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The origins of policing institutions: Legacies of colonial insurgency

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Abstract

This article examines the impact of colonial-era armed conflict on contemporary institutions. It argues that when British colonial administrators were faced with armed insurrection they responded with institutional reform of the police, and that the legacy of these reforms lives on today. Violent opposition prompted the British colonial administration to expand entrance opportunities for local inhabitants in order to collect intelligence needed to prosecute a counterinsurgency campaign. This investment in human capital and institutional reform remained when the colonial power departed; as a result, countries which experienced colonial-era conflict have more efficient policing structures today. I demonstrate how this worked in practice during the Malayan Emergency, 1948–60. Archival data from Malaysia show that local inhabitants were recruited into the police force in greater numbers and were provided with training which they would not have received had there been no insurgency. This process was consolidated and reproduced upon independence in path-dependent ways. To expand the empirical domain, I statistically explore new archival data collected from the UK National Archives on police financing across colonial territories. The results show that armed insurgency during the colonial era is associated with higher percentages of police expenditure during the colonial era and higher perceived levels of contemporary policing capacity.

Keywords

armed conflict, colonialism, policing

This article seeks to understand the variation in contemporary policing structures in states which once were British colonial territories, focusing on the experience of armed conflict during the period of colonial occupation. It is traditionally thought that both colonialism and armed conflict have adverse consequences for post-colonial states in the form of weakened institutions and other negative externalities. This article shows that when colonial powers faced armed insurrection they responded with security inputs, the legacy of which lives on in the form of human capital and effectivized policing practices.

Studying the legacy of colonial-era conflict on contemporary policing institutions speaks to a growing body of literature on the historical origins of political institutions and the consequences of conflict for their trajectories (Keith & Ogundele, 2007; Pierskalla, De Juan & Montgomery, forthcoming; Wantchekon & García-Ponce, 2014; Wucherpfennig, Hunziker & Cederman, 2016). While this article focuses on the colonial period, scholars have also demonstrated that the pre-colonial era (Acemoglu, Reed & Robinson, 2014; Wig, 2016; Wimmer, 2016) and the immediate post-independence era (Slater, 2010) impact on institutional patterns. This literature is united by the claim that historical events matter and that they exert path-dependent effects on institutions.

Answering this question also speaks to contemporary policing practices. Recent debates about police brutality have propelled this issue onto the center stage of social science research. There are many dimensions to quality of policing; I focus here on efficiency, particularly with regards to intelligence-gathering and preventive capacity. States with such capacity can wield it to different ends: it can be used for tasks like infiltrating crime syndicates or

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preventing terrorist attacks, but it can also be used to repress opposition. To this end, effective police organizations should not be understood as normatively desirable, but rather as organizations whose capacity can be used both for social good and to illiberal ends.

My argument builds on a simple, but often overlooked, insight that imperial governance was highly varied. Colonizers responded to local conditions and innovated responses to the problems that they encountered. Most administrative responses were not dictated by Whitehall; they were determined by the man on the spot. Armed conflict elicited a particularly strong response from administrators because providing order was the legitimizing rationale for colonization. The condition of violent opposition resulted in the strengthening of policing institutions in order to increase the gathering of local-level intelligence needed to prosecute a counterinsurgency campaign.

Critically, colonial administrations built up policing structures by expanding entrance opportunities for local inhabitants. Because of the lower wages and greater contextual knowledge they could bring to bear on counterinsurgency, locals were recruited in greater numbers and promoted to higher positions than was possible prior to insurgency. This investment in human capital remained when the colonial power departed: police in territories which had experienced colonial-era insurgency were better trained, better equipped, and greater in number upon independence than in territories which did not experience colonial-era insurgency.

In some ways this argument is counterintuitive. Civil conflict is not only more likely to occur in weak states (Fearon & Laitin, 2003; Sobek, 2010), it further weakens them through the devastation wrought by war (Collier, 2008; Thies, 2010). One should therefore expect colonial-era insurgency to be associated with weak institutions and a depressed policing capacity. My argument suggests that it is important to nuance our understanding of trajectories of violence and the conditions under which institutions develop capacity. Note that this argument does not diminish the costs of violence in terms of human suffering or suggest that colonialism was benign; foreign domination caused enormous disruption and harm.

This article is builds on the logic of classic works on violence and statebuilding (Moore, 1966; Tilly, 1975; Huntington, 1968). More recently, Levitsky & Way (2012) show that the state durability that results from periods of sustained, violent, and ideologically driven conflict is a consequence of the identities, norms, and organizational structures forged during the struggle. Likewise, Slater (2010) argues that violent internal contention can 'make the state' in autocracies when it takes especially threatening and challenging forms because this leads to the creation of protection pacts that unify key support for state power and tighten controls against unrest. This article is grounded in the same fundamental logic that violence can contribute to stronger state institutions under certain conditions. While previous work tended to focus on parties and regimes, I examine the impact of violent struggle on the development of policing institutions.

To do so, I unpack how the process of police reforms as a response to violent challengers worked in practice in the case of colonial insurgency in Malaya. Pouring enormous resources into the territory, colonial officials expanded local recruitment and training of the police to combat insurgents; as a result, the post-independence Malaysian police have proven efficient at gathering intelligence and striking against potential regime opponents. Colonial Malaya is particularly interesting as a case since it continues to serve as a contemporary counterinsurgency role model (Nagl, 2009; Fergusson, 2008; Dixon, 2009).

