Article

Early Statehood and Support for Autocratic Rule in Africa

Comparative Political Studies
2022, Vol. 55(4) 688–724

DOI: 10.1177/00104140211036031
journals.sagepub.com/home/cps
SAGE

Vladimir Chlouba[1], Daniel S. Smith[1], and Seamus Wagner[1]

Abstract

Recent work highlights the importance of pre-modern political practices for explaining persistent institutional features, including representative democracy. Typically, this argument is institutional in nature—pre-industrial practices are hypothesized to either bolster or retard the transmission of democratic institutions. This article proposes a separate channel through which legacies of early statehood continue to impact the prospects of democratic governance. Using survey data from Africa, we document a positive relationship between early statehood development and support for autocratic rule among ordinary Africans. This finding is robust to a wide range of pre- and post-treatment covariates, country and survey round fixed effects, as well as an instrumental-variable design. The identified relationship is particularly prominent in respondents from precolonially centralized ethnic groups in former British colonies, suggesting the importance of locally surviving traditional institutions for propagation of norms that owe their origins to precolonial autocratic socialization.

Keywords

autocratic attitudes, Africa, precolonial centralization, norms

[1]Department of Political Science, The Ohio State University, Columbus, OH, USA

Corresponding Author:
Vladimir Chlouba, Political Science, The Ohio State University, 3078 Derby Hall, 154 N Oval Mall, Columbus, OH 43210, USA.
Email: chlouba.1@osu.edu

Introduction

An influential line of work in political science and economics argues that early statehood development outside of Europe was associated with subsequent institutional reversal (Acemoglu et al., 2001; Foa, 2017). In other words, locales that were ahead of their time at the start of the modern era subsequently suffered underdevelopment and vice versa. Typically, this phenomenon is explained by prevalence of extractive colonial practices in colonies with higher precolonial population density (Engerman & Sokoloff, 2002). In another version of this argument, Hariri (2012) notes that precolonial statehood was an impediment to European colonization, limiting the diffusion of European institutions and ideas. Areas with strong precolonial states were either ruled indirectly (Gerring et al., 2011) or they experienced defensive modernization and were better able to resist European institutional transplantation (Foa, 2017). As a result, societies with early precolonial statehood were better positioned to preserve their traditional mode of governance—autocracy. In this article, we propose and empirically test an alternative channel through which early statehood continues to impact the prospects of democratic governance in non-European societies. We document a positive effect of early statehood on autocratic attitudes, which, as extant work has demonstrated, do not bode well for the survival of democracy itself (Booth and Seligson, 2009; Claassen, 2020; Diamond, 1999).

Our argument proceeds in two steps. First, in accordance with existing accounts of the origins of early states (Bentzen et al., 2019; Greenbaum, 1977; Scott, 2017; Sabetti, 2004), we note that as incipient polities became more centralized, the consensus-based, deliberative, and even proto-democratic practices that were previously surprisingly common in small communities were gradually eroded and substituted by more autocratic procedures. Second, we argue that although it was generally autocratic, the ruling elite of centralizing states could not rely solely on coercion in order to generate compliance among its subjects. For one, ruling over larger, more centralized polities meant that rulers could not always respond quickly and effectively to challenges to their power. In addition, pure coercion is almost always, when contrasted with quasi-voluntary compliance, a suboptimal strategy for projecting authority (Levi, 1989). Both internal dynastic challenges and external attempts at conquest were commonplace in nascent states and rulers were hence incentivized to develop legitimating myths that sought to entrench their authority over compliant subjects. Rulers expended considerable resources and energy to socialize the people they ruled into myths of divine authority and unquestioning obedience. In many contexts, colonial doctrines of indirect rule further encouraged the despotic instincts of autocratic rulers (Mamdani, 1996). Just as citizens of democracies learn to support democracy (Dalton, 1994; Giuliano & Nunn, 2013; Mishler & Rose, 2007; Pop-Eleches & Tucker,

2017; Tocqueville, 2000; Montero et al., 1997), the subjects of early kings and queens learned to accept autocracy.

We reason that the effects of early autocratic socialization should be most detectable in societies where early states met their demise relatively recently and democracy was introduced at most a few decades ago. Hence, we focus our attention on autocratic attitudes in contemporary Africa. Because the modal precolonial state in Africa did not have a writing system, the legitimating myths of early autocrats were transferred orally, from generation to generation, giving rise to persistent cultural norms. Despite the efforts of numerous colonial and postcolonial governments to invent (Ranger, 1983) or eradicate precolonial traditions (McGovern, 2013), there is evidence that both traditional leaders and the cultural values that legitimate their role in local communities remain remarkably resilient (Logan, 2013). We argue that persistent norms whose origins can be traced back to the autocratic socialization and enculturation efforts of early states continue to shape Africans' attitudes toward different forms of governance, including autocracy. We further suspect that these norms should be particularly strong in contexts where indirect colonial rule further entrenched decentralized despotism (Mamdani, 1996).

Just as our argument, our empirical strategy proceeds in two steps. We first use georeferenced data from George Peter Murdock's Ethnographic Map (Murdock, 1967) to illustrate that precolonial political complexity went hand-in-hand with eliminating pre-existing, proto-democratic modes of leader selection and replacing them with appointments from above. While our data does not allow us to claim that precolonial statehood *caused* a decline in local consultative practices, we show that precolonial centralization and early autocracy moved together. Second, we merge Murdock's data with four rounds of Afrobarometer surveys in order to examine whether a legacy of precolonial centralization is associated with elevated support for autocracy today. We find that it is and our findings are robust to inclusion of country and Afrobarometer round fixed effects and a wide range of pre- and post-treatment covariates. We also use an instrumental-variable strategy to alleviate concerns of reverse causality and to causally identify our findings.

In a final analytic step, we endeavor to separate the effect of attitude-shaping persistent institutions from that of persistent norms. To check whether persistent cultural norms serve as an independent causal mechanism, we further exploit the variation in our sample to show that a legacy of centralized precolonial statehood increases support for autocracy even for respondents who do not interact with traditional institutions of governance or who reside outside of the areas governed by "their" traditional chiefs. At the same time, we find a particularly prominent relationship between early statehood and autocratic attitudes in former British colonies, indicating that both persistent norms and persistent local institutions are likely at play when it comes to

explaining present attitudes toward autocracy. Studying precolonial ethnic groups that were insouciantly split between French and British colonies in West Africa, we show that a legacy of precolonial statehood leads to autocratic attitudes especially among respondents that wound up under British colonial administrations. This hints at norm-shaping traditional institutions as the comparatively more important mechanism of attitudinal persistence.

Our work speaks to several distinct strands of scholarship. First and most broadly, we address literature studying the determinants of individual attitudes toward different forms of government. Specifically, our findings broaden work that has linked the impact of "cultural" factors on individual attitudes toward democratic governance and autocracy (Letsa & Wilfahrt, 2018; Inglehart & Welzel, 2008, 2005; Jamal & Tessler, 2008) and indicate that persistent cultural norms are conceptually and empirically distinct from socioeconomic and institutional factors (Besley & Persson, 2019; Claassen, 2020; Mattes & Bratton, 2007; Wu et al., 2017). We join scholars arguing that democracy has origins in processes that in some cases unfolded long before the industrial revolution (Acemoglu et al., 2008; Downing, 1989; Hariri, 2012). Our work is particularly related to Giuliano and Nunn (2013) and Bentzen et al. (2019) who show that historical features of local-level democracy can persist over time. This article differs in analyzing the persistent effect of autocracy and highlighting its attitudinal, as opposed to institutional, effects. Our conclusions are particularly pertinent for scholars of African politics because formation of pro-autocratic attitudes has typically been studied in established democracies (Alvarez & Brehm, 2002; Dalton, 1994).

Second, our work speaks to extant scholarship on long-run norm transmission (Becker et al., 2016; Chaudhary & Shrivastava, 2018; De Juan, 2017; Nunn & Wantchekon, 2011; Pop-Eleches & Tucker, 2020; Schulz et al., 2019) by showing that similarly to pre-industrial political institutions (Becker et al., 2016; Chaudhary & Shrivastava, 2018) and disruptive historical events (Besley & Reynal-Querol, 2014; Nunn & Wantchekon, 2011; Schulz et al., 2019), the enculturation efforts of precolonial political elites can be an enduring source of prevailing norms. We build upon the work of Lechler and McNamee (2018) who show in the context of Namibia that greater influence of traditional leaders in indirectly ruled areas continues to socialize individuals to accept nondemocratic sources of authority. Specifically, we show that the empirical regularities these authors identified in a single case generalize to other African countries.

Third, our article contributes to the extensive and still growing literature on the long-term effects of precolonial political organization (Alsan, 2015; Bandyopadhyay & Green, 2016; Broich et al., 2015; Depetris-Chauvin, 2014; Gennaioli & Rainer, 2006, 2007; Jedwab & Storeygard, 2017; Michalopoulos & Papaioannou, 2013, 2015; Wig, 2016; Wilfahrt, 2018) by adding to the

handful of studies that highlight its persistent cultural effects (De Juan & Koos, 2019; De Juan, 2017; Lowes et al., 2017; Heldring, 2016; Hjort, 2010).

Early Statehood and Autocratic Socialization

Existing scholarship suggests that consultative, quasi-democratic practices were surprisingly ubiquitous prior to European colonialism (Bentzen et al., 2019; Sabetti, 2004; Stasavage, 2020; Greenbaum, 1977). Historical evidence indicates that sometimes even kings and minor potentates were selected—or approved—by formal assemblies of elites in a variety of societies in South Asia (Gogoi, 1991; Guha, 1983; Sherwani and Joshi, 1973), Central Asia (Biran, 2013; Martinez, 2009), and North Africa (Messier, 2010). Features of consultative governance were even more ubiquitous at the local level—this is evident based on the records summarized by Murdock (1967). Africa in particular stands out among world regions due to—among other reasons—its diversity of precolonial political development. Although large swaths of the continent lacked centralized states on the eve of colonization, numerous African polities exhibited considerable political complexity. Sub-Saharan Africa, in particular, featured myriad forms of political organization that defied widespread assumptions held by European anthropologists venturing out from the metropole (Malinowski, 1929). A typical example of precolonial African consultative institutions are the *Amala* village assemblies, which remain key to rural life in southeastern Nigeria even today. *Amalas* are public meetings held in Igbo villages and attended by the heads of local lineage groups and other notables. In these meetings, issues vital to community life are discussed and decisions are reached in a consensual fashion (Ayittey, 2006). In certain instances, the *Amala* would gather villagers together for input on some matter of great importance. These meetings, whose tradition reaches deep into the past, are invaluable for traditional leaders to gauge the support of their communities for proposed policies.

