

Indirect Colonial Rule Undermines Support for Democracy: Evidence From a Natural Experiment in Namibia

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Abstract

This article identifies indirect and direct colonial rule as causal factors in shaping support for democracy by exploiting a within-country natural experiment in Namibia. Throughout the colonial era, northern Namibia was indirectly ruled through a system of appointed indigenous traditional elites whereas colonial authorities directly ruled southern Namibia. This variation originally stems from where the progressive extension of direct German control was stopped after a rinderpest epidemic in the 1890s, and, thus, constitutes plausibly exogenous within-country variation in the form of colonial rule. Using this spatial discontinuity, we find that individuals in indirectly ruled areas are less likely to support democracy and turnout at elections. We explore potential mechanisms and find suggestive evidence that the greater influence of traditional leaders in indirectly ruled areas has socialized individuals to accept nonelectoral bases of political authority.

Keywords

indirect colonial rule, decentralized despotism, natural experiment, political attitudes, democratic consolidation, Namibia, democratic institutions, sub-Saharan Africa, spatial RDD

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Introduction

The authority of the chief thus fused in a single person all moments of power: judicial, legislative, executive, and administrative.

—Mahmood Mamdani (*Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*, 1996, p. 23)

What factors shape individual and community attitudes toward democracy? There is substantial cross-national and within-country variance in individual support for democratic institutions. This component of the political or “civic” culture of a society has long been shown to play an important role in affecting both the sustainability and success of democratic institutions (Almond & Verba, 1963; Inglehart & Welzel, 2005; Putnam, 1994). Yet, beyond a number of recent findings that show that support for democracy is endogenous to exposure to national democratic institutions (de Aquino, 2015; Fuchs-Schündeln & Schündeln, 2015; Persson & Tabellini, 2009), we have relatively little quantitative evidence for other factors behind variation in individual support for democratic institutions. In line with a body of literature that highlights the importance of forms of colonialism for contemporary political and economic outcomes (Acemoglu, Johnson, & Robinson, 2002; Hariri, 2012; Iyer, 2010; Lange, 2009), this article argues that indirect and direct colonial rule are important factors in shaping contemporary support for democracy.

The difficulty in demonstrating the effects of direct and indirect colonialism on contemporary democratic attitudes is, of course, that colonial strategies were not assigned randomly. For example, because indirect colonialism tended to be conducted in precolonial states that were more centralized (Gerring, Ziblatt, Gorp, & Arévalo, 2011; Hariri, 2012), we usually cannot rule out that pre-state centralization also affects political culture through channels beyond the form of colonial rule (Michalopoulos & Papaioannou, 2013, 2015). To address this endogeneity issue, this article introduces a novel empirical design that exploits a within-ethnic group natural experimental setting in the sub-Saharan country of Namibia. In Namibia, as in sub-Saharan Africa as a whole, colonial authorities instituted systems of direct rule in those areas settled by White Europeans, whereas in those areas where indigenous population was not dispossessed, colonial authorities ruled through an indirect system of local “tribal” elites (Miescher, 2012). Unlike elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa, however, Europeans did not settle and directly rule only the most agriculturally fertile areas of Namibia (Werner & Odendaal, 2010), but rather, settled in the more arid southern areas of Namibia, which were

hardest hit by an 1897 rinderpest epidemic. To protect German herds from future epidemics, a veterinary cordon fence was introduced at the spatial extent of direct German control in 1897 that divided northern and southern Namibia. In the face of stringent financial constraints, the German colonists then never completely expanded their settlement territory to the northern areas of the country (Eckl, 2007) but rather ruled indirectly through a system of appointed traditional authorities.

Hence, although indirectly ruled areas of Namibia were governed through a system of appointed traditional authorities, traditional authorities were given no formal political role in the directly ruled central and southern areas of Namibia. After Namibian independence in 1990, these regional differences in the influence of traditional leaders still persist; traditional leaders play an extremely important formal role in land allocation and customary law enforcement in northern Namibia while playing a largely symbolic role in central and southern Namibia (Keulder, 2000).

