Observations	11,275	11,145	128	126	3,155	3,136
R-squared	0.182	0.259	0.253	0.320	0.118	0.286
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES
Panel D: Exclude Middle East						
	All years		First yr. indep.		Post-1991	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
British Col.	5.294*** (1.286)	5.372*** (1.207)	7.952*** (1.113)	7.794*** (1.124)	1.426 (1.156)	0.835 (1.093)
Observations	9,541	9,541	107	107	2,684	2,684
R-squared	0.119	0.156	0.366	0.377	0.011	0.140
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES
Panel E: Only Africa						
	All years		First yr. indep.		Post-1991	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
British Col.	2.828** (1.194)	2.794** (1.134)	7.125*** (1.724)	7.347*** (1.747)	0.929 (1.525)	0.801 (1.504)
Observations	2,570	2,570	44	44	1,099	1,099
R-squared	0.051	0.052	0.317	0.323	0.007	0.009
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES

Notes: Table A.7 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.

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

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 formed 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.8 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, more negative after the Cold War ended than before. The estimated effects of British colonialism on post-independence democracy are smaller than the Table 1 estimates, but remain strongly statistically significant.

Panel B of Table A.8 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.8: 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 Col.	3.385** (1.285)	2.605** (1.115)	5.438*** (1.642)	5.689*** (1.812)	1.242 (1.476)	-0.0962 (1.484)
Communist Bloc	-1.497 (1.362)	-2.642 (1.920)	-2.405 (2.498)	-3.388 (3.323)	-3.151 (2.440)	-4.349 (2.721)
French Community	-0.128 (0.973)	1.246 (1.096)	-1.597 (1.594)	-0.873 (1.886)	0.938 (1.470)	1.661 (1.576)
Country-years	3,903	3,387	73	66	1,734	1,436
R-squared	0.075	0.208	0.224	0.391	0.030	0.225
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 Col.	4.313*** (1.242)	4.553*** (1.057)	6.455*** (1.187)	6.300*** (1.099)	0.190 (1.167)	-0.100 (0.959)
Communist Bloc	-1.590 (1.388)	-0.0295 (1.155)	1.330 (2.696)	1.954 (2.705)	0.242 (2.983)	0.347 (1.782)
French Community	-2.724 (1.793)	-4.524*** (1.691)	-4.576 (2.982)	-5.942** (2.957)	-6.684* (3.469)	-8.395*** (2.920)
Observations	11,052	11,052	123	123	3,063	3,063
R-squared	0.100	0.209	0.256	0.345	0.044	0.296
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 Col.	3.659*** (1.153)	2.558** (0.992)	6.111*** (1.481)	6.360*** (1.716)	1.320 (1.305)	-0.0487 (1.261)
NATO Base	1.059 (1.789)	1.005 (1.158)	-1.752 (2.293)	-0.972 (2.078)	0.901 (1.975)	1.321 (1.324)
Country-years	3,903	3,387	73	66	1,734	1,436
R-squared	0.076	0.197	0.221	0.381	0.013	0.190
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 Col.	4.069*** (1.243)	4.230*** (1.085)	6.484*** (1.193)	6.336*** (1.113)	0.413 (1.166)	0.206 (0.987)
NATO Base	1.852 (1.375)	1.670 (1.167)	0.575 (1.401)	0.499 (1.231)	0.774 (1.604)	0.603 (1.455)
Observations	11,052	11,052	123	123	3,063	3,063
R-squared	0.094	0.202	0.243	0.325	0.003	0.231
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES

Notes: Table A.8 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 heterogenous 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.9 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 most of the rival empires: French, Portuguese, Spanish, and Belgian. These differences weaken somewhat in the full temporal sample, and have mostly dissipated after 1991—reinforcing the Table 1 pattern.