Paradigmatic accounts of Western European state-formation and democratization ascribe notable importance to indigenous tribal councils and Germanic practices of participatory decision-making writ large. The standard narrative is as follows: consultative local institutions were able to survive and "scale up" in Western Europe in the absence of strong, autocratic polities capable of unilateral imposition (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2019; Downing, 1992; Ertman, 1997; Stasavage, 2016). Decades of anthropological research indicate that many stateless societies in sub-Saharan Africa broadly fit this mold: local participatory institutions developed and thrived in lieu of superordinate hierarchies (Ayittey, 2006; Lewis, 1961). Of course, such systems were not necessarily democratic by contemporary standards: governance was dominated by considerations of kinship, ethnic group, and local solidarity, not formal constitutional frameworks (Ayittey, 2006). Moreover, complex

patterns of non-state political organization emerged in relatively populous regions, contrary to the predictions of political development theories based on Eurasian history (McIntosh, 1999; Vengroff, 1976; Fortes & Evans-Pritchard, 1940).[1] To take the *Amala* case: the Igbo ethnic group of present-day southeastern Nigeria constructed political arrangements that encompassed multiple localities and employed a system of village representation (McIntosh, 1999).

Polities lacking in centralization were often geographically small and fractured, ordinarily consisting of several villages or nearby settlements. It would be difficult to identify a clear ruler, and if such a person existed, his position more often than not depended on personal skill and charisma rather than on predetermined rules of succession. Important decisions in decentralized polities were more likely to be made through ad hoc meetings that involved a great number of people, again privileging those that were strong and charismatic rather than those who had any legitimate and durable claim to authority. Rather than centralizing decisions in a few individuals, decentralized societies empowered larger groups of older people known as elders. Although vulnerable to domination by skillful individuals, elders' councils could be remarkably consensual, reflecting the generally egalitarian nature of the small, non-stratified society that characterized a great many decentralized groups.

The prevalence of consensus-based, consultative practices that were often observed in decentralized communities contrasts vividly with Africa's centralized kingdoms. Vansina (1962) pertinently describes "despotic kingdoms" such as the Ruanda, Nkore, and Soga in which the king concentrated control over both the external and the internal affairs of the state in his own hands. Visiting the centralized Ovambo kingdoms in northern Namibia, German missionary Heinrich Vedder noted that in Ovambo polities, "the chief was an autocrat in the widest sense of the word. The whole land belonged to him, and those who had plots were merely loaning them from him; and he had the right of ownership over the herds of cattle, and of life and death over his subjects" (Vedder, 1966, p. 72). Buganda, one of Africa's most centralized precolonial polities, was ruled as an absolute monarchy (Green, 2018). Ruling on the eve of the colonial era, Mutesa I of Buganda became known as a ruthless autocrat and skillful politician who eliminated his opposition and strengthened his kingdom's centralized bureaucracy (Kiwanuka, 1967).

A key step in the process of early state formation in Africa as elsewhere consisted of eliminating competing institutions that could threaten the nascent state's authority (Tilly, 1985). Even if this goal was not always achieved easily and often involved compromises with actors that centralizing rulers were not able to defeat militarily (Herbst, 2014; Levi, 1989; North & Weingast, 1989; Stasavage, 2010), the goal was nearly always to amass power at the expense of potential rivals. This process often took the violent form of eliminating competitors but it also featured the erosion of pre-statist forms of social organization

(Fukuyama, 2014; Migdal, 1988). In particular, power-consolidating rulers brought the outer regions of their newly acquired authority under control by imposing hierarchical power structures on relationships that were previously either non-existent or relatively equal. Because control over expanding territories implied the necessity of delegating particular duties to specialists, centralization ordinarily went hand-in-hand with hierarchical chains of command that clarified who answers to whom and who prevails in the event of clashing views.[2] Greater degrees of centralization typically enabled rulers of such polities to govern a larger area consisting of administrative sub-units. The Kingdom of Buganda, for instance, built war canoes in mid-nineteenth century that allowed it to control Lake Victoria and conquer the people that lived around it (Kiwanuka, 1967). Buganda's *kabaka* (as the ruler of Buganda is known) then ruled the conquered territory through his appointee chiefs.

To what extent did precolonial African rulers rely on appointees to govern on their behalf at the local level? Figure 1 uses Murdock's (1967) data to compare the precolonial procedures used for selection of local headmen (or equivalent leaders) among African ethnic groups. While there was certainly much diversity within both centralized and decentralized groups, it is notable that in relatively decentralized societies, headmen were typically selected by local communities themselves (via election, informal consensus, or due to age or influence). Among groups that anthropologists classify as centralized, appointment of local headmen by a higher authority had become increasingly common (Murdock, 1967; Malinowski, 1929). While simple descriptive

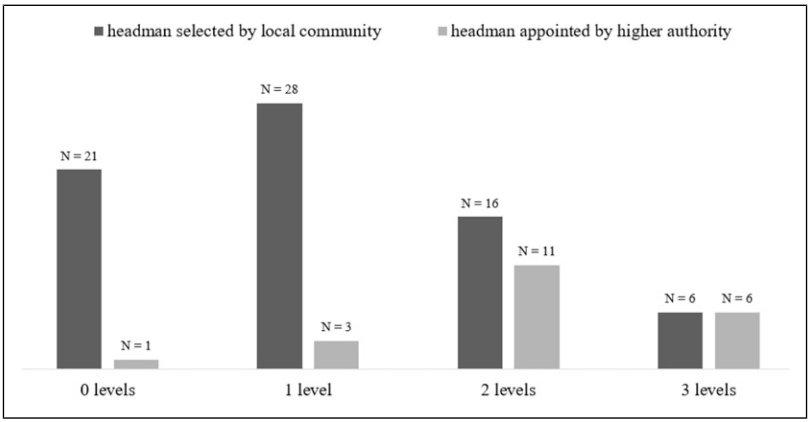

Figure 1. Precolonial centralization and local leader selection. This figure shows how centralization of precolonial societies in Africa (measured as the number of jurisdictional levels above the village) relates to the procedures used for selection of local leaders. Appointment of local headmen by a higher authority became more common as polities centralized. Data on centralization and leader selection come from Murdock (1967).

comparison seems to suggest that Buganda's *kabakas* were not the only potentates who appointed local officials, other historical, economic, and natural factors undoubtedly affected precolonial governance at the local level. In Supplementary Appendix C, we show that there is a statistically significant association between centralization and appointment of headmen by a higher authority even when we control for a variety of climatic, geographical, and historical covariates. Naturally, this does not prove that precolonial centralization *caused* autocratic institutions at the local level, even if the anecdotal evidence cited throughout this article suggests that this is quite likely. Even if the historical co-evolution of centralized statehood and autocratic institutions may be more ambiguous than we suggest, it appears that the two phenomena were historically bundled.

As a result, we argue that "centralization" and "autocracy" are tightly linked concepts. The former eroded quasi-democratic practices by eliminating local consultative institutions, shifting the ultimate locus of political authority to a centralized administrative apparatus, and implanting state agents in village leadership positions (Ben-amos Girshick & Thornton, 2001; Vansina, 1978). Conquered residents of a particular locality were deprived of their voice in village governance. Moreover, loss of communal autonomy meant the end of informal consultation. Politics in a free community might still be a complex function of interests, actors, and negotiations located within the village and its surroundings even in the absence of elections or councils. Yet, it is not necessarily obvious how the destruction of local consultative institutions gives rise to persistent pro-autocratic norms. We contend that rulers actively inculcated autocratic norms within the population to mitigate resistance by subjugated peoples (Reid, 2002; Vansina, 1962; Evans-Pritchard, 1960). These norms were grounded in a belief that kings, paramount chiefs, etc. were integral to political (and sometimes cosmic) orders and thus worthy of veneration by subjects. Compliance with state agents (i.e., appointed headmen) signaled deference to the distant "strong man" who lay at the center of this autocratic ideology. Thus, centralization entailed the destruction of local consultative institutions which, in turn, generated resistance and prompted rulers to inculcate norms that favored supra-local autocrats.[3] We now turn to a discussion of (1) the origins of pro-autocratic norms in pre-colonial states as well as (2) the specific mechanisms by which those norms persisted up to the present day.

Attempts at generating widespread quasi-voluntary compliance by the subdued populations could not rely on coercion and administrative imposition from above alone, both because pre-modern rulers lacked the technology available to modern states (Herbst, 2014) and because coerced compliance requires relatively more resources than at least partial consent of the governed. This compliance dilemma was exacerbated by the fact that centralization stripped many locals of their previous role in (consultative) governance.

Furthermore, early states could not offer their people much in the way of services and public goods (Scott, 2017), which have been theorized to increase compliance with rulers' decisions (Besley & Persson, 2011; Levi, 1989; Tilly, 1990). How, then, did the rulers of early centralizing states amalgamate newly conquered communities with traditions of autonomous collective governance and distinct cultural backgrounds into a cohesive polity that complied with the rulers' authority? Perhaps the most cost-effective tool employed by kings, paramount chiefs, and emperors alike was ideology: they sought to inculcate their subjects with beliefs in the divine providence and political necessity of the ruler (DeMarrais et al., 1996). An important role in state formation was thus played by religion (Canning, 2014; Stanish, 1996; Turchin, 2016), political rituals (Claessen, 1996; Di Cosmo, 1999; Stein, 1994), and proto-nationalist beliefs (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983). Notions of "divine right" and kingship as an essential bulwark of the common good were part and parcel of the ideologies propagated by centralizing potentates. These tools were pursued not only to create a compliant "imagined community" (Anderson, 2006) but also to legitimate the autocratic position of presiding rulers themselves. Apter (1997) and Reid (2002) detail the extent to which kingship was a fundamental component of Bugandan identity—even to the degree that the Baganda resisted British efforts to create a democratic Ugandan state. Portuguese visitors to the Kingdom of Benin noted that the populace revered rulers for their supposed divinity: the king was a central pillar of state legitimacy (Ben-amos Girshick & Thornton, 2001). Centralized polities throughout the continent relied on similar programs of ideological indoctrination, backed up by rituals to manifest and reaffirm commitment to the ruler and realm (Vansina, 1962, 1978). For many conquerors, seizing abutting territories often meant more than replacing one ruler with another. Stateless subjects, voluntarily or by force, adopted norms of deference to a distant figure who decided their collective fates (Apter, 1960; Vansina, 1962).

Because writing systems were rare in Africa's pre-modern polities, legitimating myths were typically transmitted from generation to generation orally in the form of common proverbs. De Juan & Koos (2019) note that in regions governed by the precolonial Bushi Kingdom, ordinary people are still intimately familiar with proverbs that legitimate a feudal social order whereas individuals outside the Kingdom are less familiar with these norms. Among the Ovambo in northern Namibia, proverbs such as "two elephants cannot be in the shade of one shrub" (Williams, 1991, p. 100) remain well-known in areas ruled by precolonial monarchs. Williams (1991, p. 67) notes that Ovambo rulers encouraged the memorization of legitimating myths by specifically appointing adult men to maintain their polities' traditions. The custom reportedly continues to this day, although "elders in the community who nowadays practise this are no longer appointed to it but do so because of their own personal interest" (Williams, 1991, p. 67). One of the authors'

interviews with two dozen traditional leaders in Namibia reveal that chiefs continue to see transmission of traditional norms as one of their most important tasks (Chlouba, 2020). As one chief put it, "we have to teach people their culture."[4] An example of intergenerational cultural transmission that remains common across traditional communities are so-called "traditional festivals" during which habituated norms are passed onto young adults in their impressionable years. Though they differ from community to community, a key component of traditional festivals concerns collective reproduction and reminders of cultural myths (Lund, 2006).