To probe the generalizability of the Malaya findings, I then explore the argument with a quantitative analysis of former British colonies. As a proxy for colonial police inputs, I collected new data from the UK National Archives on police financing across colonial territories. The findings indicate that armed insurgency during the colonial era is associated with both higher levels of police expenditure during the colonial era and higher perceived levels of contemporary policing capacity.

This article makes the following contributions. First, it provides a unique argument about the origins of variation in policing institutions. Second, it provides empirical evidence that colonial-era conflict led to higher levels of contemporary policing capacity. Third, it presents new data collected from historical archives which capture colonial police inputs. Finally, it speaks to a growing literature which stresses empirically disaggregating within colonial empires.

That was a long time ago

What can colonialism tell us about modern governance? Is it really plausible that events from upwards of 60 years ago are still influencing institutional practices today? This may seem to be an excessively long time lag, but a recent wave of research suggests that historical processes have traction for explaining contemporary phenomena. Social scientists and historians have found

that countries' colonial pasts are central to understanding a battery of present-day phenomena, such as economic outcomes (Acemoglu, Johnson & Robinson, 2001; Grier, 1999; Huillery, 2009; Pepinsky, 2016), social policies and dynamics (Kaseke, 2011; Patel, 2011), political institutions (Keith & Ogundele, 2007; Pepinsky, 2016), ethnic demographics (Schwartz, 2015), national identification (Robinson, 2014), and violence (Wucherpfennig, Hunziker & Cederman, 2016; Mamdani, 2001).[1] A broad range of studies not directly interested in colonialism but which include colonial dummies in their statistical analyses also model the extent to which a colonial past is correlated with various economic, political, and social outcomes (e.g. Alesina & Dollar, 2000; Barro, 1996; Bollen & Jackman, 1985).

Although there has been a recent turn to bringing large-N empirical data to bear, these types of explanations are not new; the central tenet of Dependency Theory is that colonialism created structural distortions in the economies of Third World countries that continue to thwart development today (Frank, 1978). Others have argued that colonialism had little impact on modern states; for example, Herbst (2000) posits that colonial rule only plays a minor part in explaining current patterns of social, political, and economic life. But the majority of the literature suggests a battery of negative *and* positive outcomes that resulted from colonial practices, though the methodological problems of determining the counterfactual are manifold.[2]

A growing body of literature departs from classic works on state-building (Huntington, 1968; Moore, 1966; Tilly, 1975) in exploring the consequences of violent conflict on the trajectories of political institutions (Keith & Ogundele, 2007; Levitsky & Way, 2012; Wantchekon & Omar García-Ponce, 2014). Pierskalla, De Juan & Montgomery (forthcoming) find that violence is a strong predictor of colonial penetration in a subnational analysis of early German colonization in East Africa, while Wucherpfennig, Hunziker & Cederman (2016) control for whether a colonial territory experienced a violent transition to independence and find that this is correlated with a lower probability of armed conflict in the post-independence period.

Within the field of comparative studies of empire, there is a longstanding debate on the methods by which the British and French empires governed and the consequences thereof (Bertocchi & Canova, 2002; Acemoglu & Johnson, 2005; Crowder, 1964; Geschiere, 1993). The most basic version of this debate centers on the binary of direct versus indirect rule (often proxied by French versus British rule, respectively). Recent scholarship questions the utility of this dichotomy, suggesting that the ways in which the colonizers administered their territories may have been less distinctly demarcated than has been suggested and may differ across sectorial lines, prompting scholars to conceptualize structures of domination along a spectrum rather than as a dichotomy (Boone, 1994; Gerring et al., 2011; Lange, 2004). Lange (2009) and Gerring et al. (2011) differentiate between indirect and direct rule within the British empire. Relatedly, Mahoney (2010) argues that the type and intensity of colonial institutions impacted differently on post-independence development within the Spanish empire.[3] This growing literature demonstrates that the effects of colonial governance were differentiated across sectors and were often contingent on the context in which administrators operated (Jedwab, Kerby & Moradi, 2017; Jedwab & Moradi, 2016; Iyer, 2010; Banerjee & Iyer, 2005).

Within the field, however, there has been little attention to responses to colonial-era violence and how this impacted on institutional trajectories, particularly with regards to the police. Yet the variation in policing has important implications for societies. Effective policing prohibits the outbreak of organized violence through detection and pre-emption of violent contentious politics. Understanding policing structures can also help us to understand policing practices which respect or violate human rights. Exploring the origins of policing institutions may provide leverage on the social concerns over how contentious politics are managed.

Cut the coat according to the cloth

To 'cut one's coat according to one's cloth' was a popular proverb among British colonial administrators. It was

[1] Some scholars trace institutional roots to the pre-colonial period (cf. Acemoglu, Reed & Robinson, 2014; Gennaioli & Rainer, 2007; Hariri, 2012; Michalopoulos & Papaioannou, 2013; Wig, 2016; Wimmer, 2016).

[2] For example, there are potential spillover effects from colonies to non-colonies (Iyer, 2010) and the territories selected for colonization were not determined randomly; they provided particularly attractive trade and economic opportunities.

