



British Colonial Legacies and Political Development

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Summary. — This paper investigates the developmental legacies of British colonial rule. It draws on insight from qualitative case studies, which show that direct and indirect rule institutionalized very different states and thereby differentially affected postcolonial political development. The study proposes that these qualitative findings might provide insight into mechanisms underlying past statistical work on colonial state legacies. Using a variable measuring the extent to which 33 former British colonies were ruled through indirect legal-administrative institutions, the analysis finds that the extent of indirect colonial rule is strongly and negatively related to several different indicators of postcolonial political development while controlling for other factors. It therefore provides evidence that the present levels of political development among former British colonies have historical roots and have been shaped by the extent to which they were ruled either directly or indirectly during the colonial period.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Over the past few years, numerous studies have investigated the potential impact of colonialism on long-term developmental trajectories (Brown, 2000; Grier, 1999; Kohli, 1994; Lange, 2003; Mahoney, 2003; Sokoloff & Engerman, 2000; Young, 1994). While most works analyze the long-term effects of colonialism on economic development, several others consider democratization, health, and education. Regardless of the outcome variable, however, nearly all of these scholars recognize that the colonial state was the primary extension of foreign domination and investigate how its form and persistence over time have shaped future development.

Two of the most influential works are cross-national, statistical analyses by Acemoglu, Johnson, and Robinson (2001, 2002). Together, the papers provide evidence that colonialism transformed the developmental trajectories of nearly all regions of the world and that these reversals were colonial state legacies. They divide colonialism into two broad categories—settlement and extractive. Settlement colonies were created in areas with relatively benign disease environments yet without large indigenous populations. According to the authors, because settlers both demanded and helped to construct institutions that protected property rights, settlement colonies had relatively effec-

tive legal systems, institutions that persisted and thereby benefited postcolonial development. Alternatively, where large-scale European settlement did not occur, colonial state officials were not constrained by European settlers, focused simply on expropriating wealth from the colonized, and therefore failed to provide the same legal protection of property as in settlement colonies.

While providing evidence that colonialism shaped state institutions and thereby developmental trajectories, the intricacies of the authors' argument are somewhat underdeveloped. First, only a small proportion of the world's colonies experienced large-scale European settlement, and the present state institutions of former colonies with low levels of European settlement are characterized by great diversity. Other factors beside institutional transfer via settlement or extraction therefore appear to have affected state institutional quality. Second, although economic development requires the protection of property rights, state institutions are multifaceted and influence economic as well as more broad-based human development in several ways. A state-centered analysis of colonial legacies must therefore have a broader view of the state.

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Recognizing these two critiques, this paper works within the general framework of Acemoglu *et al.*, accepting their findings that the form of colonialism was shaped by the disease environment and precolonial population—among other things—yet drawing on the works of qualitative researchers to explore more elaborate explanations for the link between colonialism and development. Specifically, it tests whether the extent to which former colonies were ruled through either direct or indirect colonial institutions had long-term effects on postcolonial state governance among colonies with low levels of European settlement. To do so, the paper reviews qualitative works discussing the impact of direct and indirect colonial rule on political development and provides a statistical test through the analysis of 33 former British colonies whose populations at the end of colonialism were overwhelmingly non-European in origin. For the latter, it constructs an index measuring the extent to which British colonies were ruled through indirect—as opposed to direct—legal-administrative institutions and uses statistical methods to measure whether relationships exist between the indirect rule variable and numerous indicators of postcolonial state governance: political stability, bureaucratic effectiveness, state regulatory burden, rule of law, lack of government corruption, and democratization.

The paper finds that there is a negative and robust relationship between the extent of indirect rule and political stability, bureaucratic effectiveness, lack of state regulatory burden, rule of law, and lack of government corruption even controlling for other factors. The relationship between the form of colonialism and postcolonial democratization, however, is less robust, although still negative and marginally significant. Thus, while recognizing that the paper's findings are limited to former British colonies and that more research is needed for broader conclusions, it provides evidence that the qualitative works on indirect/direct colonial rule are generalizable and might provide new yet complementary insight into the findings of Acemoglu *et al.*

2. VARIATION IN BRITISH COLONIALISM: DIRECT VS. INDIRECT RULE

Qualitative scholars who analyze colonial state legacies emphasize both positive and

negative effects on development and suggest that direct rule promoted the former while indirect rule promoted the latter. Boone (1994), Mamdani (1996), Migdal (1988), and Reno (1995), for instance, describe how indirect rule in Africa impeded political development through institutional legacies. These works focus on how the institutional legacies of indirect rule left ineffective central administrations, empowered local chiefs, and thereby created a system of decentralized despotism that has left the state both ineffective and near collapse. Alternatively, Amsden (1985), Huff (1994), Kohli (1994), Lange (2003), and Wade (1990) suggest that direct and bureaucratic colonial rule left legacies that made possible effective states and thereby state-led development. They focus on the state's ability to provide a variety of public goods that enhance economic production (education, health care, sanitation, roads, law and order) and to steer the national economy.

Direct and indirect forms of rule are often defined based on who runs what positions within the colonial state. Doyle (1986) claims that direct rule occurs when only the lowest levels of the colonial administration are run by locals while the remaining positions are run by colonial officials. He writes that indirect rule, on the other hand, occurs when “the governance of extensive districts of the colony is entrusted to members of the native elite under the supervision of the imperial governors” (p. 38). Fisher (1991) disagrees, describing indirect rule as the incorporation of indigenous institutions—not simply individuals—into an overall structure of colonial domination. From this view, direct rule differs from indirect rule in that it involves the construction of a complete system of colonial domination that lacks any relatively autonomous indigenous component yet which might be staffed overwhelmingly by indigenous actors (pp. 6–7). Similar to the latter, this project uses “direct” and “indirect rule” as concepts describing different structures of domination, not terms used to designate who runs the state. It suggests that the state in directly ruled colonies approximated what Migdal (1994) calls “integrated domination”—or centralized state control of an entire territory—while its counterpart in indirectly ruled colonies was closer to “dispersed domination”—or a fragmented state unable to achieve countrywide domination over local power-holders (p. 9).