Admittedly, the existence of quondam salient social norms does in and of itself not guarantee their persistence. As Przeworski (2010) observes, it is unlikely that the present regime type of modern Greece owes its origins to Athenian democracy. Likewise, an extensive literature on colonial institutions indicates that European governments molded local attitudes toward authority in certain contexts. The relationship between colonialism and contemporary autocratic attitudes is thus undoubtedly complicated. One thesis holds that colonial institutions had a direct and lasting impact on political norms within indigenous populations. Beliefs, ideologies, and attitudes inculcated during the colonial era possibly survived independence. This is one of several mechanisms that scholars invoke to explain the putative "democratic advantage" associated with former British colonies. British political culture supposedly emphasized democratic governance and the attendant pluralistic norms (Ferguson, 2003, 2012; Lipset et al., 1993; Maseland, 2018; Seidler, 2018). Other scholars contend that indirect rule, a practice typically associated with British colonialism, engendered distinctively antidemocratic tendencies. That is, pro-autocratic political ideologies were more likely to persist in areas where colonial magistrates delegated local authority to traditional leaders (Lechler & McNamee, 2018; Mamdani, 1996). Yet, it is unlikely that colonial-era norms took root in a uniform, easily predictable fashion: disparate factors impacted the rate and magnitude of transmission. For example, Seidler (2018) presents evidence that "good" *informal* norms were more likely to take hold where local bureaucrats interacted with expatriate administrators from the former colonizer country. Moreover, colonialism possibly spread ideas and attitudes outside of political channels. Woodberry (2012) identifies Protestant evangelism as a channel for norm transmission: exposure to evangelism in the early 20th century is associated with higher levels of post-independence democracy in "non-western" societies.

However, another strand of research cautions us not to overestimate the lasting effect of colonial arrangements. Herbst (2014) has persuasively argued that European colonialism changed precolonial political practices less than is commonly assumed.[5] With the exception of South Africa, Zimbabwe, and perhaps Namibia, few white settlers ventured a voyage to sub-Saharan Africa. Chronically understaffed colonial administrations, constituting the proverbial

"thin white line" (Richens, 2009), were mainly focused on establishing themselves in coastal administrative centers and facilitating extraction of local resources. Colonial administrators soon experienced the limits of their power in a context where few Africans lived in urban centers and European metropoles repeatedly emphasized "colonialism-on-the-cheap" (Kilson, 1966, p. 24). Indeed, Richens (2009, p. 36) notes that "[o]ne of the most striking characteristics of Europe's imperial adventure in Africa was the tiny amount of resources devoted to it." For example, the number of Africans per European administrator in Niger amounted to 203,076 in 1937 (Richens, 2009, p. 47). Though Niger's white line was especially thin, ratios of tens of thousands of Africans per administrator were commonplace. As a result, European colonizers frequently relied on pre-existing political structures to reach local populations rather than building their own institutions, following a simple logic: "if it ain't broke, don't fix it" (Gerring et al., 2011, p. 385).

Even in cases where colonial and postcolonial governments abolished precolonial institutions, they did not necessarily extirpate enduring social norms (De Juan, 2017; Mahoney & Thelen, 2009). Compared to the Americas and Asia, European colonial rule in Africa lasted a relatively short period of time. European administrators only established themselves at the turn of the twentieth century and their influence started to wane with the conclusion of the Second World War. Norms tend to be sticky and require sustained effort over a long period of time to change (Roland, 2004). Pop-Eleches & Tucker (2020), for example, show that prevalence of left-authoritarianism in attitudinal survey respondents can be explained by personal communist exposure, especially in individuals who spent their formative years living under authoritarian regimes (Neundorf et al., 2020). It is unlikely that colonial and postcolonial governments, a great many of which suffered from limited capacity, were able to change enduring norms. While our own priors are with those who question the ability of colonial rulers to effectively project their power beyond administrative centers, we take the possibility of heterogeneous effects of precolonial centralization in different colonies seriously and reflect it in our empirical approach.

In this article, we argue that generationally transmitted social norms that owe their origin to autocratic legitimating myths of early states continue to shape people's attitudes toward different forms of government, including autocracy. We conceive of social norms as rules of thumb and decision making heuristics that guide individuals to choose a particular course of action or to adopt a certain preference instinctively (Gigerenzer, 2007). Hence, we see norms as socially rooted sources of preferences that are distinct from individual incentives (Bowles, 2016; Bowles & Polanía-Reyes, 2012). While it is possible for widely shared norms to emerge via bottom-up processes that are facilitated by interactions between autonomous actors (Hayek, 1979; Luban, 2020; Menger, 1981), we reason that autocratic socialization in early states

took the form of imposition by powerful actors who had the initial ability to coerce others to comply (Knight, 1992; Tilly, 1990). Specifically, we envision the rulers of early states as norm-setting entrepreneurs who wielded enough power to coerce at least some proportion of their community to follow the norms preferred by the ruler.[6] Coercion was likely important not only for enforcing the norms preferred by the rulers but also for suppressing competing ideas of proper behavior that might have circulated in previously decentralized societies. We hypothesize that in the presence of a sufficiently strong norm-setter, the coerced population habituated, over time, the introduced norms and the need for continued coercion gradually decreased. By habituation, we mean what Hodgson (2006, p. 18) describes as "the psychological mechanism by which individuals acquire dispositions to engage in previously adopted (...) behavior." In other words, we assume that repeatedly experiencing a given norm in action decreases, over time, the importance of coercion by creating shared habits of reasoning and behavior (Kilpinen, 2000; Joas, 1993). Hence, we hypothesize that *members of precolonially centralized ethnic groups are more likely to hold autocratic attitudes*.

Early Statehood and Attitudes Towards Autocracy

In order to evaluate our hypothesis, we need reliable information that captures the characteristics of Africa's precolonial polities as well as a representative survey measure of Africans' political attitudes. Following an established practice in the literature, we turn to the Ethnographic Map compiled by the American anthropologist George Peter Murdock (Murdock, 1967) for insights about the distinct traits of precolonial polities in Africa. The map, which was successively published in the journal *Ethnology* starting in 1962, has since been updated (Gray, 1999) and has become an established source of information concerning precolonial societies (Michalopoulos & Papaioannou, 2013, 2015; Fenske, 2013; Wig, 2016). Murdock's map delineates the spatial distribution of more than eight hundred ethnic homelands in Africa as well as regions that Murdock classified as uninhabited upon colonization.

The map includes a variable that details the degree of precolonial political complexity—*juris dictional hierarchy*. For each ethnic group, the variable indicates the number of jurisdictional levels above the community level. This variable, which is displayed in the right part of Figure 2, takes on five different values ranging from 0 to 4. The lowest level is assigned to groups that lacked any form of political centralization, 1 is associated with petty chiefdoms, 2 with large paramount chiefdoms and small states, and 3 and 4 denote what Murdock described as large states. While Murdock's map offers an uneven snapshot of precolonial politics on the eve of colonization and necessarily simplifies assuredly complex political realities, it represents the most comprehensive dataset of its kind.[7] To measure precolonial centralization, we keep

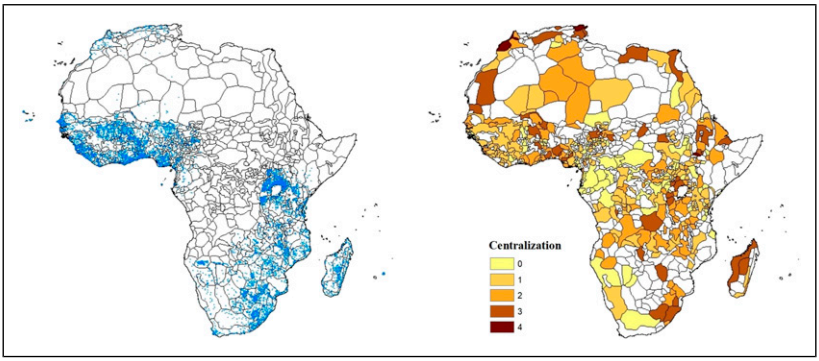

Figure 2. Location of Afrobarometer respondents and precolonially centralized polities. The left side of the figure plots locations of Afrobarometer respondents whose responses we study in this article over Murdock's (1967) map of African ethnic groups (digitized by Nunn, 2008). The right side of the figure displays individual ethnic groups' degree of precolonial centralization. Darker regions represent higher extent of centralization, white ethnic homelands indicate missing data.

jurisdictional hierarchy in its original, ordinal form, though our analyses are robust to employing a dichotomized version of the variable.

Because our theoretical interest lies in understanding the determinants of ordinary Africans' support for autocracy, we turn to Afrobarometer surveys, the most extensive data source on African public opinion. We use georeferenced Afrobarometer data from rounds 3, 4, 5, and 6 of the survey (BenYishay et al., 2017).[8] In order to inspect how variables from Murdock's dataset relate to Afrobarometer, it is first necessary to merge these two distinct sources of data. This is a relatively complicated task because the ethnic groups identified by Murdock do not perfectly overlap with ethnic identities as measured by Afrobarometer. To overcome this obstacle, we employ the Linking Ethnic Data from Africa (LEDA) R package developed by Müller-Crepon et al. (2020). Using a dictionary-based linking procedure, LEDA matches several prominent datasets (including Murdock's map and Afrobarometer) via a list of known language families, languages, and dialects listed in the 16th edition of the Ethnologue database (Lewis, 2009). We use LEDA to link two groups once they are associated with one or more common dialects on the Ethnologue language tree.[9] This represents a conservative choice on our part because dialects are located below languages on the language tree and hence provide more precise links. Though by no means perfect, we see our approach as an improvement on techniques adopted in extant literature which include linking survey respondents to entire countries (Giuliano & Nunn, 2013) or assuming that respondents living in an ethnic homeland today are of the homeland's ethnicity (Ali et al., 2020). In sum, the utilized procedure

allows us to link 121,241 respondents from Afrobarometer's rounds 3, 4, 5, and 6 to variables from Murdock's map. The respondents' locations are displayed in the left part of Figure 2.

Recall that our argument focuses on the role of persistent precolonial norms in shaping contemporary attitudes toward autocratic governance. Specifically, these norms are hypothesized to legitimate the presence of a "big man" at the apex of political power. In pre-colonial times this might be a king or paramount chief but in the post-colonial era this is typically a president, prime minister, or even a military leader. Our main dependent variable is therefore facilitated by a question about respondents' support for concentrating political power in the hands of one person. Specifically, the question is worded as follows: "There are many ways to govern a country. Would you disapprove or approve of the following alternatives: Elections and Parliament are abolished so that the president can decide everything?" The possible answers are "strongly disapprove," "disapprove," "neither approve nor disapprove," "approve," "strongly approve," and "don't know."[10] An important strength of this question is that it does not ask respondents whether they favor autocracy in some general, abstract sense. Instead, it specifies a form of rule where characteristics typically associated with democratic systems, such as free elections, citizen influence, and checks and balances on executive power (Diamond, 1999), are abandoned in favor of empowering an autocratic ruler. We use this question in its original, ordinal form, though our results are robust to using a dichotomous version where approving and strongly approving of autocratic rule are coded as 1. It should be noted that while it is possible that actual support for autocratic rule is mismeasured due to social desirability bias,[11] this possibility should bias our data against rejecting a null hypothesis of no effect. We employ ordinary least squares (OLS) regression models and our base specification is

$$y_{ijk} = \alpha_j + \delta_k + \beta \cdot \text{centralization}_{ijk} + \varepsilon_{ijk}$$

where y_{ijk} is support for democracy expressed by Afrobarometer respondent i from round j and country k, α_j is an Afrobarometer round fixed effect, δ_k is a country fixed effect, $\text{centralization}_{ijk}$ is the degree of precolonial centralization exhibited by respondent i's ethnic group, and ε_{ijk} is a normally distributed disturbance term. Note that the treatment unit is the ethnic group as defined by Murdock (1967), since this is the level at which precolonial institutions are coded. Our models cluster standard errors at the level of ethnic groups because this is the level at which treatment assignment is correlated among individual observations. Identification in our initial models depends on the assumption that conditional on fixed effects and control covariates, the effect of centralization is exogenous to the outcome. We subsequently relax this assumption in an instrumental-variable framework which we discuss in greater detail below.