Table A.9: 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 Col.	-4.176*** (1.162)	-2.795** (1.064)	-6.903*** (1.583)	-6.551*** (1.922)	-1.985 (1.359)	-0.438 (1.350)
Portuguese Col.	-0.974 (1.801)	0.338 (1.677)	-8.843*** (1.509)	-8.732*** (2.374)	2.107 (2.269)	2.846 (1.900)
Spanish Col.	-6.269*** (1.038)	-5.311** (2.057)	-9.343*** (1.283)	-10.53*** (1.923)	-6.445*** (1.046)	-3.664 (2.742)
U.S. Col.	2.792*** (1.038)	-0.426 (1.723)	-0.343 (1.283)	-3.812** (1.876)	6.722*** (1.046)	5.660*** (2.054)
Dutch Col.	-0.617 (1.890)	-2.724* (1.383)	0.157 (2.271)	-2.592 (2.121)	2.576* (1.328)	1.941 (1.916)
Belgian Col.	-4.285*** (1.239)	-4.279*** (1.527)	-5.010*** (1.796)	-6.848*** (2.096)	-1.501 (2.049)	-1.302 (2.891)
Italian Col.	-4.600** (2.098)	-0.579 (1.546)	-2.343 (5.400)	0.103 (5.800)	-3.938 (2.538)	-0.210 (1.508)
Country-years	3,903	3,387	73	66	1,734	1,436
R-squared	0.107	0.214	0.274	0.421	0.082	0.221
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 Col.	-2.543** (0.987)	-2.071** (0.979)	-4.966*** (1.215)	-4.121*** (1.252)	-1.741 (1.144)	-0.716 (1.212)
Portuguese Col.	-0.305 (1.194)	-1.947 (1.431)	-6.789*** (1.070)	-8.298*** (1.109)	3.155 (1.967)	1.749 (1.817)
Spanish Col.	0.667 (1.107)	-1.509 (1.315)	-3.742*** (1.083)	-5.987*** (1.205)	4.919*** (1.299)	2.456* (1.381)
U.S. Col.	4.376*** (0.867)	2.282* (1.184)	1.611* (0.868)	-0.432 (1.120)	6.803*** (0.784)	4.309*** (1.117)
Dutch Col.	0.883 (1.779)	0.954 (1.283)	2.111 (2.021)	1.798 (1.461)	2.783** (1.067)	2.754*** (0.679)
Belgian Col.	-2.795** (1.101)	-4.681*** (1.234)	-3.056** (1.501)	-5.051*** (1.518)	-1.397 (1.908)	-3.510* (1.927)
Italian Col.	-3.074 (2.019)	1.097 (2.035)	-0.389 (5.185)	3.927 (5.393)	-3.645 (2.416)	1.318 (2.617)
Observations	11,275	11,145	128	126	3,155	3,136
R-squared	0.031	0.127	0.144	0.270	0.121	0.259
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES

Notes: Table A.9 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.0.1 Pre-Independence Elections

Table A.10: Pre-Independence Elections

Dependent variable: VDEM polyarchy score					
Yrs. before indep.:	45	40	35	30	25
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
British Col.	0.0506*** (0.0140)	0.0557*** (0.0148)	0.0566*** (0.0166)	0.0560*** (0.0162)	0.0596** (0.0236)
Country-years	52	57	57	58	60
R-squared	0.200	0.216	0.187	0.186	0.098

Dependent variable: VDEM polyarchy score					
Yrs. before indep.:	20	15	10	5	1
	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
British Col.	0.0588** (0.0240)	0.0652** (0.0255)	0.0578** (0.0259)	0.0780** (0.0317)	0.101*** (0.0342)
Country-years	62	64	64	61	63
R-squared	0.090	0.097	0.074	0.095	0.132

Notes: Table A.10 summarizes a series of OLS regressions by presenting coefficient estimates for British colonialism, and robust standard error estimates in parentheses. The constant term is suppressed for expositional clarity.