Direct rule provided an administrative structure based on formal rules, as opposed to

individual decisions, and had a centralized legal-administrative structure with a formal chain of command that linked the diverse state actors throughout the colony to the central colonial administration and thereby back to governments in Europe or Japan. This centralized and rule-based organization was possible because state actors were employees whose positions could not be owned, were based on merit (and usually race), and were the only means of income for the office holders. Besides the organization of the colonial administration, the regulation of society was also guided by rules. Large police forces and courts based on European law were constructed in directly ruled colonies,¹ and both collaborated with one another in order to create a broad and centralized legal framework regulating societal and state-society relations.

The legal-administrative institutions of indirectly ruled colonies differed considerably from those of directly ruled colonies. Indirect rule was based on a tripartite chain of patron-client relations linking the colonial administration to the population via chiefs. According to Lugard (1922), the acclaimed theoretician and practitioner of indirect rule,

The essential feature of the system . . . is that the native chiefs are constituted as an integral part of the machinery of the administration. There are not two sets of rulers—the British and the native—working either separately or in co-operation, but a single Government in which the native chiefs have well-defined duties and an acknowledged status equally with British officers. Their duties should never conflict, and should overlap as little as possible. They should be complementary to each other, and the chief himself must understand that he has no right to place and power unless he renders his proper services to the State (p. 203).

Despite such doctrinaire claims of unification and complementarity, Mamdani (1996) recognizes that the reality of indirect rule was usually quite different. In particular, he finds that indirect rule created a “bifurcated state” in which two separate and incompatible forms of rule existed—one dominated by the colonial administration, the other by numerous chiefs.

While the members of the colonial administration were generally recruited and employed along bureaucratic lines, the position held by chiefs was based primarily on patrimonialism. Chiefs were selected to rule according to their lineage and—most importantly—their willingness to collaborate with colonial officials.

Moreover, although often receiving a salary, chiefs earned most of their livelihood through the control of land and direct extraction from their subjects. The chiefs were given executive, legislative, and judicial powers to regulate social relations in their chiefdoms, vast authority which was supposed to be grounded in preexisting tradition or custom, not bureaucratic rules. Thus, indirect rule often took the form of numerous patrimonial kingdoms linked together only weakly by a foreign administration.

Much of the qualitative work on colonial state legacies focuses on three aspects of indirect rule that, in combination, promoted local despotism at the expense of centralized control. First, the central legal-administrative institution was miniscule, concentrated almost exclusively in the colonial capital, and had very little interaction with the colonial population, characteristics which endowed it with very little infrastructural power (Mann, 1984). As a result, the colonial state in indirectly ruled colonies lacked the capabilities to implement policy outside of the capital city and often had no option for pursuing policy other than coercion.

Next, indirect rule endowed chiefs with great institutional powers (Boone, 1994; Chanock, 1985; Mamdani, 1996; Merry, 1991; Migdal, 1988; Roberts & Mann, 1991). Chiefs were given control of ‘customary law’ and, because it lacked formalization, were able to mold and wield it for personal benefit. Customary law also endowed chiefs with control over communal lands and chiefdom police, both of which could be coercively employed to dominate local inhabitants. Although most work focuses on the judiciary, chiefs also had executive and legislative powers, which further concentrated power in their hands.

Finally, the institutional powers of chiefs were augmented by their intermediary positions, which enabled them to control information and resource flows between the colonial administration and the local population and avoid colonial supervision (Clapham, 1982; Reno, 1995; Scott, 1972). Consequently, chiefs were able to play administrators and local subjects off against one another in order to maintain considerable autonomy from each. In addition, their intermediary position allowed chiefs to be rent-seekers extraordinaire whenever exchanges between the administration and local population occurred. Thus, when independence reforms failed to weaken chiefs, this system of “decentralized despotism” provided

an effective impediment to state governance and broad-based development (Mamdani, 1996).

While the British—and particularly, Lord Lugard—have been credited with inventing indirect rule, the French, Portuguese, and Belgians all used indirect forms of rule (Bayart, 1993; Boone, 1992, 1994; Cruise O'Brien, 1975; Mamdani, 1996; Robinson, 1972). British colonialism was exceptional in at least one aspect, however—mainly the size and diversity of the British Empire, which caused Great Britain to rely much more extensively on both direct and indirect modes of domination than any other colonial power. For example, colonial Uganda and Nigeria were extreme cases of indirect rule, Kenya and Fiji had larger colonial legal-administrative orders yet were still heavily dependent on chiefs, and Singapore and Jamaica lacked chiefs completely. The British Empire therefore provides an opportunity to analyze the different institutional legacies of direct and indirect rule while controlling for the colonial power, the latter of which appears necessary given the numerous statistical analysis that find a positive and significant relationship between British colonialism and various development indicators (Bollen & Jackman, 1985; Brown, 2000; Grier, 1999; La Porta, Lopez-de-Silanes, Schleifer, & Vishny, 1999).

Within the British Empire, direct or indirect colonialism was not a random event but instead was shaped by numerous factors, including those that Acemoglu *et al.* show are related to present state institutional quality. First, the form of rule was shaped by the presence or absence of large numbers of European settlers, with large-scale settlement colonies having very direct forms of rule and nonsettlement colonies having more indirect forms of rule. Second, strategic geopolitical importance affected the willingness of colonial powers to invest in direct forms of rule. In addition, since the extensiveness of the colonial administration depended on its ability to raise local resources and because settlers chose to migrate to lands with economic opportunities, the form of rule was shaped by the economic potential of the colony. Fourth, the extensiveness of colonial rule also depended on the disease environment of the colonies. Since much of Africa was a “white man’s grave,” for example, neither settlement nor the use of numerous European officials was feasible even if great economic potential existed. Finally, the presence of local populations shaped the form of rule in two primary ways.