Our control variables can be usefully divided between pre- and post-treatment covariates. Aside from respondent characteristics, most of our control covariates are associated with the PRIO-GRID data structure, which divides the Earth into approximately 10,000 grid cells (corresponding to about 55 × 55 km for each cell).[12] Using this data, we construct the control covariates at the ethnic group level by overlapping the PRIO-GRID structure with a shapefile of Murdock's map (digitized by Nunn, 2008). The pre-treatment covariate set consists of variables that could plausibly affect both the degree of precolonial centralization and present attitudes.[13] First among these is a dummy variable for water access in respondents' assigned PRIO-GRID grid cell, as derived from GIS data on rivers and the Landcover database (Bontemps et al., 2009). Next, we control for soil quality using an indicator that originates in data from the Harmonized Soil Quality Database (Batjes et al., 2008). Additional controls include absolute latitude, the percentage of mountainous terrain in a given grid cell, precipitation (and its squared version), mean temperature (all of which come from Tollefsen et al., 2012), the malaria ecology index (supplied by Kiszewski et al., 2004), and measures of relative humidity as well as the proportion of a given ethnic homeland that has tropical climate (both of which come from Alsan, 2015). Furthermore, we add indicators of access to coast and rivers and estimates of ethnic homeland's population density (calculated by Alsan, 2015) Centralized or not, population density has been described as a key constraint to extension of state authority (Herbst, 2014; Fenske, 2013). Climatic and geographical characteristics are included to account for the possibility that what governance looks like is an outcome of the natural circumstances that rulers navigate (Ahmed & Stasavage, 2020). We label these variables as pre-treatment because they were plausibly present before the advent of precolonial centralization.

After examining models with pre-treatment covariates, we add additional, post-treatment controls that are plausibly correlated with individual attitudes. Chief among these are estimates of local economic development in the form of average nightlight intensity. We emphasize and caution that models with post-treatment covariates potentially yield biased estimates because extant literature has clearly shown that precolonial centralization is associated with economic development (Alsan, 2015; Michalopoulos & Papaioannou, 2013, 2015). The same applies to our measure of historical conflict (Wig, 2016).[14]

We also control for current logged population, distance to the current capital city, and distance to the nearest international border. In addition, we control for the land area of ethnic homelands (calculated by Alsan, 2015) and presence of intensive agriculture (Murdock, 1967). More intensive agricultural practices were undoubtedly related to complex political systems. Finally, we control for the natural log of total slave exports, a variable which comes from Nunn and Wantchekon (2011). This variable is included because greater involvement in the slave trades has been linked to increased absolutism of

African political institutions (Whatley, 2012). We hasten to admit that several of these covariates could be plausibly labeled as both pre- and post-treatment. Our approach is to include any variable that could be affected by precolonial political development in the post-treatment category. Reassuringly, our results are remarkably similar regardless of which set of covariates we control for. Because respondents' attitudes toward autocracy are likely to be influenced by their countries' current system of government, we add the combined polity score (Marshall & Jaggers, 2016) in selected models. Individual-level post-treatment covariates include education, a dummy indicator for formal employment, and a binary variable for urban residence.[15] We include summary statistics for all our variables in Supplementary Appendix A and a detailed description of our data in Supplementary Appendix B.

Turning to our empirical results displayed in Table 1, we find robust evidence that legacies of precolonial statehood continue to impact Africans' support for an autocratic form of governance today.[16] Although a simple model (Model [1]) that relates our five-point scale of precolonial centralization to support for autocracy while including country and Afrobarometer round fixed effects yields a positive coefficient, it is not statistically significant. This changes in Model (2) after we account for pre-treatment covariates. The positive coefficient from our second model indicates that moving by one unit along the precolonial centralization scale moves a respondent by about 0.03

Table 1. Precolonial Centralization and Support for Autocratic Rule.

Dependant variable	Support for autocratic rule				
Model	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Centralization	0.01	0.03***	0.04***	0.04***	0.03***
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Country FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Round FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Pre-treat. controls (ethinic group)		✓	✓	✓	✓
Post-treat. controls (ethinic group)			✓	✓	✓
Pre-treat. controls (respondent)				✓	✓
Post-treat. controls (respondent)					✓
Observations	46,727	38,638	37,993	37,712	37,631
Adjusted R^2	0.07	0.07	0.07	0.07	0.08

Table shows results from OLS regressions. Standards errors (clustered at the pre-colonial ethnic group level) are in parentheses.
"Round" refers to Afrobarometer survey round. FE = fixed effects. OLS = ordinary least squares.
***$p < .01$; **$p < .05$; *$p < .1$.

points along the outcome scale. To put it differently, when the degree of centralization exhibited by a respondent's ethic group increases from wholly decentralized to what Murdock terms large states, the average respondents move by a little over one tenth of a standard deviation toward expressing support for authoritarian rule. The effect size increases with additional controls and movement from a group with no precolonial centralization to a group organized in a precolonial state moves the average respondent, according to Model (4), by about 0.14 standard deviations toward favoring autocratic rule. Our most complete model (Model [5]) points to a slightly smaller effect: 0.13 standard deviations. Admittedly, these effects are relatively small but they are interesting and robust nevertheless, especially considering the inherent social desirability bias in large-scale survey data that likely attenuates the true effects of interest. In addition, one should not necessarily expect a large effect of precolonial centralization given how many generations have passed between the precolonial experience and the present. In their study of indirect rule in Namibia, Lechler and McNamee (2018) find that residence in areas governed by chiefs dampens democratic attitudes by about one quarter of a standard deviation. Our effect magnitude is about half of that which is commensurate with the notion that apartheid-driven homeland policies in Namibia possibly further strengthened traditional leaders' undemocratic impulses. The key thing to note in our analysis is that centralization exhibits positive and statistically significant coefficients across four of the five estimated models, whether we include pretreatment controls, posttreatment covariates, or both. The relatively small R^2 statistics point to the fact that there is much that matters for individuals' attitudes toward autocracy that our models do not capture. Alternatively, it is likely that our measure of precolonial centralization suffers from some measurement error. We interpret this as an indication that history matters for people's pro-autocratic attitudes but it does not render them unmodifiable.

Endogeneity Concerns and Reverse Causality

Identification in Table 1 depends on the assumption that, conditional on control covariates and fixed effects, the effect of precolonial centralization is exogenous to our attitudinal outcome. While we endeavor to include all possible confounders in our specifications in order to bar against producing spurious associations, there is in principle no guarantee that we succeed fully. One might raise the specter of reverse causality, a scenario in which attitudes come prior to modes of political life. While we find such scenario implausible, we again cannot in principle rule out the possibility that an unobserved, third factor causes both certain type of attitudes and organization of political life. For example, the findings of Nunn & Wantchekon (2011) and Whatley (2012) suggest that the slave trades had both institutional and attitudinal effects.

Because we hypothesize that precolonial centralization has an independent, positive effect on respondents' autocratic attitudes that operate, among other things, via intergenerationally transmitted norms, we employ an instrumental-variable design to generate exogenous variation in centralization and examine whether our findings hold.

The instrument we adopt is Alsan's (2015) TseTse suitability index (TSI) which Alsan computed as the *Z*-score of the potential steady-state population of the TseTse fly across the African continent. The index goes beyond approximating straightforward climate features because the TseTse has non-monotonic temperature and humidity requirements for its survival (Alsan, 2015). In her work, Alsan (2015) has shown that TSI is a powerful predictor of African historical development, including precolonial centralization. We verify this relationship in the first stage of our two-stage OLS procedure in Table 3. Regardless of whether we only include fixed effects or varying sets of controls, the F-statistic on the excluded instrument is well above ten, indicating that we do not suffer from a weak instrument. A crucial assumption of a successful instrumental-variable design is the so-called exclusion restriction, a condition stating that the instrument only affects the dependent variable via the independent variable of interest and not otherwise. In our case, the TSI can only affect attitudes toward autocracy through precolonial centralization. If this assumption were to be violated, centralization could still be correlated with the error term in our base specification, leading to biased causal estimates. One obvious channel of such bias is identified by Alsan (2015): modern economic development. We attempt to plausibly eliminate this backdoor path by controlling for several indicators of present development such as night-lights intensity and present population size of precolonial ethnic homelands. In addition, we keep our set of pre- and post-treatment covariates from Table 1 in our models in order to include variables that might affect the exclusion restriction if left unattended. Having said that, we have to caution the critical reader that the possibility of an unsatisfied exclusion restriction remains. Our results in this section should be interpreted together with the rest of our findings which suggest that the estimates in Table 2 are not unreasonable. As Table 2 shows, we continue to find statistically robust and positive impact of centralization on autocrat-favoring attitudes.

Persistent Norms Versus Surviving Institutions: Unpacking the Mechanisms

In the final part of our empirical investigation, we endeavor to examine evidence for two distinct mechanism that are consistent with our theory. One possibility is that autocratic attitudes are mostly due to persistent, intergenerationally transmitted norms that survived into the present period regardless of whether the institutions responsible for initially inculcating them

Table 2. Precolonial Centralization and Support for Autocratic Rule (IV-2SLS).

Dependant variable	Support for autocratic rule				
Model	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Second-stage IV					
Centralization	0.02**	0.04***	0.04***	0.04***	0.04***
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
First-stage IV					
TSI	−0.17	−0.30**	−0.28**	−0.29**	−0.28**
	(0.11)	(0.12)	(0.14)	(0.14)	(0.14)
Country FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Round FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Pre-treat. controls (ethinic group)		✓	✓	✓	✓
Post-treat. controls (ethinic group)			✓	✓	✓
Post-treat. controls (individual)				✓	✓
Post-treat. controls (individual)					✓
Observations	46,506	39,889	39,227	38,898	38,810

Table shows results from OLS regressions. TSI is Alsan's TseTse suitability index. Standard errors (clustered at the pre-colonial ethnic group level) are in parentheses.
"Round" refers to Afrobarometer survey round. FE = fixed effects. OLS = ordinary least squares.
***$p < .01$; **$p < .05$; *$p < .1$.

have endured as well. Crucially, this causal channel should be distinguished from situations in which precolonial centralization affects attitudes via present institutions, whether modern or traditional.[17] Most plausibly, strong, precolonially centralized institutions were better positioned to survive till this day. Such institutions could affect respondents' attitudes via present-day interactions. Hence, we reason that if persistent norms are an independent mechanism of their own, those who are affected by them should exhibit evidence of their effects even when removed from the original circumstances that gave rise, and later sustained, the said norms. In other words, the attitudinal effects of centralization should be detectable even among those who have little to no contact with current traditional institutions. Departing from this assumption, we split our sample in several ways that allow us to distinguish between respondents who might continue to be affected by present traditional institutions and those who are plausibly unaffected.