[3] Researchers have also studied the effects of colonialism on institutional variation within a given colonial territory (see Wantchekon, Klašnja & Novta (2015) on Benin; Acemoglu, Reed & Robinson (2014) on Sierra Leone; and Banerjee & Iyer (2005) and Iyer (2010) on India).

used to capture the idea that a colony must make do with the available resources and adjust expenditure accordingly (Killingray & Anderson, 1992), but in a broader sense it meant that one must make adjustments to governance given circumstances. It is a common misconception that colonies were governed from the Colonial Office in London. While the secretary of state for the colonies answered to the British government, the day-to-day administration was devolved to the colonial governments, and governors and officers of the Colonial Service were employed and paid by the territorial governments, not the Colonial Office (Banton, 2008; Jeffries, 1956). The nature of the relationship between colony and metropole is important because 'the "arm's length" approach was a factor in creating the widely differing policies and practices which developed in the dependencies' (Banton, 2008: 22). As administrators faced different challenges across the colonies, they were forced to innovate responses which led to varying practices of governance across the empire.[4]

While many places in the empire experienced brief 'disturbances of the peace', that is, demonstrations, strikes, and riots, only a few territories saw sustained armed opposition. I argue that institutional reform resulted as a response to armed conflict because officials were forced to innovate new practices: new laws were implemented, rights were both retracted and granted, social services provided or withdrawn, political freedoms restricted. In particular, I suggest that policing structures lay at the heart of this institutional response. The police were at the center of British counterinsurgency strategy due to the belief that intelligence-gathering was the natural purview of the police (Townshend, 1986) and that to win a guerilla war, the key is to be able to identify the opponent. The condition of violent opposition thus generated a reaction that was concerned with strengthening police intelligence and surveillance capacity.

The 'normal' state of affairs in which the colonial police were reactive in response to crimes and in which their preventive dimension was mainly symbolic (the 'bobby on the street' serving to remind potential criminals of eventual costs) shifted in the situation of counterinsurgency to place a far greater emphasis on prevention. In counterinsurgency, resources were diverted to training police on how to recruit informants and collaborators, conduct surveillance, gather and collate intelligence information, interrogate effectively, and respond to 'hot' information. This knowledge transfer was conducted both from metropole to the colony, for example, by sending local cadets to police courses at training centers in the UK (MEPO 2/8310), and within the colony, as experienced police trained new cadets recruited as a response to insurgency (Townshend, 1986).

From an economic perspective, recruiting police from the UK entailed higher costs than employing local inhabitants, who could be given lower wages and fewer benefits. Local inhabitants also had a relative advantage in terms of gathering intelligence (Sinclair, 2006): the superior language and cultural knowledge of locals, not to mention their ability to blend into the ethnic communities, was essential in cultivating collaborators and infiltrating opposition movements.

The theoretical story thus has both human capital and institutional components: knowledge and skills were transferred to colonial inhabitants, and this human capital was reproduced through the structures and practices that were established to combat insurgency. New institutional forms were innovated, such as detective training schools, surveillance systems, and data management of intelligence.

While policing institutions are not static but evolve in response to various stimuli, previous structures tend to be reinforced when they prove useful to the leadership. For example, the founding Prime Minister of Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew, realized that having an effective Special Branch (police intelligence service) would facilitate his governance, 'he would have to have a Special Branch that was very effective otherwise he would have endless problems. He wouldn't know what was going on in the first place; only the Special Branch could provide that' (Bogaars, 1980: Reel 9). Politicians in the post-independence era often found it advantageous to have a strong and robust policing apparatus, both to ensure law and order and to prevent challenges to their own power.

The fact of colonial rule itself does not necessitate a knowledge transfer or institutional legacy. For example, the departing Belgian colonial administration in Zaire, 'took everything with them – from knowledge of how to organize a state all the way to the typewriters' and as a result, 'there was neither the physical infrastructure nor the human capital or organizational routines for the independent state to provide its citizenry even with a minimal level of public goods' (Wimmer, 2016: 1414). Memoirs of UK policemen also show that they had little

[4] This claim understands the relationship between the colonized and colonizer to be mutually constitutive. While the focus is on the colonizer's institutional dynamics, this was taken in response to the actions of the inhabitants. Local residents had agency, though circumscribed, to influence the direction of governance; a large body of literature addresses how this agency was asserted and its effects (cf. Wantchekon & Garciá-Ponce, 2014 on the relationship between anticolonial independence movements and democracy).

knowledge of intelligence and infiltration prior to the outbreak of insurgency. Guy Madoc, who later became the Director of Intelligence in Malaya, describes the instructions he received to penetrate an opposition organization prior to conflict having broken out: 'not having any training, I hadn't the slightest idea how to penetrate the [opposition organization], nor had [...] the Director, nor had the handful of British officers who were serving under me; I don't think that we got any penetration achieved at that time' (Madoc, 1981a: 95). For colonies which never experienced insurgency, this remained the case for the entire colonial period: neither the colonial administrators nor the local inhabitants had training in intelligence and counterinsurgency.

Colonial archival data

To understand what, if any, lasting impact colonial-era insurgency had on governance practices, I turn to archival records to unpack how colonial territories within the British empire responded institutionally to violent challenges.