First, large local populations limited settlement by obstructing access to land and greatly increasing the costs and risks of large-scale settlement. Second, as the Indian Mutiny of 1857 showed, indigenous peoples were more likely to revolt against invasive forms of colonialism and were therefore most effectively ruled through more “customary” and indirect forms of rule (Porter, 1996, pp. 29–48).

3. STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

The paper uses statistical methods to test whether the direct or indirect form of British colonialism is related to postcolonial indicators of state governance. The cases used for the statistical analysis are limited to the 33 former British colonies² that (a) did not experience large-scale European settlement, (b) had over 100,000 inhabitants at independence, (c) did not merge with non-British colonies after independence, and (d) experienced more than 30 years of formal colonial rule. Although decreasing valuable degrees of freedom, such case restrictions are employed in an attempt to make the sample more homogeneous and thereby increase insight gained from cross-case comparison.³

The first restriction is used in order to focus on colonies without large-scale European settlement and the variation of rule within this subset of colonialism. In particular, it is employed in order to investigate the determinants of different levels of state effectiveness among former colonies with only low levels of settlement.⁴ Such a restriction is necessary because colonies with large-scale settlement were not comprised of subordinate populations; they were closer to extensions of Great Britain than to colonies of foreign peoples. As a result, settlers were not prone to the same levels of exclusion and exploitation as other colonial peoples and therefore experienced distinct forms of colonial domination. Second, small colonies such as St. Kitts and Nevis and Gibraltar are excluded because they are micro-states that are analytically distinct from other national states in terms of size and population. Next, Somaliland and British Cameroon are excluded because they merged with non-British colonies at independence and therefore experienced hybrid colonial legacies. Finally, Britain’s colonies in the Middle East are excluded from the analysis because they only experienced formal

colonial rule for a relatively brief period of time.

Using this set of 33 former British colonies, the extent of indirect colonial rule is operationalized by dividing the number of colonially recognized customary court cases by the total number of court cases in 1955,⁵ the latter of which includes both customary cases heard by chiefs and magistrate court cases presided over by colonial officials (see the Appendix). As such, it ranges from zero to 100 and measures the extent to which British colonial rule depended on customary legal institutions for the regulation of social relations. The variable also captures the size of the legal-administrative apparatus. Indirectly ruled colonies, for example, had significantly fewer police officers per capita: The correlation between the customary court variable and per capita police officers in 1955 is -0.82 . The customary law variable therefore provides a direct measurement of the level of colonial dependence on customary courts and an indirect measurement of the lack of legal-administrative personnel under centralized administrative control. The data on British colonial legal systems were collected from the 1955 annual *Colonial Report*, *Annual Judicial Report*, and other colonial documents available at the Public Records Office in the United Kingdom.

Compatible data for the extent of indirect rule are not available for Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, and Pakistan, all of which were ruled as one colony through the Indian Civil Service until the 1930s and 1940s.⁶ During British colonialism, approximately two-fifths of these territories were ruled indirectly through some 600 princely states, suggesting an indirect rule score somewhere around 20% or 30%.⁷ Other factors suggest a higher score, however. As mentioned above, police officers per capita is highly correlated with the extent of indirect rule. In 1938, the four former South Asian colonies had 0.4 police officers per 1,000 people, a ratio that is less than all other former British colonies except Nigeria (0.3 per 1,000) (Griffiths, 1971, p. 422).⁸ As such, the simple use of police officers per capita suggests a score of approximately 90%. Similarly, qualitative works describe how the minimal colonial state created local conditions in both the directly and indirectly ruled areas of colonial India that were quite similar to those in indirectly ruled Africa.⁹ Noting these factors, this analysis scores the extent of indirect rule in between the two extremes at 60%.

The seven dependent variables are proxies for various types of political development, six of which are compiled by the World Bank for 1997–98, the other by Freedom House during 1972–2000. The World Bank indicators range from -2.5 to 2.5 and include variables for (i) state effectiveness, which measures the quality of the public service provision and the bureaucracy; (ii) state stability, which measures perceptions of the likelihood that the government in power will be destabilized or overthrown; (iii) lack of state corruption, which measures the extent to which public power is exercised for public gain; (iv) lack of regulatory burden, which measures freedom from excessive regulation; and (v) rule of law, which measures the incidence of crime, the effectiveness and predictability of the judiciary, and the enforceability of contracts (see Kaufmann, Kraay, & Zoido-Lobaton, 1999). In addition to testing these different state governance variables independently, the analysis also combines them in order to make an aggregate variable of state governance. Notably, because the World Bank data are only available for 1997–98, the state governance variables are limited to a single point in time.

The democracy variable combines the Freedom House indices of political rights and liberties, inverts the scores, and averages them between different time periods. As such, the democracy measurement is continuous and ranges from one (least democratic) to thirteen (most democratic). In order to see if the relationship between average level of democratization and the extent of indirect rule change over time, level of democratization is averaged over four different time periods: 1972–2000, 1972–82, 1982–92, 1992–2000. Unlike the World Bank indicators, the Freedom House scores therefore allow the analysis of one aspect of state governance at different times and over extended periods.