First, we divide our sample between respondents from former French colonies and respondents from countries colonized by the British. This divide should roughly correspond to divisions between direct and indirect forms of colonial rule (Crowder, 1968). Müller-Crepon (2020) finds that while the

British considered precolonial centralization when devolving power to local institutions, no such patterns existed in French-administered territories. For our purposes, these findings imply that while higher support for autocracy among respondents in former British colonies could be explained by interaction with surviving traditional institutions, this is less likely in former French dependencies. Figure 3 shows the direction and magnitude of coefficients on centralization for the sub-samples. Notably, we find that the positive effect of pre-colonial centralization on autocratic attitudes is stronger in former British colonies whereas it is insignificant (and generally mixed depending on whether or not control covariates are accounted for) in former French colonies.[18] We interpret this as evidence for the importance of surviving traditional institutions for shaping current autocratic attitudes. We examine the importance of different forms of colonial rule further in the section immediately below.

Second, we use an Afrobarometer question which asks respondents whether they had contacted a traditional leader in the past 12 months to explicitly distinguish between those whose attitudes could be affected by interaction with present institutions and those whose attitudes are more likely to be affected purely by norms. We hasten to add that contact with traditional leaders in the preceding year offers only a limited window into people's interaction with chiefs because norms can be transmitted early in life. In contrast to examining differences between different colonial rulers, we find that precolonial centralization exhibits a positive correlation with support for autocracy even if a respondent reports no contact with traditional leaders in the past year ($p = 0.09$). Among respondents that interacted with their chief in the past year, centralization remains positive but it loses statistical significance.

Finally, using ArcGIS to plot georeferenced respondent locations over a shapefile of Murdock's map, we split our sample depending on whether or not a respondent presently resides in their ethnic homeland. Here we assume that surviving precolonial institutions are mainly active in their homelands as identified by Murdock. Hence, if a respondent lives outside of her ethnic homeland, her attitudes should be more likely to be shaped by persistent norms rather than by existing institutional structures. We find that centralization is positively associated with our dependent variable among both residents and non-residents of historical ethnic homelands. Notably, however, the effect appears to be driven by nonresidents ($p = 0.02$), again suggesting that norms are at play.

Precolonial Centralization and Support for Autocracy in West Africa

In this section, we further investigate the heterogeneous effects observed in former French and British colonies detected above. As we noted previously, it

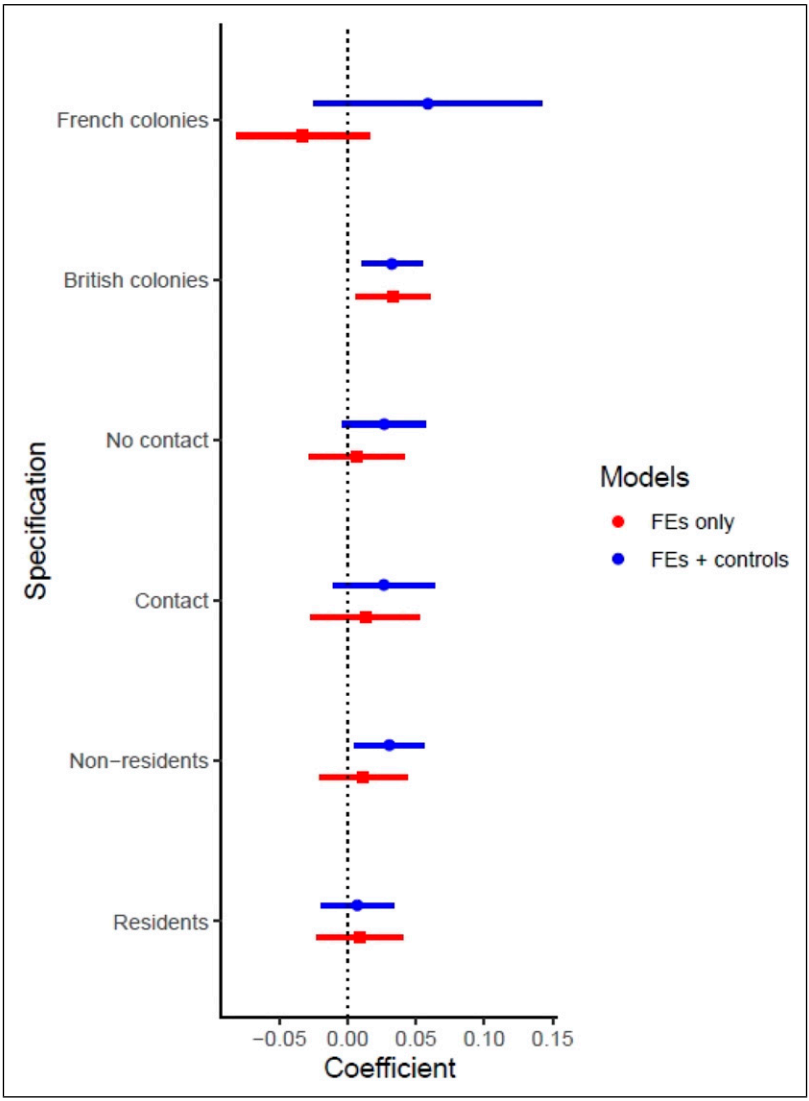

Figure 3. Generationally transmitted norms as a mechanism. The figure shows how the coefficient on centralization changes when the base sample is subdivided between respondents from former French/British colonies, between respondents who report to have had contact with a traditional leader in the past 12 months and those who report no contact, and between respondents who live outside/inside their ethnic homelands. Red squares represent coefficients from models with Afrobarometer round and country fixed effects, blue circles represent coefficients from models with fixed effects and controls. The associated whiskers

capture 95% confidence intervals. The figure shows that the positive relationship between centralization and support for autocratic rule holds among respondents who do not have contact with traditional leaders or live outside their ethnic homeland, suggesting that it cannot be explained solely by respondents' experience with current structures of traditional governance.

is plausible that in former British colonies, the legacy of early statehood could affect present attitudes via both persistent norms and persistent institutions, whereas in former French colonies, persistent institutions are less likely to be at play. Miles (1987), for instance, notes the continued power of Hausa chiefs in anglophone Nigeria and their diminished importance in French-colonized Niger. In this section, we restrict our analysis to West Africa, a region that concentrates most of French-British colonial borders. Scholars of African politics have long noted that a large proportion of African borders are quite arbitrary. Barbour (1961) writes that at the end of the Scramble for Africa, nearly half of African borders were straight lines. Colonial borders in West Africa are no exception. Boundaries between francophone and anglophone areas are an archetypal example of colonialists' disregard for pre-existing social formations and political structures. The border between Ghana and Burkina Faso simply follows the 11th parallel. Miles (1993) notes that many ethnic groups were carelessly split by colonial borders and where local conditions were taken into account, colonizers merely followed natural conditions like small rivers rather than paying attention to the local populations (Cogneau & Moradi, 2014). Ali et al. (2020) observe that even in cases where we have some evidence of colonial bargaining over the exact nature of spheres of influence (such as in the case of Sierra Leone–Guinea borders), European powers chiefly cared about natural resources and not about the people on the ground.

Taking advantage of this unique history, we analyze survey responses of individuals who come from precolonial homelands that were split by West African borders between British and French colonies. Figure 4 displays the location of these homelands as well as the coordinates of Afrobarometer respondents. Across the four survey waves, a total of 7,611 respondents come from ethnic groups that were partitioned by colonial borders in West Africa. Using this sub-sample of respondents, we repeat our analyses from Table 1 with two exceptions. First, we interact residence in a former British colony (Sierra Leone, Ghana, and Nigeria) with precolonial centralization. Second, we estimate our models with ethnic group fixed effects in order to soak up the remaining unobserved and potentially biasing variation. This means that the interaction between British colony and centralization can still be identified, while the constitutive terms, which are secondary to our analysis, drop. The results displayed in Table 3 include respondents residing along the colonial

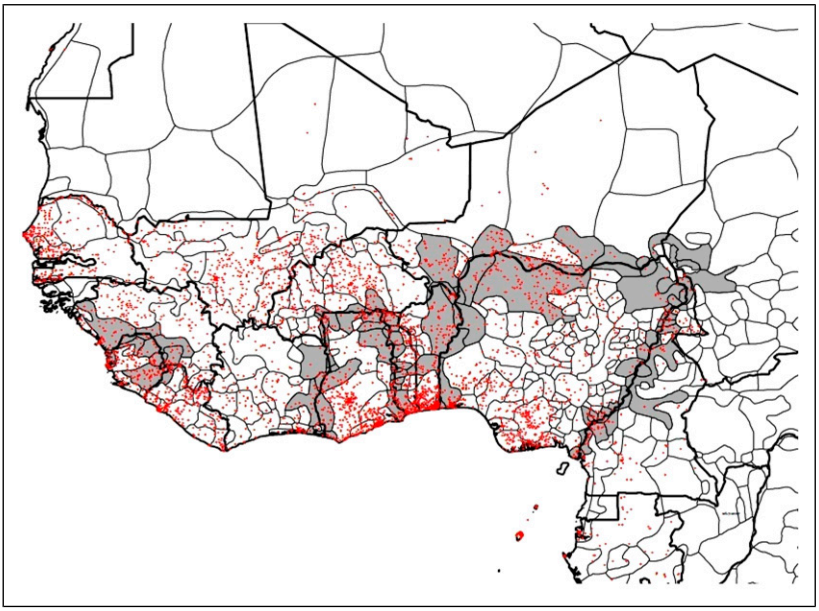

Figure 4. Split ethnic homelands in West Africa. Shaded ethnic homelands represent communities partitioned by French-British colonial borders in West Africa (Sierra Leone, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Togo, Benin, Nigeria, Niger, Cameroon, and Chad). Red dots show Afrobarometer respondent locations.

Nigeria–Cameroon border (which experienced subsequent changes in the 1960s) but our results are robust to their omission.

The results indicate that interaction with surviving traditional institutions is, at least in West Africa, a prominent mechanism that links precolonial statehood to enduring support for non-democratic forms of government. Respondents from groups that were both precolonially centralized and that found themselves under indirect (British) colonial rule are particularly likely to endorse autocratic rule. Notably, the effects identified in the West African sub-sample are considerably larger than those detected in our continent-wide sample, suggesting that the empowerment of traditional leaders via indirect rule further deepened the autocratic effect of precolonial statehood.[19]

Additional Robustness Checks

The Supplementary Appendix includes results from a number of robustness checks that lend further support to the findings contained in this article. First, we re-estimate our results with a binary version of our independent variable (Supplementary Appendix D). A dichotomized version of jurisdictional

Table 3. Precolonial Centralization and Support for Autocratic Rule in West Africa.