I leverage several unique archival sources of data. In the first empirical section, I map the process by which the colonial administration responded to insurgency in Malaya. To understand how the process unfolded on the ground, I exploit the rich data that can be found in the private papers of colonial administrators. In the run-up to independence, colonial administrators could choose to do one of three things with an official file: (1) send it to the National Archives in the UK; (2) leave it to successor administrations; (3) destroy it. There is much to be said on both how this decision was made and the extent to which it was circumvented (FCO 141/19930). In the end, most documents which could have potentially embarrassed the UK or 'compromised intelligence' were destroyed. But as luck would have it, numerous colonial administrators retained copies of work-related documents in their private papers, including many marked 'Top Secret'. Some of these administrators donated their private papers – classified documents included – to collections, for example, at the Imperial War Museum, Oxford University, and the Singapore National Archive, all of which provided data for this project. These papers provide unique insights into institutional response and reform in the wake of armed conflict.[5]

I focus on collections of officials who held positions central to the security apparatus, both because the official documents they retained were more topically relevant and because their own reflections in diaries, letters, and memos often contained insights into how individuals working within the colonial administration viewed the question of counterinsurgency. Some information is easily verified through triangulation, such as details regarding the expansion and training of police forces. Others are not, such as insights into early phases of police intelligence-gathering, where few individuals were involved in the process. While the data used in the Malaya empirics are public and verifiable, the selection of which data to present is an act of interpretation by the researcher, implying a responsibility to ensure that the data are representative of the material as a whole.

In the second empirical section, I examine whether the findings from the Malaya case travel to other parts of the empire. In doing so, several of the concepts are proxied with quantitative data (described in detail later). The primary archival set of data collected for this section is a measure of police budgets as a percentage of total expenditure for each territory. These data were compiled from the colonial reports submitted annually by each territory to the Colonial Office. It was the responsibility of each territory to provide these statistical compilations and to keep their budgets balanced, and so there is no reason to question the accuracy of these data. Data are missing for some colonies, usually because the accounting systems were heterogeneous and in some cases police budgets were folded into a broader category (e.g. 'law and order'), making it impossible to determine the amount allocated to policing. There is no evident pattern to this heterogeneity.

Institutional reform in response to the Malayan emergency

> [...] the spearhead of the Special Branch intelligence officer was not the European, it was the Asian inspector. A man intelligent enough to absorb the training that we could give to him, and a man who could if necessary even go into the jungle, who could disguise himself like the terrorist. (Madoc, 1981b: 74)
>
> They did invaluable jobs and of course after we left they were in the best position to be really efficient. Properly trained and immensely experienced. (Madoc, 1981a: 109)

While the Communist Party of Malaya (CPM)[6] had been a thorn in the side of the Malayan and Singaporean colonial administrations prior to the outbreak of WWII,

[5] This is a convenience sample in the sense that we cannot know the processes which prompted various administrators to save official papers and deposit them into public archives.

[6] Also known as the Malayan Communist Party (MCP).

upon British reoccupation of the Malaysian peninsula at the end of WWII, the CPM was nonetheless given legal recognition like all political parties in Malaya. CPM demands for self-governance and communist reforms were met with silence from the administration, leading to urban activism in Singapore and targeted attacks on rubber plantations. Soon the UK declared a state of emergency, and the confrontation escalated into full-scale insurgency. While the story here concerns the imperial response, it is important to keep in mind that the communist insurgency was more than just a threat to colonial rule; for many, it was also an important act of resistance by those who faced marginalization and discrimination from the colonial state.

There were many policy responses to the insurgency, including the deportation or repatriation of upwards of 30,000–40,000 ethnic Chinese to mainland China (Humphrey, 1995), and the forced resettlement within Malaya of at least 600,000 individuals, 70%–85% of whom were ethnic Chinese living in remote areas near the jungle beyond the reach of the administration (COI, 1953: 20).[7] These individuals were moved into approximately 500 'new villages' which were surrounded by lit perimeter fences and were partially fortified. These policies have been discussed extensively in historiographies of the Malayan Emergency (Pye, 1950; Short, 1975; Stubbs, 1989).

The colonial administration maintained that the conflict was to remain in the hands of the civil administration, and came to understand that effective policing lay at the heart of addressing it. Because the CPM practiced guerilla warfare, being able to obtain the intelligence necessary to find the rebels in their jungle hideouts was of the essence, and the colonial administration envisaged information-gathering as the prerogative of the police.

The insurgency prompted numerous institutional reforms to the police and military, which faced the most immediate threat from the CPM. By 1948 British leaders had acknowledged that the colonial territories would eventually be granted self-governance (Jeffries, 1956), so colonial administrators in Malaya worked to train and delegate responsibility for internal security to Malayans.[8] The context of the insurgency led to the allocation of extraordinary resources to this end. As one colonial police administrator stated, 'as always happens in those situations – it happened in Palestine, it happened in Malaya, it happened in Kenya, it happened in Cyprus – there was a lot of reorganization to be done. Training and re-training, new equipment to be acquired, new brains to be acquired, new systems to be worked out and applied' (Catling, 1988: Reel 6).

In purely quantitative terms, the police force was expanded from 10,308 in 1946 to 74,417 by 1952 (Young, 1952). Police budgets rose from prewar levels of 5.9% of total government expenditure (CO 576/50: 785) to 15% in 1948 when the Emergency broke out (CO 1071/246), to over 36% of expenditure in 1953 (CO 1071/248). By the 1950s officers were no longer being recruited from Britain. Instead, Malayan cadets were sent to London for advanced courses with the London Metropolitan police and a new police training college was opened outside of Kuala Lumpur. Colonial administrators emphasized the need to give more responsibility to Asian officers and ensure that they moved higher up in the ranks than previously allowed.