Five control variables are used for this paper's multivariate analysis. The first two attempt to control for the primary factors that Acemoglu *et al.* (2001, 2002) find are related to state protection of property rights and postcolonial economic development: disease environment and indigenous population density at the onset of colonization. Because Acemoglu *et al.* (2002) find that indigenous population density at the onset of colonialism affected the quality of both colonial and postcolonial state institutions, the models include a control variable for population density at the beginning of colonial

rule. The measurements of disease environment used by Acemoglu *et al.*, however, are missing for several of the cases analyzed in this paper.¹⁰ In its place, the models include a variable that measures the percentage of the total colonial population that was comprised of European residents in 1955. Although radically different from the disease environment variable, the substitution appears appropriate since European settlement is the intervening variable through which Acemoglu *et al.* hypothesize that the disease environment—as well as indigenous population density—affected colonial and thereby postcolonial state institutional quality (see the Appendix for the data).

While this study is primarily concerned with the settlement and precolonial population density controls, the models also control for three variables that potentially influenced state institutional quality among former British colonies. Because recent statistical analyses of economic and political development find a strong African regional effect (see Englebert, 2000), and because Herbst (2000) suggests that regional characteristics hinder state building in sub-Saharan Africa, an African control variable is employed (1 = African, 0 = non-African). The analysis also includes a control for the extent of ethnic fractionalization, which other analyses find is significantly related to and both economic performance and the quality of government (Easterly & Levine, 1997; La Porta *et al.*, 1999). The variable is operationalized as the probability that two randomly selected conationals in 1960 spoke different languages, and the data come from La Porta *et al.* (1999). Finally, the paper uses a binomial variable to control for whether or not the socioeconomic system was dominated by plantations, a factor that often created ethnically based social hierarchies characterized by extreme inequality and economic systems with very low levels of diversification. To be categorized as a plantation colony, plantations must have been major social institutions that affected the daily lives of most individuals and shaped the overall economic, political, and social institutions of the colony. As such, the Solomon Islands and Malaysia are not categorized as having plantation institutions because, although present, the plantations were not anywhere close to as dominant as they were in Jamaica, Barbados, or Mauritius. Data on the presence and extent of plantations are from Beckford (1983).

Diagnostic exams have been performed to check for outliers and nonlinear relationships

between the independent/control variables and the dependent variables. The European settler variable has curvilinear relationships with other variables so its logged value is used for the analysis. In all other cases, the data are consistent with the assumptions of linear multivariate analysis. Checks on collinearity uncovered modest relationships among independent variables, but nothing considered high enough to obscure the relationships.¹¹

Tables 1–3 show the results of the multivariate models using the six World Bank governance indicators as dependent variables. For these tables and all subsequent tables, model 1 includes only the indirect rule variable, model 2 includes only the five control variables, model 3 includes the indirect rule as well as the five control variables, and model 4 uses the same variables as model 3 but excludes the four South Asian cases from the analysis. The last model is used to investigate whether the four South Asian cases with proxy scores for the extent of indirect rule conform to the remaining cases.

Considering model 1 in Tables 1–3, the extent of indirect rule is strongly and negatively related to all six governance indicators. As shown by the adjusted *R*-square values, the variable on average accounts for 40% of the variation of the six governance indicators. Model 2 in Tables 1–3 shows that the five control variables account for considerably less variation than the extent of indirect rule, having an adjusted *R*-square value that is only 0.16 on average. Moreover, while the extent of indirect rule is highly significant in model 1, few of the controls have any significance in model 2. The main exception is the logged measurement of European settlers, which is positively related to all six governance indicators and has at least a moderately significant relationship with five of the six dependent variables (lack of government corruption being the exception). Model 2 therefore supports the findings of Acemoglu *et al.* (2001, 2002).

With the complete model in Tables 1–3, however, the European settler population variable loses its significance in all cases, and its coefficients are reduced considerably. Alternatively, the extent of indirect rule continues to be negatively and very strongly related to the governance indicators. The size of the variable's coefficients is also large. For example, the coefficient of the indirect rule variable in the model for aggregate state governance suggests that a rise in the extent of indirect rule from 0

Table 1. *Multivariate analysis of state governance among former British colonies, 1997–98: Aggregate governance and political stability*

	Aggregate score				Political stability			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
<i>Variable coefficients</i>								
Intercept	0.527*** (0.130)	0.288 (0.306)	0.410 (0.243)	0.511* (0.269)	0.395* (0.226)	−0.263 (0.425)	−0.144 (0.376)	−0.163 (0.427)
Extent of indirect rule, 1955	−0.015***		−0.018*** (0.004)	−0.014** (0.005)	−0.015*** (0.004)		−0.019*** (0.007)	−0.022** (0.009)
European settlement, 1955 (log)		0.236** (0.099)	0.120 (0.083)	0.098 (0.089)		0.319** (0.136)	0.195 (0.127)	0.208 (0.140)
Precolonial population density		0.002 (0.003)	0.003 (0.002)	0.003 (0.003)		0.004 (0.004)	0.005 (0.004)	0.003 (0.005)
Africa control		−0.490* (0.273)	0.014 (0.248)	−0.187 (0.340)		−0.603 (0.377)	−0.073 (0.380)	0.081 (0.533)
Ethnic diversity, 1960		0.002 (0.005)	0.006 (0.004)	0.005 (0.004)		0.011* (0.007)	0.016** (0.006)	0.018** (0.007)
Plantation control		−0.250 (0.353)	−0.331 (0.279)	−0.354 (0.299)		−0.113 (0.503)	−0.197 (0.443)	−0.245 (0.485)
<i>Model</i>								
F-value	<0.001	0.048	<0.001	0.003	0.003	0.114	0.013	0.035
Adj. R-squared	0.494	0.207	0.508	0.456	0.252	0.148	0.341	0.314
Number of cases	33	33	33	29	31	31	31	27

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table 2. *Multivariate analysis of state governance among former British colonies, 1997–98: Bureaucratic effectiveness and state regulatory burden*