Dependant variable	Support for autocratic rule				
Model	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Centralization*British colony	0.15** (0.06)	0.15** (0.06)	0.15** (0.06)	0.15** (0.05)	0.17*** (0.05)
Country FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ethnic group FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Round FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Pre-treat. controls (ethinic group)		✓	✓	✓	✓
Post-treat. controls (ethinic group)			✓	✓	✓
Pre-treat. controls (individual)				✓	✓
Post-treat. controls (individual)					✓
Observations	3392	3392	3392	3360	3345
Adjusted R^2	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.06	0.06

Table shows results from OLS regressions. Standards errors (clustered at the pre-colonial ethnic group level) are in parenthesis.
"Round" refers to Afrobarometer survey round. FE = fixed effects. OLS = ordinary least squares.
***$p < .01$; **$p < .05$; *$p < .1$.

hierarchy is the approach taken by a number of previous studies, notably Michalopoulos & Papaioannou (2015, 2013) and Gennaioli & Rainer (2007, 2006). Our results are virtually unchanged. Second, we examine the degree to which instrumental considerations of respondents such as shared ethnicity with a given country's executive might affect our results. Adding a variable indicating whether respondents hail from the ethnic group of the current president leaves our results nearly identical (Supplementary Appendix F).[20] We also consider the possibility that precolonial statehood might affect citizen attitudes via differential access to power by individual ethnic groups (Mamdani, 1996; Vogt, 2017; Wucherpfennig et al., 2016; Young, 1994). For instance, if precolonially centralized groups were better positioned to capture power upon receiving independence from colonial bondage, then the association between support for nondemocratic forms of governance (which were prevalent in most African countries following independence) and precolonial statehood might merely reflect respondents' affinity for bygone days when their ethnic group was in power. Alternatively, respondents from ethnic groups that are currently in power might be more comfortable with a powerful executive unimpeded by democratic checks and balances. To investigate these possibilities, we merge the Ethnic Power Relations (EPR) dataset (Cederman et al., 2010) with the rest of our data. For each Afrobarometer respondent's

ethnic group, we code whether the group was excluded from state power at the time of the interview as well as the exact share of years between independence and a given Afrobarometer round during which a group was excluded from power.[21]

Regardless of which form of ethnic exclusion we control for in our models, our results remain both statistically significant and substantively similar when we control for pre-treatment covariates (Supplementary Appendix D). Adding post-treatment covariates to our models continues to produce positive coefficients on centralization, even if substantively and statistically less significant. Investigating the effect of ethnic exclusion further, we find that individuals whose groups are in pivotal positions in current governments (coded as "senior" and "junior partners" by EPR) are *less* likely to endorse autocratic rule. This casts doubt on the notion that access to power is associated with support for one-man rule. It also points to a fruitful direction for further research.

Although our theoretical interest is to examine the relationship between precolonial statehood and support for rule by a "big man," Supplementary Appendix E endeavors to show that historical statehood predicts autocratic attitudes across multiple Afrobarometer questions and not just one. In Supplementary Appendix E, we use a simple additive index of autocratic rule that measures the average level of comfort that a respondent feels toward rule by one party, one executive, and a military government as our outcome. Precolonial centralization remains a positive, statistically significant predictor of this outcome across most of our models. We also build an index of broader autocratic attitudes that includes variables such as preference for elections as a way to choose political leaders, a willingness to accept that the president is above the law, and a preference for a government that is less accountable to citizens but can get things done (see Supplementary Appendix B for a detailed description).[22] Precolonial centralization is positively correlated with this broader index but the effect is not statistically discernible. Finally, Supplementary Appendix E shows that respondents from centralized ethnic groups are *less* likely to say that good citizens should vote in elections, complain to government officials about poor services, and request assistance from elected leaders.[23] As a last step, we examine whether post-independence political history alters our findings. We control for whether a respondent was of an impressionable age (18–29) during transition to independence, a period which in many African countries was marked by both democratic hopes and subsequent political upheaval (Supplementary Appendix H). We also add a control for the number of consecutive years that a given country has spent as a democracy (polity score ≥ 5) (Supplementary Appendix I). Our results remain virtually unchanged.

Conclusion

This study investigates one channel through which legacies of early statehood influence present-day support for autocratic governance in Africa. While past work has hypothesized that early statehood might be bad for democracy due to its institutional and ideational consequences, the effect of early statehood on attitudes has rarely been shown empirically. Our findings show that African respondents from historically centralized ethnic groups display a robust preference for autocracy as measured via Afrobarometer surveys. Our results are robust to a number of model specifications including country and survey round fixed effects, pre- and post-treatment covariates, as well as an instrumental-variable design. We find support for the notion that persisting norms contribute to forming present-day attitudes and that these norms are particularly strong in areas where colonial administrators applied an indirect form of colonial rule, further empowering local autocrats. We also find suggestive support for the notion that persistent norms shape attitudes even when respondents are no longer in contact with traditional authorities or live outside of their ethnic homeland.

Our work shows the importance of theorizing and empirically testing the links that connect historical legacies with present outcomes. Particularly studies aimed at exploring the long-term effects of precolonial political development in Africa have sometimes assumed that important institutional and cultural features from the past simply persisted. Our results suggest that this assumption may in many cases be unwarranted. Where European colonization left an indelible mark, the impact of precolonial phenomena is likely to be heterogeneous. For instance, students of traditional governance in Africa have long debated whether traditional leaders are better thought of as representatives of their communities or colonial-era despots. Our article indicates that the answer to similar questions might depend on the particular mix of precolonial statehood and colonial disruption experienced by individual communities.

Future work should proceed in a number of directions. For one, we restricted our empirical analyses to the African continent. There is reason to believe that attitudinal legacies of early statehood are at work in other parts of the world, especially where early states were strong and, until recently, capable of inculcating lasting norms. Second, the degree to which attitudes expressed in a survey shape actual behavior remains an open question, one that should be taken up by other researchers. Finally, our work suggests that precolonial polities and colonial administrators interacted in heterogeneous, context-specific ways. To the extent that these interactions continue to shape ordinary people's attitudes and behavior, they should remain the focal points of social scientists' attention.

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank participants at the Comparative Politics Workshop at The Ohio State University for useful comments and thought-provoking suggestions. Special

thanks are extended to Jan Pierskalla for invaluable comments on an earlier draft. We are also grateful to the three anonymous reviewers whose constructive comments substantially improved the article. Vladimir Chlouba extends gratitude to the Institute for Humane Studies at George Mason University for continuous financial support of his fieldwork in Namibia. This is where many of the ideas contained in this article originally germinated.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: Institute for Humane Studies, George Mason University.

ORCID iDsorcid

Vladimir Chlouba https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4154-3979
Daniel S. Smith https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7911-3005

Notes

1. We should note that the relationship between population density and state formation in sub-Saharan Africa remains a point of contention (Stevenson, 1968).
2. Even relatively centralized polities were vulnerable to centrifugal forces. Fenske & Kala (2017) offer evidence that certain African states—reliant as they were on voluntary and quasi-voluntary compliance—were vulnerable to abrupt shifts in the internal balance of power. Specifically, declines in West African slave exports after 1807 yielded economic and political crises that, in turn, prompted political disintegration. Centralization measures used by Murdock (1967) might obscure some of this temporal variability in certain cases.
3. This process is similar to those proposed in several influential accounts of emerging nationalist ideologies (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983; Anderson, 2006) and the use of belief systems to justify subordination (Scott, 2008). Power is exercised not through brute force coercion but by reshaping the underlying preferences of individuals. In our account, locality-centric identities generated and buttressed preferences in a way that yielded resistance to outside domination. The kingdom or empire-centric identities that replaced them entailed changes in preferences that, instead, softened resistance.
4. Interview with traditional leader, August 12, 2019.
5. For example, Besley and Reynal-Querol (2014) find evidence that areas with higher levels of pre-colonial conflict were more likely to experience conflict after independence. The estimated effect is robust to variation in colonial occupier.

6. Though it is also possible that norm-setting entrepreneurs were able to implant the norms they favored due to their unique charisma, we expect this to be a relatively rare scenario
7. One important simplification introduced in the Ethnographic Map is its conflation of ethnicity and political organization. With all likelihood, a great many African polities were multiethnic in nature. Furthermore, the map sidesteps the fact that ethnic groups and their homelands moved over time and occasionally overlapped with other groups.
8. The latest round of Afrobarometer surveys, round 7, was not geo-referenced at the time of writing.
9. In instances where multiple Murdock groups are linked to one respondent, we randomly drop duplicate observations.
10. "Don't know" answers are dropped in our analyses.
11. In other words, there is reason to believe that the number of respondents who favor autocratic rule is larger than the number of survey participants willing to admit this preference.
12. The data from PRIO-GRID cells are merged with Murdock's geospatial data and the mean or modal values are taken for cases where the two overlap. This results in PRIO-GRID data at the Murdock ethnic group level for covariates.
13. With the exception of gender and age, which are included as pre-treatment variables because they cannot be possibly affected by precolonial politics.
14. This variable measures the share of years from 1989 to 2000 in which a grid cell was part of a conflict zone (Hallberg, 2012).
15. Education and formal employment proxy individual levels of material.
16. Replication data and code can be found at Chlouba et al. (2021).
17. In our previous analyses, we control for the possibility that precolonial institutions shaped their modern counterparts, as suggested by Hariri (2012), by including the combined polity score in our specifications.
18. An alternative to splitting our sample and running identical models would be to include an interaction for French colonialism. We opt for sample splitting because main effect coefficients arguably facilitate more straightforward interpretation but we include models with interactions in Supplementary Appendix D. They produce substantively similar conclusions.
19. Table 3 yields yet another interesting insight: respondents from those centralized ethnic groups that ended up in French colonies are *less* likely than respondents from decentralized groups to support autocratic rule. A full investigation of this result is beyond the scope of this article but it might suggest that the French paid particular attention to disrupting polities that posed the greatest challenge to colonial rule.
20. We used the Political Leaders' Affiliation Database (PLAD) as the basis for coding ethnicities of leaders throughout our sample (Dreher et al., 2020). We conducted desk research and completed the dataset for leaders not contained in PLAD and leaders whose listed ethnicity does not match the ethnicities in Afrobarometer's

codebook. We then created a binary indicator to capture shared ethnicity with each respondent's leader across rounds. The interview dates included in the survey were used for election years.

21. See Chlouba et al. (2018) for a detailed description of the coding procedure.
22. There are several reasons why we use these particular questions for our second index. First, they touch upon several important aspects of democratic versus autocratic rule: leader selection procedures (elections as the best way to pick leaders), accountability of leaders (president above law, a government that gets things done but does not explain itself), and plurality of political actors (rule by one man, rule by one party). Second, these questions are present in nearly all of the four survey rounds we examine. Furthermore, they all use five-point scales as answers which facilitates a simple and transparent additive index.
23. Statistical significance differs across these outcomes; see Supplementary Appendix F for details.

References

Acemoglu, D., Johnson, S., & Robinson, J. A. (2001). The colonial origins of comparative development: An empirical investigation. *American Economic Review*, *91*(5), 1369–1401.

Acemoglu, D., Johnson, S., Robinson, J. A., & Yared, P. (2008). Income and democracy. *American Economic Review*, *98*(3), 808–842.