But the transformation of the Malayan police was not just a numbers game. Training in intelligence-gathering, including infiltration, surveillance, and attracting informants, became paramount. As has been noted in other contexts, 'without such information, authorities are unable to target overt repressive actions [. . .] essentially, they are left swinging in the dark' (Sullivan & Davenport, 2018: 177). The Special Branch of the police force was tasked with this work, becoming renowned for its expertise in intelligence and contributing to the military success against the CPM (Munro-Kua, 1996: 22). Based in Kuala Lumpur, the Special Branch coordinated intelligence activities throughout the country.

In substantive terms, intelligence paid rich returns: the military estimated that the odds of achieving contact in the jungle with CPM were 1 in 10 for ambushes using information compared with 1 in 188 for patrols with no prior information (Nicholls, 1953).[9] By the late 1950s, Special Branch knew the names, locations, and unit assignments of most guerillas (Sunderland, 1964). The ten-year report on the Emergency written by the Director of Operations stated that the majority of contacts between soldiers and terrorists that resulted in a guerilla's death or capture were attributable to good intelligence (Sunderland, 1964). In assessing the state of the Malayan Police, the Inspector General of Colonial Police

[7] There are varying estimates of the number of individuals resettled. The government claimed about 600,000 were moved (COI, 1953: 20) while Munro-Kua (1996: 21) puts the estimate at double that.

[8] I use 'Malayan' to refer to all local residents of Malaya regardless of ethnicity and 'Malay' to refer to those of specifically Malay ethnicity.

[9] While the CPM tried to adapt to prevent British intelligence-gathering (cf. Sullivan & Davenport, 2018), its vulnerable position in the forest circumscribed its ability to do so.

underscored the institutionalization of intelligence-collection: 'A vast police organization has evolved out of experience to deal with the pressing threats of the Emergency [...] I have been most impressed with [...] the Special Branch' (CO 1030/168: 18).

These institutions were inherited by the Malayan government upon independence, were further expanded, and have endured until today. The past 50 years have demonstrated a trend of politicians tasking the police with detaining and charging political opponents and critical voices within civil society. To do so requires detailed intelligence about the structure and operation of opposition parties and movements, and in this the police have been effective. In the 1960s, for example, repeated detentions led to the erosion of the leadership of the Socialist Front, and the Labour Party decided in 1969 to withdraw from constitutional politics after its experience with detentions and state harassment (Munro-Kua, 1996: 55; Milne, 1963).

The Malaysian state inherited from colonial Britain the training and tools necessary to implement extensive surveillance and policing of society. In the intervening years, it has entrenched and expanded legislation allowing the state the opportunity to imprison indefinitely anyone it defines as a national security threat, and it has ensured that the police have the resources and skills to fulfill this mandate. As a result of the terminal period of colonial rule, Malaya was 'endowed with [...] [a] law and order machinery [while] the rest of newly independent Southeast Asia in the Postwar era had to virtually establish police systems from scratch' (Zakaria, 1977). In the next section, I explore this counterfactual claim for territories across the British empire.

Expanding the empirical domain

To explore the extent to which the findings from Malaya are generalizable, I turn to an analysis of 28 British colonies from 1946 onwards. A British colony is defined as a 'territory which, by settlement, conquest, cession or annexation has become part of Her Majesty's dominions and over which Her Majesty [...] exercises absolute sovereignty' (Jeffries, 1956: 29). For the purposes of this article the terms 'colony', 'dominion', and 'protectorate' are taken as interchangeable to mean a territory which was governed by the British colonial apparatus. Such territories produced an Annual Report that was submitted to London providing statistical overviews of the colonial administration.

The temporal domain starts at 1946 because the experience of World War II throughout the empire was so monumental that it effectively rebooted the entire colonial apparatus, in terms of both infrastructure and human capital (Sinclair, 2006). The majority of administrators were killed, injured, or displaced during the war, requiring massive recruitment drives upon its termination. The experience of occupation in many territories, combined with the vast shift in personnel in all of them, led to major gaps in institutional memory upon the retaking of control by the UK.

The geographical scope is delimited for a number of practical reasons. Territories which were incorporated into other countries are omitted because they never became independent states (e.g. Somaliland, Hong Kong, Zanzibar, Yemen, the Cameroons). The sample is also restricted to territories with populations of over 500,000 (Singer & Small, 1972), which in practice omits small island nations in the Caribbean and South Pacific. This choice is driven by practical constraints, as data for the dependent variable and most of the control variables are unavailable for microstates.

The resulting dataset contains 28 territories, a sample size not uncommon in cross-national statistical studies of former colonies (cf. Acemoglu, Johnson & Robinson, 2002; Gerring et al., 2011; Lange, 2004; Wantchekon & García-Ponce, 2014). The primary concern with N is that the models will be underpowered, thereby increasing the risk of a Type II error. The low test sensitivity should work to attenuate the findings and decrease the likelihood of finding a statistically significant relationship. To allay potential concerns about the t-statistic, I also conduct permutation tests (e.g. Good, 2005) in order to determine if these results are an artifact of sampling uncertainty instead of a product of the theoretical argument.[10] The permutation test estimates whether the coefficients are different from a random re-assignment of values on the independent variable. To check for this possibility 1,000 regressions were run for each of the models, randomly re-ordering the value of the independent variable for each regression, keeping the other variables fixed. The results are reported in footnote 16 and show little reason for concern.