Given that this colonial-era dividing line, progressively formalized throughout the 20th century, was drawn with little reference to existing indigenous territorial boundaries, Namibia provides an ideal setting to examine the effect of direct and indirect colonial rule on contemporary democratic attitudes. We can identify the effect of forms of colonial rule on individual support for democracy using the spatial discontinuity that exploits the exogenous border between formerly indirect and directly ruled areas of Namibia with a spatial regression discontinuity design (RDD). Our results suggest that individuals in indirectly ruled areas are less likely to support democracy as a system of governance, and less likely to participate in voting.

By analyzing individual-level survey data, we are able to provide evidence for the potential mechanisms through which indirect and direct colonial rule affect contemporary political attitudes. We find that people living in formerly indirectly ruled areas tend to contact traditional leaders more and respect authority to a greater extent. This suggests that traditional leaders still play an important role in the local governance in indirectly ruled areas and we theorize that this is an important mechanism through which the form of colonial rule likely affects contemporary democratic attitudes. In this way, our findings advance a long-standing debate over whether there is a trade-off between the consolidation of “traditional” and “modern” institutions in sub-Saharan Africa (Baldwin, 2015; Englebert, 2000; Logan, 2008, 2009; Mamdani, 1996; Williams, 2004, 2010), by suggesting that the institutional legitimacy held by traditional leaders in indirectly ruled areas has socialized individuals to accept nonelectoral systems of governance.

Theory

How might the form of colonial rule affect contemporary political attitudes? We follow Lange (2009) by defining indirect rule as “domination via collaborative relations between a dominant colonial center and several regionally based indigenous institutions” (p. 28) and direct rule as a “system of colonial domination in which both local and central institutions are well integrated and governed by the same authority and organizational principles” (Lange, 2009, p. 28). In sub-Saharan Africa, the existence of collaborative relations between traditional leaders¹ and colonial bureaucrats is a key factor distinguishing directly and indirectly ruled colonies. Directly ruled colonies were administered by imperial bureaucrats who enforced written laws, whereas indirectly ruled colonies were administered through local “chiefs” who were given the authority to informally enforce customary or “traditional” law (Acemoglu, Reed, & Robinson, 2014; Lange, 2004).²

There are striking cross-national correlations linking different forms of colonial rule with contemporary levels of democracy. Countries with stronger precolonial states tended to experience indirect colonial rule, and states that experienced indirect rule, in turn, tend to be less democratic today (Gerring et al., 2011; Hariri, 2012; Lange, 2009). Hariri (2012) influentially argued that indirectly ruled countries are less democratic today because indirect colonial rule reinforced traditional bonds of political authority and did not facilitate the transplantation of participatory democratic institutions from Europe.

Yet, in sub-Saharan Africa, indirect colonial rule did not only reinforce traditional bonds of authority but often radically reshaped precolonial systems of governance to suit the administrative requirements of indirect rule. In extending their control over indirectly ruled colonies, colonial authorities refashioned the political landscape by bolstering the coercive power of supportive elites, by detaching the authority of traditional leaders from the consent of clansmen, and by creating salaried hierarchies of “headmen” and “chiefs” where previously there existed only amorphous and territorially dispersed clan-based loyalties (Mamdani, 1996; Newbury, 1988). Contemporary hierarchical systems of traditional authority in indirectly ruled areas are, therefore, more accurately regarded as legacies of authoritarian colonial political systems, which radically altered indigenous African forms of governance rather than as legacies of consolidated precolonial political systems.

The institutional legacies of indirect colonial rule have largely persisted to the current day at a local level in sub-Saharan Africa, even as countries such as Namibia or Sierra Leone have democratized at a national level. Barring a radical postcolonial upheaval in local governance of the kind that occurred in

Tanzania (Miguel, 2004), traditional leaders still today enjoy unparalleled political, social, and economic authority in local governance in indirectly ruled areas of sub-Saharan Africa (Acemoglu et al., 2014; Baldwin, 2014; Düsing, 2002). As highlighted by many African scholars and political leaders (e.g., Luthuli, 1962; Mboya, 1956; Ntsebeza, 2005), the institution of traditional leadership is incongruous with procedural democratic notions of rule of law, the primacy of individual over group rights, and the electoral accountability of authority; indeed, Mahmood Mamdani goes so far as to call traditional leadership a system of “decentralized despotism” (Mamdani, 1996).