Acemoglu, D., & Robinson, J. (2019). *The narrow corridor: States, societies, and the fate of Liberty.* Penguin.

Ahmed, A. T., & Stasavage, D. (2020). Origins of early democracy. *American Political Science Review*, *114*(2), 502–518.

Ali, M., Fjeldstad, O. H., & Shifa, A. B. (2020). European colonization and the corruption of local elites: The case of chiefs in Africa. *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization*, *179*, 80–100.

Alsan, M. (2015). The effect of the tsetse fly on African development. *American Economic Review*, *105*(1), 382–410.

Alvarez, R. M., & Brehm, J. (2002). *Hard choices, easy answers: Values, information, and American public opinion*. Princeton University Press.

Anderson, B. (2006). *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. Verso Books.

Apter, D. (1960). The organization of a Zande kingdom. *Cahiers d'e´tudes Africaines*, *1*(4), 5–37.

Apter, D. (1997). *The political kingdom in Uganda: A study in bureaucratic nationalism*. Frank Cass.

Ayittey, G. (2006). *Indigenous African institutions*. Brill.

Bandyopadhyay, S., & Green, E. (2016). Precolonial political centralization and contemporary development in Uganda. *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, *64*(3), 471–508.

Barbour, K. M. (1961). A geographical analysis of boundaries in inter-tropical Africa. In: K. M. Barbour & R. M. Prothero (Eds.), *Essays on African population* (pp. 303–323). Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Batjes, N., Dijkshoorn, K., van Engelen, V., Fischer, G. J., Arwyn, M.-L., Petri, M., Prieler, S., Teixeira, E., Wiberg, D., & Shi, X. (2008). *Harmonized world soil database*. Tech. Rept. FAO.

Becker, S. O., Boeckh, K., Hainz, C., & Woessmann, L. (2016). The empire is dead, long live the empire! Long-run persistence of trust and corruption in the bureaucracy. *The Economic Journal*, *126*(590), 40–74.

Ben-amos Girshick, P., & Thornton, J. (2001). Civil war in the Kingdom of Benin, 1689-1721: Continuity or political change? *The Journal of African History*, *42*(3), 353–376.

BenYishay, A., Rotberg, R., Wells, J., Lv, Z., Goodman, S., Kovacevic, L., & Runfola, D. (2017). *Geocoding Afrobarometer rounds 1-6: Methodology & data quality*. AidData at William & Mary.

Besley, T., & Persson, T. (2011). *Pillars of prosperity: The political economics of development clusters*. Princeton University Press.

Besley, T., & Persson, T. (2019). Democratic values and institutions. *American Economic Review: Insights*, *1*(1), 59–76.

Besley, T., & Reynal-Querol, M. (2014). The legacy of historical conflict: Evidence from Africa. *American Political Science Review*, *108*(2), 319–336.

Biran, M. (2013). *Qaidu and the rise of the independent Mongol state in Central Asia*. Routledge.

Bontemps, S., Defourny, P., & Van Bogaert, E. (2009). *Globcover 2009. Products description and validation report*. European Space Agency. http://globcover.s3.amazonaws.com/LandCover2009/GLOBCOVER2009_Validation_Report_1.0.pdf

Booth, J. A., & Seligson, M. A. (2009). *The legitimacy puzzle in Latin America: Political support and democracy in eight nations*. Cambridge University Press.

Bowles, S. (2016). *The moral economy: Why good incentives are no substitute for good citizens*. Yale University Press.

Bowles, S., & Polanía-Reyes, S. (2012). Economic incentives and social preferences: Substitutes or complements? *Journal of Economic Literature*, *50*(2), 368–425.

Broich, T., Szirmai, A., & Thomsson, K. (2015). Precolonial centralisation, foreign aid, and modern state capacity in Africa. UNU-MERIT Working Paper. Maastricht, The Netherlands.

Canning, J. (2014). *A history of medieval political thought: 300–1450*. Routledge.

Cederman, L.-E., Wimmer, A., & Min, B. (2010). Why do ethnic groups rebel? New data and analysis. *World Politics*, *62*(1), 87–119.

Chaudhary, L., Jared Rubin, S. I., & Shrivastava, A. (2018). Cultural transmission and the colonial legacy: Evidence from public good games along a historical border. Working Paper. Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, CA.

Chlouba, V. (2020). Traditional authority and state legitimacy: Evidence from Namibia. *The Journal of the Middle East and Africa*, *11*(3), 251–272.

Chlouba, V., Smith, D. S., & Wagner, S. (2021). Replication data for: Early Statehood and support for autocratic rule in Africa, https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/O6L4UX, Harvard Dataverse, V1, UNF:6:j7h/zfE2jUpJunSRw6sooQ== [fileUNF].

Chlouba, V., Wibbels, E. & Pierskalla, Jan H. (2018) Historical exposure to state hood, ethnic exclusion, and government legitimacy. Working paper. The Ohio State University, Columbus, OH.

Claassen, C. (2020). Does public support help democracy survive? *American Journal of Political Science*, *64*(1), 118–134.

Claessen, H. (1996). *Ideology and the formation of early states*. (Vol. 11). Brill.

Cogneau, D., & Moradi, A. (2014). Borders that divide: Education and religion in Ghana and Togo since colonial times. *The Journal of Economic History*, *74*(3), 694–729.

Crowder, M. (1968). *West Africa under colonial rule*. Hutchinson.

Dalton, R. J. (1994). Communists and democrats: Democratic attitudes in the two Germanies. *British Journal of Political Science*, *24*, 469–493.

De Juan, A., 2017. "Traditional" resolution of land conflicts: the survival of precolonial dispute Settlement in Burundi. *Comparative Political Studies*, *50*(13), 1835–1868.

De Juan, A., & Koos, C. (2019). The historical roots of cooperative behavior-Evidence from eastern Congo. *World Development*, *116*, 100–112.

DeMarrais, E., Castillo, L. J., & Earle, T. (1996). Ideology, materialization, and power Strategies. *Current Anthropology*, *37*(1), 15–31.

Depetris-Chauvin, E. (2014). *State history and contemporary conflict: Evidence from Sub-Saharan Africa*. mimeo, Brown University.

Di Cosmo, N. (1999). State formation and periodization in inner Asian history. *Journal of World History*, *10*, 1–40.

Diamond, L. (1999). *Developing democracy: Toward consolidation*. Johns Hopkins University Press.

Downing, B. M. (1989). Medieval origins of constitutional government in the west. *Theory and Society*, *18*(2), 213–247.

Downing, B. (1992). *The military revolution and political change*. Princeton University Press.

Dreher, A., Fuchs, A., Kammerlander, A., Kaplan, L., Robert, C., & Unfried, K. (2020). *The political leaders' Affiliation database (PLAD). V5*. Harvard Dataverse.

Engerman, S. L., & Sokoloff, K. L. (2002). *Factor endowments, inequality, and paths of development among New World economies*. National Bureau of Economic Research.

Ertman, T. (1997). *Birth of the Leviathan: Building states and regimes in medieval and early modern Europe*. Cambridge University Press.

Fenske, J. (2013). Does land abundance explain African institutions? *The Economic Journal*, *123*(573), 1363–1390.

Fenske, J., & Kala, N. (2017). 1807: Economic shocks, conflict and the slave trade. *Journal of Development Economics*, *126*, 66–76.

Ferguson, N. (2003). *Empire: The rise and demise of the British World Order and the lessons for global power.* Basic Books.

Ferguson, N. (2012). *Empire: How Britain made the modern world*. Penguin.

Foa, R. S. (2017). Persistence or reversal of fortune? Early state inheritance and the legacies of colonial rule. *Politics & Society*, *45*(2), 301–324.

Fortes, M., & Evans-Pritchard, E. E. (1940). *African political systems*. Oxford University Press.

Fukuyama, F. (2014). *Political order and political decay. From the industrial revolution to the globalization of democracy.* Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Gennaioli, N., & Rainer, I. (2006). Precolonial centralization and institutional quality in Africa. In: M. Gradstein & K. Konrad (Eds.), *Institutions and norms in economic development*. MIT Press.

Gennaioli, N., & Rainer, I. (2007). The modern impact of precolonial centralization in Africa. *Journal of Economic Growth*, *12*(3), 185–234.

Gerring, J., Ziblatt, D., van Gorp, J., Arévalo, J., & Arévalo, J. (2011). An institutional theory of direct and indirect rule. *World Politics*, *63*(3), 377–433.

Gigerenzer, G. (2007). *Gut feelings: The intelligence of the unconscious*. Penguin.

Giuliano, P., & Nunn, N. (2013. The transmission of democracy: From the village to the nation-state. *American Economic Review*, *103*(3), 86–92.

Gogoi, L. (1991). *The history of the system of Ahom administration*. Penguin.

Gray, J. P. (1999). A corrected ethnographic atlas. *World Cultures*, *10*(1), 24–85.

Green, E. (2018). Ethnicity, national identity and the state: Evidence from sub-Saharan Africa. *British Journal of Political Science 14*, 1–23.

Greenbaum, L. (1977. Cross-cultural study of the Use of elections for selection of the village headman. *Behavior Science Research*, *12*, 45–53.

Guha, A. (1983). The Ahom political system: An enquiry into the state formation process in Medieval Assam (1228-1714). *Social Scientist*, *11*(12), 2–34.

Hallberg, J. D. (2012). PRIO conflict site 1989–2008: A geo-referenced dataset on armed conflict. *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, *29*(2), 137.

Hariri, J. G. (2012). The autocratic legacy of early statehood. *American Political Science Review*, *106*(3), 471–494.

Hayek, F. A. (1979). *Law, legislation, and liberty.* Vol. 3. Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Heldring, L. (2016). *Violence and the state: Evidence from Rwanda's 'Decade of Atrocities'*. mimeo, Harvard University, MA.

Herbst, J. (2014). *States and power in Africa*. Princeton,Princeton University Press.

Hjort, J. (2010). Pre-colonial culture, postcolonial economic success? The Tswana and the African economic miracle. *The Economic History Review*, *63*(3), 688–709.

Hobsbawm, E, & Ranger, T. (1983). *The invention of tradition*. Cambridge University Press.

Hodgson, G. M. (2006). What are institutions? *Journal of Economic Issues*, *40*(1), 1–25.

Inglehart, R., & Welzel, C. (2005). *Modernization, cultural change, and democracy: The human development sequence*. Cambridge University Press.

Inglehart, R., & Welzel, C. (2008). The role of ordinary people in democratization. *Journal of Democracy*, *19*(1), 97–111.

Jamal, A. A., & Tessler, M. A. (2008). Attitudes in the Arab world. *Journal of Democracy*, *19*(1), 97–110.

Jedwab, R., & Storeygard, A. (2017). *Economic and political factors in infrastructure investment: Evidence from railroads and roads in Africa 1960–2015*. Institute for International Economic Policy Working Paper.

Joas, H. (1993). *Pragmatism and social theory*. University of Chicago Press.

Kilpinen, E. (2000). *The enormous fly wheel of society: Pragmatism's habitual conception of action and social theory*. University of Helsinki.

Kilson, M. L. (1966). *Political change in a West African state: A study in the modernization process*. Harvard University Press.