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

Because the trends shown in Figure 1 might simply be picking up minor fluctuations in *polity2* scores as opposed to substantively meaningful changes in individual countries' democracy levels, it is useful to demonstrate that a similar pattern holds with tabulated data. Table A.11 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.11 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.11: 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.12: British Colonialism and Democracy: Arellano-Bond Time Series Results

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Lagged Polity2	0.891***	0.881***	0.573***	0.552***	0.881***	0.870***
(Instrumented)	(0.00813)	(0.00863)	(0.0628)	(0.0643)	(0.00828)	(0.00874)
Post Ind. Years	0.0226***	0.0393***	-0.102	-0.268**	0.0263***	0.0423***
	(0.00338)	(0.00994)	(0.0811)	(0.122)	(0.00361)	(0.0108)
Post Ind. Years*British Col.	-0.0168***	-0.0134***	-0.211*	-0.367***	-0.0133***	-0.00688
	(0.00438)	(0.00510)	(0.111)	(0.128)	(0.00466)	(0.00537)
ln(GDP/capita)		-0.582***		1.827		-0.588***
		(0.164)		(1.899)		(0.166)
ln(Population)		-0.436		6.884**		-0.440
		(0.345)		(3.404)		(0.375)
ln(Oil & gas/capita)		0.0239		-0.615		0.0128
		(0.0370)		(0.478)		(0.0371)
Constant	-0.515***	6.980**	-0.305	-67.25**	-0.683***	6.908*
	(0.0743)	(3.446)	(0.217)	(32.66)	(0.0869)	(3.648)
Observations	3,735	3,285	368	329	3,367	2,956
Number of ccodecow	73	66	73	66	73	66
Country FE	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES

Notes: Table A.12 summarizes a series of Arellano-Bond dynamic time series regressions by presenting coefficient estimates for the main variables of theoretical interest, and panel-corrected standard error estimates in parentheses. The other coefficient estimates are suppressed for expositional clarity. 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: logged annual GDP per capita, logged annual population, logged annual oil and gas production per capita. *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

Table A.13: Assessing Negotiated Decolonization Mechanisms Post-1991

Dependent variable: <i>polity2</i> score first yr. indep.				
Panel A. Elections and Guerrillas				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
VDEM polyarchy 5 yrs. before indep.	14.94*** (4.767)	14.39** (5.860)	13.84*** (5.128)	14.32** (5.966)
Guerrillas inherit state	-0.557 (2.166)	0.817 (2.239)	-0.0279 (2.132)	0.919 (2.190)
British Col.			1.173 (1.449)	0.285 (1.605)
Observations	1,448	1,222	1,448	1,222
R-squared	0.105	0.176	0.113	0.176
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES
Panel B. Disaggregated Elections and Guerrillas				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
VDEM polyarchy 5 yrs. before indep., not 20 yr. demo	8.872 (9.759)	4.510 (11.46)	7.595 (10.44)	4.554 (11.35)
Demo. 20 yrs. before indep.	6.196** (2.481)	5.025 (3.192)	5.654** (2.696)	4.997 (3.244)
Guerrillas inherit state	-0.830 (2.096)	0.0852 (2.228)	-0.362 (2.025)	0.158 (2.202)
British Col.			1.102 (1.527)	0.190 (1.595)
Observations	1,424	1,222	1,424	1,222
R-squared	0.085	0.149	0.092	0.149
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES
Panel C. Colonizer Democracy				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Colonizer Polity	0.0390 (0.176)	-0.127 (0.204)	-0.0990 (0.228)	-0.200 (0.259)
British Col.			1.610 (1.536)	1.002 (1.727)
Observations	1,734	1,484	1,734	1,484
R-squared	0.000	0.146	0.012	0.149
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES
Panel D. Decolonization Manifestos				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Colonizer Anti-Colonial Manifesto	3.115** (1.357)	3.396** (1.527)	4.181*** (0.947)	4.850*** (1.184)
British Col.			-1.197 (1.258)	-1.879 (1.259)
Observations	1,567	1,334	1,567	1,334
R-squared	0.044	0.154	0.048	0.164
Covariates	NO	YES	NO	YES
Panel E. Decolonization Manifestos w/o Minor Empires				
	(1)	(2)		
Colonizer Anti-Colonial Manifesto	2.877 (1.970)	1.927 (2.136)		
Observations	1,423	1,224		
R-squared	0.025	0.139		
Covariates	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. Temporally, the sample in each column consists only of post-1990 country-years. In Panel E, the regressions in Columns 1 and 2 cannot be estimated when adding a British colonial dummy because this variable is perfectly collinear with colonizer manifestos (because only British and French colonies are in the sample). *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

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