The data needed to explore the argument are threefold: colonial-era insurgency, colonial policing inputs, and contemporary policing. Data on colonial-era insurgency come from the extrasystemic conflict data at the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP), version 4.2015. It defines extrasystemic conflict as, 'a conflict

[10] A permutation test cannot guard against problems of selection, endogeneity, or other research design problems.

between a state and a non-state group outside its own territory. These conflicts are by definition territorial, since the government side is fighting to retain control of a territory outside the state system', noting that 'this category basically contains colonial conflicts' (UCDP, 2016). The conflict must have occurred between the end of WWII and the onset of independence. I modified the data to also include Singapore as having experienced colonial-era conflict, as the MCP sought to expel the UK from the entire Malaysian peninsula. The security responses from both territories mirrored each other, and the police in both colonies cooperated in security measures and in the deportation of the Chinese population.[11] Four of the colonies in the dataset are coded as having experienced pre-independence armed conflict: Cyprus, Kenya, Malaysia, and Singapore.

To measure colonial police inputs I went through several hundred Colonial Annual Reports housed at the UK National Archives. Using budgetary data compiled in the annual expenditure reviews, I created a measure of policing as a percentage of the total annual expenditure. Police budgets are an imperfect proxy for human capital transfers in policing, but while noisy, they measure important cross-national variation in the resourcing and reformation of the police.

To capture contemporary efficiency of policing, I employ data from the World Economic Forum (WEF) on the reliability of police service, downloaded from the Quality of Government dataset (Teorell et al., 2016). These data come from a question on its 2014 Global Competitiveness Survey (GCS) of business executives which asks the respondent to rate the extent police services can be relied upon to enforce law and order in their country, where 1 is 'cannot be relied upon at all' and 7 is 'can be completely relied upon' (World Economic Forum, 2015). The mean value among the countries in the dataset is 3.9, with a minimum of 2.62 (Nigeria) and a maximum of 6.16 (Singapore). I refer to this variable as 'police quality' or 'police reliability' in the following text.

This measure has some drawbacks. First, it is a rough proxy of the concept of police efficiency. The theory speaks to a particular type of competency in intelligence, surveillance, and prevention, which may or may not correlate with citizen perceptions of the reliability of the police. Reliability may be understood as quick response times, lack of corruption, ability to solve crime – all important components of efficient policing but not necessarily those that were developed in response to colonial insurgency. This is, however, the closest conceptual match available with global coverage, highlighting the need for more cross-national data on police institutions; of the 128 governance variables included in the comprehensive Quality of Governance dataset, only three concern policing (the other two capture bribes and corruption).

Second, the measure is subjective, and previous research has found divergence between citizen satisfaction with service provision and the actual quantity and quality of service provision (Brown & Coulter, 1983); however, there are no global cross-national data which capture objective facets of police performance.

Third, while the GCS is designed to capture a representative sample of business leaders (across sector and firm size), business leaders on average may have more positive experiences with police than individuals with lower socio-economic status. To address the non-representativeness of the sample, I turn to the World Values Survey (WVS) and Afrobarometer which contain questions regarding respondent trust in the police using nationally representative samples. The WVS covers nine of the countries under study and the Afrobarometer 13; because the coverage is reduced they cannot be used for regression analysis but they can help to validate the WEF data. Correlation coefficients show that for the overlapping countries, $r = 87.2$ for WVS and $r = 60.1$ for Afrobarometer, indicating that the GCS respondents appear to track the general populace in their appraisals of the police.[12] While this correlation provides leverage on the question of inferring attitudes of the general population, there is reason to be cautious in interpreting the findings. If business leaders' perceptions diverge from the general populace in countries which have seen colonial-era insurgency then the estimates will be biased; we cannot conclude whether this is or is not the case. The reader is advised to keep the sampling strategy in mind.

I include several control variables which could influence the likelihood of a colonial-era conflict as well as policing and security practices. *Year of independence* controls for the duration of colonialism after WWII to address the fact that the timing of decolonization was determined in response to internal challenges.

[11] Not doing so does not substantively impact the results, although in two of the models (5 and 6) the main explanatory variable drops to the 0.1 significance level.

[12] Calculated using the percentage of respondents answering that they had 'a lot' or 'somewhat' trust in police for the Afrobarometer (Round 6) and 'a lot' or 'great deal' in the WVS (Wave 6).

Table I. Colonial police financing as a percentage of annual expenditure

1st quartile	*2nd quartile*
Ghana (5%)	Gambia (8%)
Jamaica (7%)	Lesotho (8%)
Mauritius (6%)	Swaziland (8%)
Trinidad & Tobago (6%)	Tanzania (8%)
Uganda (6%)	
3rd quartile	*4th quartile*
Kenya (13%)*	Botswana (14%)
Malawi (10%)	Cyprus (16%)*
Singapore (13%)*	Malaysia (36%)*
Zambia (12%)	Zimbabwe (15%)

*experienced conflict during the post-WWII to independence period. Note that Zimbabwe is considered to be a colonial territory until its unilateral declaration of independence in 1965.

Pre-colonial development measures the 'stateness' existing in territories prior to the arrival of colonizers by capturing the number of levels in a territory's jurisdictional hierarchy. The *Percentage of colonial population comprised of European residents* is included since when large numbers of Europeans settled, they demanded rights and protection analogous to that found in their home country (Acemoglu, Johnson & Robinson, 2002). Data for these variables come from Gerring et al. (2011). *Mountainous terrain* captures the difficulty of policing rough terrain as well as the likelihood of armed conflict to occur in such areas (data from Fearon & Laitin, 2003). Acemoglu, Johnson & Robinson (2002) find that the *Pre-colonial indigenous population density* is correlated with colonial and post-colonial state institutions; higher density may also result in higher levels of policing inputs. Alternatively, Acemoglu, Johnson & Robinson (2002) interpret the indigenous population density measure as a proxy for income per capita (data from Gerring et al., 2011).