Kiszewski, A., Sachs, S. E., Mellinger, A., Malaney, P., Sachs, J., Spielman, A., & Sachs, J. (2004). A global index representing the stability of malaria transmission. *The American Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene*, *70*(5), 486–498.

Kiwanuka, M. S. (1967). *Muteesa of Uganda*. East African Literature Bureau.

Knight, J. (1992). *Institutions and social conflict*. Cambridge University Press.

Lechler, M., & McNamee, L. (2018). Indirect colonial rule undermines support for democracy: Evidence from a natural experiment in Namibia. *Comparative Political Studies 17*, 1–41.

Letsa, N. W., & Wilfahrt, M. (2018). Popular support for democracy in autocratic regimes: A micro-level analysis of preferences. *Comparative Politics*, *50*(2), 231–273.

Levi, M. (1989). *Of rule and revenue*. University of California Press.

Lewis, I. (1961). *A pastoral democracy: A study of pastoralism and politics among the Northern Somali of the Horn of Africa*. Oxford University Press.

Lewis, P. M. (Ed.). (2009). *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*. SIL International.

Lipset, S. M., Seong, K.-R., & Torres, J. C. (1993). A comparative-analysis of the social requisites of democracy. *International Social Science Journal*, *45*(2), 154–175.

Logan, C. (2013). The roots of resilience: Exploring popular support for African traditional authorities. *African Affairs*, *112*(448), 353–376.

Lowes, S., Nunn, N., Robinson, J. A., & Weigel, J. L. (2017). The evolution of culture and institutions: Evidence from the Kuba Kingdom. *Econometrica*, *85*(4), 1065–1091.

Luban, D. (2020). What is spontaneous order? *American Political Science Review*, *114*(1), 68–80.

Lund, C. (2006). Twilight institutions: Public authority and local politics in Africa. *Development and Change*, *37*(4), 685–705.

Mahoney, J., & Thelen, K. (2009). *Explaining institutional change: Ambiguity, agency, and power*. Cambridge University Press.

Malinowski, B. (1929). Practical anthropology. *Africa*, *2*(1), 22–38.
Mamdani, M. (1996). *Citizen and subject: Contemporary Africa and the legacy of late colonialism*. Princeton University Press.
Marshall, M. G., & Jaggers, K. (2016). *Polity IV project: Political regime characteristics and transitions, 1800–2016*. Cambridge University Press.
Martinez, A. P. (2009). *The Cambridge history of inner Asia: The Chinggisid age*. Cambridge University Press.
Maseland, R. (2018). Is colonialism history? The declining impact of colonial legacies on African institutional and economic development. *Journal of Institutional Economics*, *14*(2), 259–287.
Mattes, R., & Bratton, M. (2007). Learning about democracy in Africa: Awareness, performance, and experience. *American Journal of Political Science*, *51*(1), 192–217.
McGovern, M. (2013). *Unmasking the state: Making Guinea modern*. University of Chicago Press.
McIntosh, S. K. (1999). *Pathways to complexity: An African perspective*. Cambridge University Press, York.
Menger, C. (1981). Principles of economics, In: J. Dingwall (Ed.) and *Translated by B. F. Hoselitz from the German edition of 1871*. New York University Press.
Messier, R. A. (2010). *The Almoravids and the meanings of Jihad*. ABC-CLIO.
Michalopoulos, S., & Papaioannou, E. (2013). Precolonial ethnic institutions and contemporary African development. *Econometrica*, *81*(1), 113–152.
Michalopoulos, S., & Papaioannou, E. (2015). On the ethnic origins of African development: Chiefs and precolonial political centralization. *Academy of Management Perspectives*, *29*(1), 32–71.
Migdal, J. S. (1988). *Strong societies and weak states: State-society relations and state capabilities in the third World*. Princeton University Press.
Miles, W. F. S. (1987). Partitioned royalty: The evolution of Hausa chiefs in Nigeria and Niger. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, *25*(2), 233–258.
Miles, W. F. S. (1993). Traditional rulers and development administration: Chieftaincy in Niger, Nigeria, and Vanuatu. *Studies in Comparative International Development*, *28*(3), 31–50.
Mishler, W., & Rose, R. (2007). Generation, age, and time: The dynamics of political learning during Russia's transformation. *American Journal of Political Science*, *51*(4), 822–834.
Montero, J. R., Gunther, R., & Torcal, M. (1997). Democracy in Spain: legitimacy, discontent, and disaffection. *Studies in Comparative International Development*, *32*(3), 124–160.
Müller-Crepon, C. (2020). *Continuity or change? (In) Direct rule in British and French colonial Africa* (pp. 1–35). International Organization.
Müller-Crepon, C., Pengl, Y., & Bormann, N.-C. (2020). *Linking ethnic data from Africa*. University of Pittsburgh Press.

Murdock, G. P. (1967). *Ethnographic atlas: A summary*. University of Pittsburgh Press.

Neundorf, A., Gerschewski, J., & Olar, R.-G. (2020). How do inclusionary and exclusionary autocracies affect ordinary people? *Comparative Political Studies*, *53*(12), 1890–1925.

North, D. C., & Weingast, B. R. (1989). Constitutions and commitment: The evolution of institutions governing public choice in seventeenth-century England. *The Journal of Economic History*, *49*(4), 803–832.

Nunn, N. (2008). The long-term effects of Africa's slave trades*. *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, *123*(1), 139–176.

Nunn, N., & Wantchekon, L. (2011). The slave trade and the origins of mistrust in Africa. *American Economic Review*, *101*(7), 3221–3252.

Pop-Eleches, G., & Tucker, J. A. (2017). *Communism's shadow: Historical legacies and contemporary political attitudes*. Princeton University Press.

Pop-Eleches, G., & Tucker, J. A. (2020). Communist legacies and left-authoritarianism. *Comparative Political Studies*, *53*(12), 1861–1889.

Przeworski, A. (2010). *Democracy and the limits of Self-Government*. (Vol. 9). Cambridge University Press.

Ranger, T. (1983). The invention of tradition in colonial Africa. In: E. J. Hobsbawm & T., Ranger (Eds.), *The invention of tradition*. Cambridge University Press.

Reid, R. (2002). *Political power in pre Colonial Buganda: Economy society and warfare in the nineteenth century*. Oxford University Press.

Richens, P. (2009). The economic legacies of the "thin white line": Indirect rule and the comparative development of sub-Saharan Africa. *African Economic History*, *37*, 33–102.

Roland, G. (2004). Understanding institutional change: Fast-moving and slow-moving institutions. *Studies in Comparative International Development*, *38*(4), 109–131.

Sabetti, F. (2004). Local roots of constitutionalism. *Perspectives on Political Science*, *33*(2), 70–78.

Schulz, J. F., Bahrami-Rad, D., & Beauchamp, J. P., (2019). The church, intensive kinship, and global psychological variation. *Science*, *366*(6466), 3221–3252.

Scott, J. C. (2008). *Weapons of the weak*. Yale University Press.

Scott, J. C. (2017). *Against the grain: A deep history of the earliest states*. Yale University Press.

Seidler, V. (2018). Copying informal institutions: the role of British colonial officers during the decolonization of British Africa. *Journal of Institutional Economics*, *14*, 2, 289–312.

Sherwani, H. K., & Joshi, P.M. (1973). *History of the Medieval Deccan*. Yale University Press.

Bentzen, J., Hariri, J. G., & Robinson, J. A. (2019). Power and persistence: The indigenous roots of representative democracy. *The Economic Journal*, *129*(618), 678–714.

Stanish, C. (1996). The origin of state societies in South America. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, *37*(1), 15–31.

Stasavage, D. (2010). When distance mattered: geographic scale and the development of European representative assemblies. *American Political Science Review*, *7*, 625–643.

Stasavage, D. (2016). Representation and consent: Why they arose in Europe and not else- where. *Annual Review of Political Science*, *19*, 145–162.

Stasavage, D. (2020). *The decline and rise of democracy: A global history from antiquity to today*. Columbia University Press.

Stein, G. (1994). *Economy, ritual, and power in 'Ubaid Mesopotamia*. Prehistory Press.

Stevenson, R. (1968). *Population and political systems in tropical Africa*. Columbia University Press.

Tilly, C. (1985). War-making and state-making as organized crime. In: P. Evans, D. Rueschemeyer, & T. Skocpol (Eds.), *Bringing the state back in* (pp. 169–187). Cambridge University Press.

Tilly, C. (1990). *Capital, coercion and European States*. Basil Blackwell.

Tocqueville, A. D. (2000). *Democracy in America*. Chicago University Press.

Tollefsen, A. F., Strand, H., & Buhaug, H. (2012). PRIO−GRID: Auni f iedspatialdatastructure. *Journal of PeaceResearch*, *49*(2), 363−374.

Turchin, P. (2016). *Ultrasociety: How 10,000 years of war made humans the greatest cooperators on Earth*. Beresta Books.

Vansina, J. (1962). A comparison of African Kingdoms. *Africa*, *32*(4), 324–335.

Vansina, J. (1978). *The children of Woot: A history of the Kuba peoples*. University of Wisconsin Press.

Vedder, H. (1966). *South West Africa in early times*. Frank Cass & Co. (Reprint of 1938 edition).

Vengroff, R. (1976). Population density and state formation in Africa. *African Studies Review*, *19*(1), 67–74.

Vogt, M. A. (2017). Ethnic stratification and the equilibrium of inequality: Ethnic conflict in post-colonial states. *International organization*, *72*(1), 105–137.

Whatley, W. (2012). The transatlantic slave trade and the evolution of political authority in West Africa. *Africa's Development in Historical Perspective 13*, 460–488.

Wig, T. (2016). Peace from the past: Pre-colonial political institutions and civil wars in Africa. *Journal of Peace Research*, *53*(4), 509–524.

Wilfahrt, M. (2018). Precolonial legacies and institutional congruence in public goods delivery: Evidence from decentralized West Africa. *World Politics*, *70*(2), 239–274.

Williams, F.-N. (1991). *Precolonial communities of Southwestern Africa: A history of Owambo Kingdoms, 1600–1920*. National Archives of Namibia.

Woodberry, R. D. (2012). The missionary roots of liberal democracy. *American Political Science Review*, *106*(2), 244–274.

Wu, W.-C., Chang, Y.-T., & Pan, H.-H. (2017). Does China's middle class prefer (liberal) democracy? *Democratization*, *24*(2), 347–366.

Wucherpfennig, J., Hunziker, P., & Cederman, L.-E. (2016). Who inherits the state? Colonial rule and postcolonial conflict. *American Journal of Political Science*, *60*(4), 882–898.

Young, C. (1994). *The African Colonial state in comparative perspective*. Yale University Press.

Author Biographies

Daniel S. Smith is a PhD student in the Department of Political Science, The Ohio State University. His research covers topics such as the relationship between economic modernization and regime type, dynamics of mass mobilization, and pre-modern political systems.

Vladimir Chlouba is a PhD candidate in political science at the Ohio State University. His research interests center on traditional political systems in sub-Saharan Africa, state building, long-term effects of colonialism, and political economy of development broadly construed.

Seamus Wagner is a PhD student at the Ohio State University specializing in comparative politics with an interest in political behavior. He is interested in studying elections and electoral behavior in Sub-Saharan Africa. Seamus graduated from the Pennsylvania State University with BAs in African Studies and International Relations.