The existence of an undemocratic³ parallel governance system at the local level has important implications for the development of different kinds of political culture in directly and indirectly ruled areas of sub-Saharan Africa. The inclusiveness of colonial rule—broadly defined as the extent to which a broad range of political actors are involved in policy formulation and implementation—is a key mechanism linking the form of colonial rule to contemporary political and economic outcomes (Lange, 2009). The differential inclusiveness of colonial governance systems across directly and indirectly ruled areas shapes both the “supply” and “demand” of postcolonial democracy. Emphasizing the institutional supply side, Lange (2009) argues that less inclusive colonial institutions in indirectly ruled areas ultimately fostered the development of autocracy because low inclusiveness impeded the ability of the postcolonial state to manage competing social demands and incentivized the use of coercion as a means of regulating social relations.⁴

We build on this argument by demonstrating that the legacy of less inclusive colonial-era institutions may also be felt in a lower general “demand” for procedural democracy. The appointment of political leaders through elections is not necessarily the most effective or legitimate means of allocating political office. Rather, in sub-Saharan Africa, traditional leaders are actually the most widely supported and trusted political actors in society and appear to have an independent, nonelectoral base of political legitimacy (Logan, 2008).⁵ Traditional leaders do not appear to rely on coercion to sustain their rule; rather, traditional leaders have proven deft at managing competing constituencies as informal social ties have kept such leaders highly accountable and close to their communities (Baldwin, 2015). Given the legitimacy and support possessed by traditional leaders, often exceeding those of elected leaders, it may be that a key legacy of indirect rule has also been to socialize individuals to *demand* less formally inclusive systems of government relative to individuals living under democratic local institutions.

Indeed, in a more general sense, political attitudes are endogenous to exposure to forms of governance. Individuals who live under democracies are more likely to become socialized to accept democratic notions of electoral

legitimacy, whereas individuals who live under autocracies are more likely to become socialized to accept nondemocratic bases for legitimacy—hence, support for electoral democracy has been shown to increase the longer the individuals live under a democratic government (de Aquino, 2015; Fuchs-Schündeln & Schündeln, 2015). Given the legitimacy possessed by traditional leaders, we expect that ongoing exposure to the institution of traditional leadership in indirectly ruled areas of sub-Saharan Africa has socialized individuals to accept nondemocratic systems of government even as national political leaders are increasingly democratically elected. We also expect that, because the institution of traditional leadership is a hierarchical form of governance, individuals in indirectly ruled areas have been socialized to be less willing to question authority in general. Finally, given that voting is the essential participatory exercise in a democracy and civic norms of participation have been shown to be crucial in motivating individuals to sustain the cost of voting in Southern Africa (e.g., de Kadt, 2017; Roberts, Struwig, & Gordon, 2014), we expect weaker civic norms of electoral participation to be reflected in lower turnout in indirectly ruled areas.

In articulating and testing whether the institutional legacies of indirect colonial rule undermine democratic consolidation, we consciously enter into a long-standing and rich debate in the literature on sub-Saharan African politics. A number of authors have previously and compellingly argued that the ongoing political influence of traditional authorities in the postcolony presents a significant block to democratic consolidation (Englebert, 2000; Mamdani, 1996; Ntsebeza, 2005). Mamdani (1996) and Englebert (2000) were both particularly influential in arguing that African states and democratic leaders have been engaged in a struggle with local traditional leaders over power and political legitimacy in the postcolonial context.

However, a number of other authors have since argued that there is no necessary trade-off between traditional leadership and democratic consolidation because good governance is key to the legitimation of both elected and unelected officials in Africa alike (Bratton, Mattes, & Gyimah-Boadi, 2005). As local political actors may be kept accountable and good governance achieved through both electoral and nonelectoral means (Baldwin, 2015), there may be no necessary trade-off between support for traditional leadership and elected leadership (Williams, 2004, 2010). Rather, insofar as good governance requires cooperation between traditional authorities and elected officials, it may be that legitimacy is a rising tide that lifts all boats (Logan, 2013).⁶ We help adjudicate between these competing perspectives by exploiting exogenous variation in the form of colonial rule—something that is essential to conduct causal inference given that the institutional influence of traditional leadership across different ethnic groups is far from assigned randomly.

Specifically, and following on from the above theoretical framework, we will test the following two key hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: Individuals in indirectly ruled areas are less likely to support democracy as a system of government.