Table I shows descriptive data for the peak level of policing during the post-WWII to independence period for the 17 territories for which there were policing data.[13] UK colonial policing budgets were high: the lowest level was 5% and, at the upper end, Malaya at its peak spent 36% of its annual budget on policing and internal security. For point of reference, the United States spent less than 1% of its budget (federal, state, and local combined) on policing in 2012.[14] Table I shows that territories which experienced a domestic armed conflict between the end of WWII and independence generally saw higher levels of police financing.

Table II. Colonial-era conflict and colonial police expenditure

	Model 1	*Model 2*	*Model 3*
Colonial-era conflict	0.108*	0.107*	0.111*
	(0.052)	(0.046)	(0.046)
Year of independence		–0.004	–0.003
		(0.007)	(0.007)
Pre-colonial development		0.011	0.027†
		(0.018)	(0.02)
% European population		0.007†	0.002
		(0.005)	(0.006)
Mountainous terrain		0.000	–0.000
		(0.000)	(0.000)
Pre-colonial population density			–0.003
			(0.003)
Intercept	0.087**	7.02	5.589
	(0.009)	(14.439)	(13.373)
N	17	17	17
R-squared	0.422	0.496	0.556

†$p \leq .10$; *$p \leq .05$; **$p \leq .01$. Standard errors in parentheses. One-tailed tests.

The budgetary data also show that on average, the percentage of expenditure spent on policing increased 6.3% in territories which experienced insurgency between the end of WWII and decolonization. In comparison, the non-insurgency territories saw an average increase of 1.5%, indicating that the temporal order follows that of the argument: insurgency prompted increases in policing resources.

Table II shows the bivariate results of regressing police budgeting on colonial-era conflict using OLS with robust standard errors. Model 1 shows that territories which experienced conflict prior to independence had a police budget which was on average 11 percentage points higher than those territories which did not experience a colonial-era conflict. Models 2 and 3 include the control variables; the findings hold and the argument continues to find support.

Table III examines the relationship between colonial-era conflict and contemporary police reliability. Again, the results are indicative that the argument has traction:

[13] Using the average over the period does not substantively change the interpretation.

[14] Data for state and local budgetary expenditures come from the US Census; data for national expenditures come from the Federal Office of Management and Budget and include all police posts.

Table III. Colonial-era conflict and contemporary police reliability

	Model 4	*Model 5*	*Model 6*
Colonial-era conflict	1.383**	1.261**	1.249**
	(0.455)	(0.465)	(0.441)
Year of independence		0.025	0.055*
		(0.031)	(0.027)
Pre-colonial development		–0.189	0.101
		(0.245)	(0.227)
% European population		–0.116*	–0.195**
		(0.066)	(0.058)
Mountainous terrain		0.002	–0.001
		(0.009)	(0.009)
Pre-colonial population density			–0.012**
			(0.003)
Intercept	3.59**	–45.29	–104.099*
	(0.151)	(61.938)	(54.353)
N	26	25	25
R-squared	0.335	0.442	0.563

$^{\dagger}p \leq .10$; $^{*}p \leq .05$; $^{**}p \leq .01$. Standard errors in parentheses. One-tailed tests.

Table IV. Colonial police expenditure and contemporary police reliability

	Model 7	*Model 8*
Colonial police expenditure	3.827**	6.059**
	(1.21)	(1.905)
Year of independence		0.108*
		(0.05)
Pre-colonial development		–0.033
		(0.25)
% European population		–0.231**
		(0.06)
Mountainous terrain		–0.004
		(0.008)
Pre-colonial population density		0.008
		(0.016)
Intercept	3.771**	–207.981*
	(0.217)	(97.617)
N	17	17
R-squared	0.127	0.542

$^{\dagger}p \leq .10$; $^{*}p \leq .05$; $^{**}p \leq .01$. Standard errors in parentheses. One-tailed tests.

on average, countries that experienced armed conflict during their colonial history score 1.4 steps higher on subjective assessments of police reliability than those that did not experience armed conflict. Because the scale runs from 1 to 7, a one-step increase is a large substantive effect.

Finally, we can consider whether colonial police expenditure is correlated with reliability of policing. Table IV shows that that the percentage of expenditure spent on colonial policing is positively and significantly correlated with contemporary reliability of policing values.[15] On average, increasing colonial policing as a percentage of expenditure by ten percentage points results in an increase of 0.4–0.6 in contemporary police reliability.[16]

While one might object that there is a possibility of selection bias, in that armed opposition may indicate that these states have had historically weak policing structures, if this is the case, the bias should run against the argument and attenuate rather than inflate the results. These findings suggest that the findings from Malaysia that colonial-era conflict has a long-term impact on policing has traction in a broader set of cases

The sample was restricted to larger colonial possessions which became independent states upon decolonization; we cannot be sure of the extent to which the argument travels to microstates or territories which were folded into other states. The sample was also restricted to the former British empire, and it is an open question whether the argument could travel to other empires. The theoretical traction hinges on whether the colonial administration responded to threats with the development of human resources and institutions which remained in the territory after decolonization. Institutional reform is always a political decision, and in some cases, occupying forces may opt to bear the costs of bringing in non-local labor to restore temporary order. The Tirailleurs Sénégalais, for example, were used 'extensively as an expeditionary force in every corner of the French empire' (Echenberg, 1991: 5), highlighting the need for archival work on the institutional legacy of security apparatuses across other empires.