	Bureaucratic effectiveness				State regulatory burden			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
<i>Variable coefficients</i>								
Intercept	0.452** (0.191)	0.074 (0.390)	0.183 (0.346)	0.369 (0.372)	0.608*** (0.119)	0.638 (0.266)	0.725*** (0.233)	0.847*** (0.242)
Extent of indirect rule, 1955	-0.016*** (0.004)		-0.017*** (0.006)	-0.010 (0.007)	-0.012*** (0.002)		-0.013*** (0.004)	-0.008 (0.005)
European settlement, 1955 (log)		0.224* (0.125)	0.112 (0.117)	0.067 (0.122)		0.173* (0.086)	0.090 (0.079)	0.062 (0.080)
Precolonial population density		0.003 (0.004)	0.004 (0.003)	0.004 (0.005)		0.001 (0.003)	0.002 (0.002)	0.002 (0.003)
Africa control		-0.647* (0.346)	-0.166 (0.350)	-0.640 (0.466)		-0.224 (0.237)	0.137 (0.237)	-0.083 (0.305)
Ethnic diversity, 1960		0.004 (0.006)	0.009 (0.006)	0.006 (0.006)		-0.005 (0.004)	-0.002 (0.004)	-0.005 (0.004)
Plantation control		-0.113 (0.462)	-0.189 (0.408)	-0.230 (0.423)		-0.227 (0.306)	-0.285 (0.267)	-0.290 (0.268)
<i>Model</i>								
F-value	<0.001	0.130	0.016	0.036	<0.001	0.036	0.003	0.007
Adj. R-squared	0.357	0.136	0.327	0.312	0.446	0.227	0.417	0.413
Number of cases	31	31	31	27	33	33	33	29

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table 3. *Multivariate analysis of state governance among former British colonies, 1997–98: Rule of law and government corruption*

	Rule of law				Lack of government corruption			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
<i>Variable coefficients</i>								
Intercept	0.609*** (0.164)	0.436 (0.393)	0.607** (0.290)	0.639* (0.326)	0.623*** (0.170)	0.526 (0.361)	0.626* (0.321)	0.811 (0.338)
Extent of indirect rule, 1955	-0.017*** (0.003)		-0.025*** (0.005)	-0.024*** (0.007)	0.016*** (0.003)		-0.016*** (0.006)	-0.008 (0.007)
European settlement, 1955 (log)		0.267** (0.127)	0.104 (0.099)	0.100 (0.108)		0.195 (0.116)	0.091 (0.108)	0.045 (0.111)
Precolonial population density		0.001 (0.004)	0.002 (0.003)	0.002 (0.004)		0.002 (0.004)	0.003 (0.003)	0.003 (0.004)
Africa control		0.528 (0.351)	-0.180 (0.296)	0.213 (0.411)		-0.475 (0.321)	-0.028 (0.324)	-0.524 (0.423)
Ethnic diversity, 1960		0.002 (0.006)	0.008* (0.005)	0.007 (0.005)		-0.003 (0.006)	0.002 (0.006)	-0.001 (0.006)
Plantation control		-0.532 (0.453)	-0.646* (0.333)	-0.632* (0.361)		-0.219 (0.428)	-0.290 (0.378)	-0.323 (0.384)
<i>Model</i>								
F-value	<0.001	0.208	<0.001	0.004	<0.001	0.112	0.014	0.025
Adj. R-squared	0.434	0.082	0.507	0.450	0.416	0.149	0.339	0.344
Number of cases		33	33	29	31	31	31	27

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

to 50 is associated with a 0.9 increase in the governance score, a gap roughly equivalent to that separating Belgium (0.793) from the Dominican Republic (-0.113).

Comparison of models 3 and 4 within Tables 1–3 shows that the general relationships continue when the four South Asian colonies with proxies for the extent of indirect rule are excluded, suggesting that the proxies generally conform to the overall analysis. In all six of the fourth models, the indirect rule variable coefficients are negative, and the overall predictive power of the models remain similar to those in the third models. The exclusion of Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, and Pakistan, however, causes the coefficients of the indirect rule variable to decrease in three models—bureaucratic effectiveness, state regulatory burden, and government corruption—and therefore to lose their significance. This appears to be due to fewer degrees of freedom as well as greater collinearity with the African control variable, whose coefficients in model 4 increase at the expense of the extent of indirect rule.¹² Even with relatively high collinearity, however, the extent of indirect rule continues to have very robust relationships with the aggregate measurement of state governance as well as the indicators of state stability and rule of law.

While the above analysis shows that the extent of indirect colonial rule in 1955 is strongly and negatively related to the World Bank governance indicators in 1997–98, Tables 4 and 5 test its relationship with average levels of democratization from 1972–2000, 1972–82, 1982–92, and 1992–2000. Similar to the models with the World Bank governance indicators, the first model in Tables 4 and 5 shows that the extent of indirect rule is negatively and strongly related to the average level of democracy during all periods, although its strength decreases considerably during the 1992–2000 period. This decrease appears to have been caused by a wave of democratization within British Africa during the 1990s that did not conform to past forms of colonial rule: The bivariate correlation between the average level of democracy and the extent of indirect rule among the 14 former British colonies in sub-Saharan Africa decreased from -0.60 for the 1982–92 period to only -0.24 during the period 1992–2000.

The second model in Tables 4 and 5 includes only the control variables. Compared to the World Bank governance indicators, the control variables account for much more variation, with an adjusted *R*-square value of 0.44 for the

overall 1972–2000 period. Of the control variables, the plantation variable is the only one that is strongly related to level of democracy. This positive relationship is somewhat surprising given the well-established literature stressing that plantation systems left legacies that negatively affected development (Beckford, 1983; Ferleger, 1985; Mandle, 1974). Notably, the positive relationship between plantation systems and postcolonial democratization is the opposite direction of the relationship between the presence of plantations and the World Bank governance indicators, although the extent of indirect rule is significantly related to only one of the World Bank indicators (see Tables 1–3). It therefore appears that the class and ethnic dynamics caused by plantations might have promoted representative government by sparking lower class mobilization but that this mobilization might, in turn, have limited other aspects of state governance that depend on corporate state action. In addition, the absence of militaries in former plantation colonies likely promoted representative government.

The variable measuring the extent of indirect rule in model 3 of Tables 4 and 5 is negatively related to average level of democracy during all periods and at least marginally significant in three of the four periods: As with model 1, the extent of indirect rule is strongly and negatively related to average level of democratization during the entire 28-year period, the 1970s, and the 1980s but less so during the 1990s. The democracy models differ from those with the World Bank governance indicators in that the addition of the colonial rule variable has a more modest impact on the adjusted *R*-squared. The weaker relationship appears to be due primarily to several former colonies in Asia—Brunei, Malaysia, and Singapore in particular—with low levels of indirect colonial rule yet low levels of postcolonial democratization. As directly ruled nonplantation colonies, these cases also help to explain the positive relationship between plantations and democracy.

Model 4 of Tables 4 and 5 shows that the exclusion of the four South Asian colonies does not dramatically transform the relationships in model 2. Yet, similar to Tables 1–3, the exclusion changes the coefficients of several of the control variables, especially the African control, causing the indirect rule variable to become insignificant even at the 0.10 level during all periods.

Table 4. *Multivariate analysis of average level of democratization among former British colonies, 1972–2000 and 1972–82*

	Average democracy level, 1972–2000				Average democracy level, 1972–82			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
<i>Variable coefficients</i>								
Intercept	9.625*** (0.704)	6.908*** (1.190)	7.201*** (1.157)	7.439*** (1.235)	9.840*** (0.750)	6.966*** (1.301)	7.289*** (1.263)	7.352*** (1.337)
Extent of indirect rule, 1955	–0.062*** (0.014)		–0.038* (0.021)	–0.022 (0.023)	–0.062*** (0.015)		–0.041* (0.023)	–0.020 (0.025)
Plantations		3.827*** (1.362)	3.435** (1.329)	3.499** (1.285)		4.258*** (1.489)	3.825*** (1.451)	3.928*** (1.392)
European settlement, 1955 (log)		0.342 (0.416)	0.202 (0.408)	0.296 (0.489)		0.086 (0.455)	–0.069 (0.445)	0.144 (0.530)
Precolonial population density		0.013 (0.016)	0.021 (0.016)	0.069 (0.063)		0.010 (0.018)	0.019 (0.018)	0.100 (0.069)
Africa control		–1.154 (1.034)	–0.193 (1.135)	–0.571 (1.337)		–1.295 (1.130)	–0.233 (1.238)	–0.825 (1.449)
Ethnic diversity, 1960		–0.002 (0.019)	0.010 (0.019)	–0.007 (0.020)		–0.002 (0.020)	0.012 (0.021)	–0.008 (0.022)
<i>Model</i>								
F-value	<0.001	0.001	<0.001	0.001	<0.001	0.003	0.002	0.002
Adj. R-squared	0.373	0.437	0.479	0.518	0.340	0.377	0.425	0.483
Number of cases	32	32	32	28	32	32	32	28

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table 5. Multivariate analysis of average level of democratization among former British colonies, 1982–92 and 1992–2000

	Average democracy level, 1982–92				Average democracy level, 1992–2000			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
<i>Variable coefficients</i>								
Intercept	9.563*** (0.764)	6.946*** (1.446)	7.360*** (1.374)	7.460*** (1.495)	9.540*** (0.849)	6.873*** (1.327)	7.024*** (1.351)	7.555*** (1.521)
Extent of indirect rule, 1955	-0.067*** (0.015)		-0.053** (0.021)	-0.038 (0.028)	-0.058*** (0.017)		-0.019 (0.025)	-0.008 (0.028)
Plantations		3.259* (1.655)	2.705* (1.579)	2.810** (1.556)		3.959** (1.519)	3.757** (1.553)	3.740** (1.583)
European settlement, 1955 (log)		0.320 (0.505)	0.122 (0.484)	0.311 (0.592)		0.626 (0.464)	0.554 (0.476)	0.439 (0.603)
Precolonial population density		0.008 (0.020)	0.019 (0.019)	0.084 (0.077)		0.024 (0.018)	0.028 (0.019)	0.026 (0.078)
Africa control		-1.707 (1.256)	-0.347 (1.347)	-0.486 (1.619)		-0.462 (1.153)	0.033 (1.325)	-0.385 (1.648)
Ethnic diversity, 1960		-0.002 (0.023)	0.019 (0.023)	-0.001 (0.024)		-0.006 (0.012)	-0.003 (0.022)	-0.014 (0.025)
<i>Model</i>								
F-value	<0.001	0.013	0.005	0.007	0.002	0.001	0.002	0.007
Adj. R-squared	0.372	0.294	0.376	0.406	0.254	0.428	0.419	0.407
Number of cases	32	32	32	28	32	32	32	28

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

4. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

This paper investigates whether British colonialism left state institutions that have reinforced long-term trajectories of political development. To do so, it measures the extent to which colonies were ruled via indirect institutions for a set of 33 former British colonies and finds that indirect rule has a strong, negative relationship with postcolonial levels of political development. These relationships are strongest and most consistent with the variables measuring aggregate state governance, state stability, and rule of law and weakest and least consistent with average level of democratization, especially during the 1990s. The findings provide evidence that British colonialism left positive political legacies in some colonies but not others and that this legacy depended on the extent to which colonial rule was either direct or indirect.