Counterinsurgency provides an opportunity for the development of strong local policing institutions but this

[15] The results for the full models in Tables II–IV hold if a dummy for Africa is included.

[16] With regard to the permutations tests, each of the observed coefficients for Models 1–6 exist outside the null distributions, indicating that the coefficients and standard errors are not the result of random chance but instead represent a general pattern between colonial-era insurgency, colonial-era police expenditure, and contemporary police reliability. Models 7–8 produce permutation p-values of 0.15, which, while not significant, are quite good considering that these permutations are a hard test for a small dataset. This is exactly the situation in which permutation tests are most valuable; a small sample size is not a reason to dismiss the results of a permutation test – it is a reason to prefer the results of a permutation test over the alternatives.

is not an inevitable response. While in Kenya the colonial government massively recruited African security forces in response to the Mau Mau rebellion (Hassan, 2014), previous patterns of training and deployment appeared to persist to a greater extent than they did in Malaysia. Rather than training police officers with shared ethnic affinities to infiltrate opposition movements, the colonial regime feared fraternization and avoided deploying police to their ethnic homelands (Eynde, Kuhn & Moradi, 2016). This suggests that the extent to which the colonial regime was willing to train and implement surveillance programs among their local recruits may have been conditional on other factors, such as patterns of ethnic amity.

Furthermore, reforms may be consolidated and strengthened when politicians deem them expedient, as happened in Malaysia and Singapore. In other states, the colonial inheritance may be allowed to degrade, underscoring the importance of political calculations in determining the subsequent trajectory of these institutions. Many regimes in post-colonial Africa opted to invest in the military rather than the police, which was underresourced and undermined (Rauch & van der Spuy, 2006; Eynde, Kuhn & Moradi, 2016). The development of institutions is not unicausal; while a territory's colonial inheritance may play a role, so do many other factors which may condition the inheritance or change its trajectory.

Concluding remarks

This article found that the experience of colonial-era armed conflict is associated with a redistribution of resources towards strengthening policing, and this in turn had a lasting impact on police practices. Archival data from Malaysia showed that local inhabitants were recruited into the police force in greater numbers and were provided with training which they would not have received had there been no insurgency. The skills and knowledge acquired through this process led to a human capital input that was reproduced and consolidated upon independence in path-dependent ways. To probe the generalizability of this finding, new archival data on police expenditure was collected from the UK National Archives for colonial territories after WWII. Analyzing these data in statistical models showed that colonial-era conflict is correlated with higher colonial police expenditure and perceptions of more reliable contemporary policing.

In thinking about the tractability of the argument to other empirical domains, it is possible that the effect could obtain in colonial territories of other empires *if* the colonial power initiated institutional reform and human capital inputs which could later be consolidated. One could also entertain the possibility that other forms of neocolonial governance inputs could have the same effect, such as state-building-oriented international interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan. On the one hand, the findings here suggest that police forces in Iraq/Afghanistan are stronger and more capably trained as a consequence of occupation than they would have been had they not been invaded. At the same time, the scale of intervention in these countries maps poorly on those from the colonial period; other dimensions of the occupation also serve to simultaneously undermine police reforms, not least the new armed challenges which result as a consequence of international intervention.

One might also wonder whether countries can create these inputs themselves: in the face of an insurgency, can they redirect resources into policing in order to create better institutions? It is difficult to envisage that a state which faces an insurgency is able to generate not only the manpower, but the skills and knowledge necessary to make policing effective and preventive. Some states try to circumvent this problem by hiring private military companies, as Angola and Sierra Leone did with Executive Outcomes in the 1990s, but such solutions do not lead to the sort of long-term institutional reform which results in more efficient policing, and their afterlife is likely to be destructive.

Does it matter if the colonial power and its domestic coalition win? The argument suggests that what matters is the nature of reforms to policing institutions as a result of insurgency and whether these reforms are retained after independence. If the colonial regime's opponents win, do they purge the service of loyalists to the former colonial power or do they allow them to remain? Often politicians find it expedient to leave institutions and their staffing intact, and in such cases we would expect the effect of the reforms to continue to impact on the trajectory of policing.

Moving forward, it would be useful to find measures to decompose different dimensions of policing quality. Given the problems posed by policing practices, it would be useful to better understand institutional development. Eck & Fariss (forthcoming) highlight that individual incidents of police brutality are ubiquitous, but that how states respond varies. It is also essential to decompose policing quality *for whom*. Do police serve equally the interests of society's elites and its most vulnerable? There are good reasons to believe that much of the 'highly reliable policing' in former UK colonies is for the benefit

of those in power while the civil liberties of average citizens are encroached upon (Eck, 2015). Thus, while it is clear that colonial legacies are important to the functioning of policing institutions, it is important to ask for whom these institutions are functioning. Findings from other contexts also suggest that the legacies of state violence may be heterogeneous across different facets of governance (Osorio, Schubiger & Weintraub, 2018), underscoring the need to unpack how different types of violence can impact (or not) a variety of institutional and social processes beyond policing.

Replication data

The dataset, codebook, and do-files for the empirical analysis in this article can be found at http://www.prio.org/jpr/datasets.

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