While supporting the basic findings of Acemoglu *et al.* (2001, 2002), this analysis provides evidence that the authors place too much emphasis on the impact of settlers and too little on the actual form of colonial rule, the latter of which affected numerous aspects of state governance. Yet, the findings of Acemoglu *et al.* must not be disregarded, as institutional transfer via settlement was undoubtedly a vital factor in the developmental success of Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United States. Moreover, the disease environment and the presence of precolonial populations not only influenced European settlement, as Acemoglu *et al.* point out, but also directly affected the extent of indirect rule and thereby indirectly shaped postcolonial state governance among nonsettler colonies as well. As such, this paper's analysis provides a bridge between large cross-national analyses which find that the form of colonialism depended on precolonial characteristics and qualitative case studies that have long emphasized the divergent effects of direct and indirect rule on political development.

Since the analysis is limited to former British colonies that did not experience large-scale European settlement, were not micro-colonies, and were colonized for more than three decades, further investigation is necessary if one attempts to generalize outside of the cases analyzed here. Previous work, however, suggests that the findings do help to provide general inference into other cases. Mamdani (1996), for example, notes that all of Africa was ruled through indirect colonial rule and that

these legacies hindered postcolonial political development *regardless* of colonial power. Some disagree, however, suggesting that French colonialism, in particular, was more direct than British colonialism in Africa since chiefs were not cloaked in tradition and had a more formal character (Fisher, 1991). This is generally correct, yet formalization still placed chiefs in an intermediary position and gave them extreme power over local affairs while leaving the central administration incapacitated. Bayart (1993) finds that predatory and patrimonial states are present in postcolonial French Africa and are the legacies of colonialism, which organized state power relations in the form of a "rhizome," not a central root system as direct rule was supposed to do. Moreover, Firmin-Sellers (2000) analyzes two neighboring regions—one in Côte D'Ivoire, the other in Ghana—and finds that the chiefs in the former French colony had greater control over land and fewer checks on their powers than those in the former British colony despite similar precolonial political institutions. Thus, although French colonies appear to have been ruled more directly, French colonialism had similar effects on state governance by creating a dispersed and despotic form of rule.

Spanish colonialism appears at first to oppose the basic findings of this paper in that those regions which were most intensively colonized—Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador, the Dominican Republic, and Mexico—have generally had much lower levels of postcolonial development over the past 150 years than the former colonial backwaters—Chile, Costa Rica, and Argentina. Yet, intense Spanish colonialism created more dispersed forms of domination: In the areas with high levels of colonial influence, rule depended on extremely powerful local intermediaries of European origin. As Mahoney (2003) recognizes, these elites obstructed state and economic reforms, thereby leaving the backwaters, which lacked decentralized rule through Spanish elites, relatively advantaged.

As both the French and Spanish cases demonstrate, a simple analysis of indirect and direct rule is quite complicated, as many forms of colonial domination existed not only among the colonial powers but within each colonial empire as well. Together with the British colonies analyzed in this paper, however, they point to a simple generalization: Dispersed forms of domination hinder state governance when they create extremely powerful local intermediaries and limit state infrastructural power. This, in

turn, not only limits the state's ability to act corporately to provide basic public goods but also impedes its ability to regulate social relations through law, thereby placing extreme constraints on the mere possibility of state governance and broad-based development. Such a generalization is not specific to colonialism or even the modern era. Tilly (1992), for example, recognizes that indirect rule has long

been a form of domination over peripheral areas and describes how it was an obstacle that had to be overcome for the construction of bureaucratic national states in early modern Europe (pp. 103–117). With their construction, in turn, Europe was able to rapidly surpass China and India as the most developed region in the world and to colonize the latter.

NOTES

1. Even the Japanese left legal systems based on European law in Korea and Taiwan since their own was based on German law.
2. The colonies include the modern states of the Bahamas, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belize, Botswana, Brunei, Cyprus, Fiji, the Gambia, Ghana, Guyana, Hong Kong, India, Jamaica, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Malaysia (which combined the three British colonies Malaya, North Borneo, and Sarawak), Mauritius, Myanmar, Nigeria, Pakistan, Sierra Leone, Singapore, the Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania (which combine the two British colonies Tanganyika and Zanzibar), Trinidad and Tobago, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.
3. The limited number of cases undoubtedly compounds difficulties associated with statistical methods. Yet, in social science analysis, a sample size near 30 is often considered sufficient for the assumptions of the central limit theorem to hold true (Hays, 1994, p. 252).
4. This paper views Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United States as having high levels of European settlement. South Africa, with approximately one-quarter of its population of European descent, is categorized as having mid-levels of European settlement and is therefore also excluded from the analysis. Alternatively, the remaining former British colonies, all of which had European populations at or below 11% of the total population during the late colonial period, are categorized as having low levels of European settlement.
5. The year 1955 is used because data for most colonies are not available earlier and because several colonies gained independence shortly thereafter.
6. Myanmar was given its own legal-administrative institutions in 1938, some 10 years before its independence. Alternatively, Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan were ruled through the same central administration until the independence period, with Bangladesh and Pakistan breaking from India in the late 1940s and Bangladesh eventually splitting from Pakistan in the early 1970s.
7. Similar to British Africa, the problems of indirect rule affected state administrative and regulative capacities as well as state integration. Kulkarni (1964), for example, describes the princely states as a "wilderness of oppression and misrule" (p. 154). "By guaranteeing protection to its feudatories from internal rebellion and external attack, British paramountcy made it impossible for the ninety-three million people of the states to launch any such struggle for emancipating themselves from capricious and oppressive rule" (p. 153).
8. The 1938 total includes the police forces of present day Bangladesh, Indian, Myanmar, and Pakistan. Specific data are not available for the individual regions during the late colonial period. Alternative data for Myanmar in 1898 and Bangladesh in 1953 are slightly higher than the aggregate figure in 1938 (0.8 per 1,000 for both) (Doha, 1957, p. 5; Griffiths, 1971, p. 202).
9. In directly ruled areas of colonial India, officials employed village headmen for a number of activities: He was "a policeman while conveying reports of crimes, a judicial officer while disposing of petty cases, a revenue officer while assisting Government officers in making collections, and an administrative officer while discharging general administrative duties" (Gopal, 1963, p. 144). The concentration of these duties, in turn, made possible unbridled power and the hyper-exploitation of the peasants (Gopal, 1963; Kumar, 1989). Since colonial revenue was largely dependent on land taxes, colonial rule also transformed social relations by giving some individuals greater control of local lands (Edwardes, 1967, pp. 75–79; Kumar, 1989). In many directly ruled areas in colonial India, tax farmers and revenue collectors known as zamindars were given rights to large tracts of land and were thereby "made masters of village communities" who were "mere parasites, who fattened on the products of the cultivators" (Kumar, 1989, p. 35). Such local despotism appears to have had its legacies:

Areas in which land rights were given to landlords during the colonial period have had much lower agricultural production and investment in public goods during the postcolonial period (Banerjee & Iyer, 2002). Thus, even in the more directly ruled areas, the tiny administration in colonial India appears to have created alternative forms of decentralized despotism at the local level that have hindered development.

10. The data are only available for 19 of the former British colonies analyzed in this paper. The bivariate relationship between the extent of indirect rule and the logged value of the European mortality rate is 0.60, suggesting that European mortality rate was an important factor that influenced the extent of indirect or direct colonial domination among British colonies. Ordinary least squares (OLS) analysis using all of the independent variables described below finds that the European mortality rate during the early colonial period does not

have a strong effect on present indicators of state governance. The extent of indirect rule, on the other hand, does, suggesting that the extent of indirect rule is an intervening variable linking disease environment to present levels of political development.

11. The extent of indirect rule and ethnic fractionalization have the strongest relationship: $r = 0.62$.

12. The Spearman correlation between the extent of indirect rule and the African control variable rises from 0.55 to 0.73 with the exclusion of the four South Asian cases. Without the South Asian colonies, Fiji, the Solomon Islands, and Malaysia are the only former British colonies outside of Africa with some level of indirect rule. Alternatively, Mauritius is the only former British colony in the sub-Saharan African region that was ruled directly.

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APPENDIX A

DATA OF FORMER BRITISH COLONIES USED FOR THE STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

Case	Extent of indirect rule, 1955 ^a	Settler population as percentage of total, 1955 ^b	Precolonial population density per kilometer ^c
Bahamas	0%	11.2%	0.0 inhabitants
Bangladesh	60.0	0.1	176.7
Barbados	0	5.1	2.3
Belize	0	2.9	0.4
Botswana	42.5	1.0	0.2
Brunei	0	4.0	3.8
Cyprus	0	1.2	20.6
Fiji	55.0	2.7	6.0
Gambia	37.3	0.1	30.0
Ghana	64.8	0.1	11.0
Guyana	0	2.9	0.1
Hong Kong	0	0.7	172.7
India	60.0	0.1	63.6
Jamaica	0	1.1	0.9
Kenya	58.8	0.5	5.7
Lesotho	49.5	0.3	5.8
Malawi	81.8	0.3	8.0
Malaysia	6.1 ^d	0.2	6.7
Mauritius	0	0.9	0.0
Myanmar	60.0	0.1	12.2
Nigeria	93.4	0.1	21.4
Pakistan	60.0	0.1	14.3
Sierra Leone	80.8	0.1	23.7
Singapore	0	1.0	1.6
Solomon Islands	51.6	0.7	3.4
Sri Lanka	0	0.1	34.8
Sudan	72.6	0.1	2.5
Swaziland	49.0	1.4	4.9
Tanzania	74.5 ^e	0.3	4.5
Trinidad	0	4.2	3.9
Uganda	79.6	0.1	15.2
Zambia	59.6	3.0	1.1
Zimbabwe	39.7	7.9	1.3

(Appendix A—continued overleaf)

^a Most data come from the *Annual Colonial Reports* and/or the various judicial reports located at the Public Records Office, UK (British Colonial Office, 1947, 1951, 1953, 1955, 1958; Colony of Fiji, 1955; Colony of Kenya, 1952; Colony of Nigeria, 1953; Colony of Northern Rhodesia, 1955; Colony of Sierra Leone, 1955; Colony of Southern Rhodesia, 1955; Colony of Sudan, 1949; Colony of Uganda, 1955). Data for several cases were not available in 1955, so data from other years are used for the statistics (Botswana 1957, Ghana 1953, Kenya 1951, Nigeria 1949, Sudan 1949). Data for Uganda were only available for three of the four districts, and an estimate based on the population sizes of the four districts as well as the customary court cases of the three districts with available data is therefore used.

^b Data are from British Colonial Office (1947, 1951, 1953, 1955, 1958) and Kuczynski (1939, 1948, 1949, 1953).

^c Data for this variable are estimated from McEvedy and Jones (1978), Kuczynski (1939, 1948, 1949, 1953), British Colonial Office (1947, 1951, 1953, 1955, 1958) and Roberts, Ngai Ling, and Bradshaw (1992). The indigenous population on most former British colonies in the Caribbean was completely or nearly wiped out by the time permanent colonial rule—usually Spanish—was first established. For example, the last of the Lucayans died in the Bahamas in 1520. More significant indigenous populations existed on Jamaica and Trinidad, but these too disappeared rapidly once contact with the Europeans was made (Cambell, 1988; Hurwitz & Hurwitz, 1971; Newson, 1976). Recognizing the quick demise of the indigenous population, this project uses the lower estimates of the population at the time of colonialism, as these figures appear to be a more accurate estimate of the indigenous population encountered by Europeans at the onset of formal colonialism.

^d The indirect rule variable for Malaysia combines the court cases of Malaya, Sarawak, and North Borneo. Because the number of court cases in Malaya was much higher than normal due to the ungoing civil war in 1955, data from 1947 are used instead.

^e The indirect rule statistic of Tanzania combines the court cases of Tanganyika and Zanzibar.