Hypothesis 2: Individuals in indirectly ruled areas are less likely to turn-out at elections.

Our theoretical framework moreover predicts that this relationship is likely being driven by greater contact to traditional leaders and greater respect for authorities in indirectly ruled areas. Thus, although we primarily focus on support for democracy as our outcome of interest, we will also test the following secondary hypotheses:

Hypothesis 3: Individuals in indirectly ruled areas are more likely to contact traditional authorities.

Hypothesis 4: Individuals in indirectly ruled areas are less likely to support questioning authority.

Historical Background

Namibia, or South West Africa as it was formerly known, was colonized progressively by Germany over the second half of the 19th century in the so-called “Scramble for Africa.” Immediately prior to colonization, the dominant ethnic groups in Namibia were the Ovambo (Ambo), Herero, Nama, Bushmen (Kung), Heikum (San), and Damara (Bergdama; see Figure S1 in the online appendix). The Ovambo and Herero are both Bantu-speaking groups who had migrated to Namibia during the great Bantu migration over the 14th and 17th centuries, displacing and establishing predominance over the Khoisan-speaking San, Damara, and Nama. All these groups had qualitatively similar political structures as measured by traditional form of succession of the local headman (patrilineal heirs) and none had individual property rights. However, the means of subsistence differed. Whereas the Ovambos depended on agricultural farming, Herero and Nama depended on animal husbandry and Bushmen and Damara on gathering and hunting.⁷ Given that political authority among all groups in precolonial Namibia was hereditary and patriarchal, we, therefore, refer to precolonial society as undemocratic.⁸

When Namibia became a German protectorate in 1884, German settlement initially focused on the less densely populated southern and central coastal regions of Namibia, which they reached first and where land could be more easily acquired (Zimmerer, 2001). German colonial authorities then

gradually expanded their territorial remit from the coast by playing off warring local factions and remunerating a number of indigenous elites for lost landholdings (German Colonial Office, 1919; Ofcansky, 1981). The Germans had planned on conquering the wealthier northern part of the protectorate but in 1897, a critical event occurred that was to shape the spatial incidence of direct and indirect rule: A rinderpest epidemic killed 95% of the cattle herds in central and southern Namibia. The epidemic particularly devastated cattle-dependent indigenous communities in central and southern Namibia because, unlike agricultural communities in fertile northern Namibia, the arid nature of the land prevented agriculture from being used as a feasible food-source substitute (Eckl, 2007; Gewalt, 2003; Miescher, 2012). The rinderpest epidemic, thereby, provided a key opportunity for German colonists to acquire large tracts of land in central and southern Namibia relatively cheaply with lessened collective resistance from weakened indigenous communities.

However, the epidemic also presented a dilemma to colonizers—there was little prospect of quickly extending direct German rule to the northern areas of South West Africa, yet continuing to allow free animal movement across South West Africa would be to potentially expose European herds to future devastating epidemics (Phoofolo, 1993). Shortly after the epidemic in 1897, therefore, the German colonial government set up a veterinary cordon fence at the boundaries of where its control extended to protect southern and central cattle herds from future potentially rinderpest-infected animals from the north (Directorate of Veterinary Services, 1996).

Irrked by the rising cost of colonization in South West Africa, in December 1905, the Reichstag in Berlin passed a resolution stating that police protection in the colony “should be restricted to the smallest possible area focusing on those regions where our economic interests tend to coalesce.”⁹ The veterinary cordon fence, in effect, then became a Police Zone boundary (see Figure 1—the first map issued by colonial authorities defining the Police Zone) and formed the dividing line between “white” and “black” Namibia: the area directly settled and directly ruled by German authorities, and the area indirectly ruled through a system of indigenous elites.¹⁰ Trade and the permanent movement of people between these two parts of South West Africa was restricted by the German authorities and European settlers consolidated control over the Police Zone.

The timing of the rinderpest shock in 1897, thus, created a number of counterfactuals that we rely on for our identification strategy. As Miescher (2012) summarizes, “the geographical location of the border reflected the limits of colonial power at the moment of its inception” (p. 41). Cooperation on the part of the indigenous population was essential to maintain the integrity of the cordon and prevent cross-border cattle flows, and as such, only

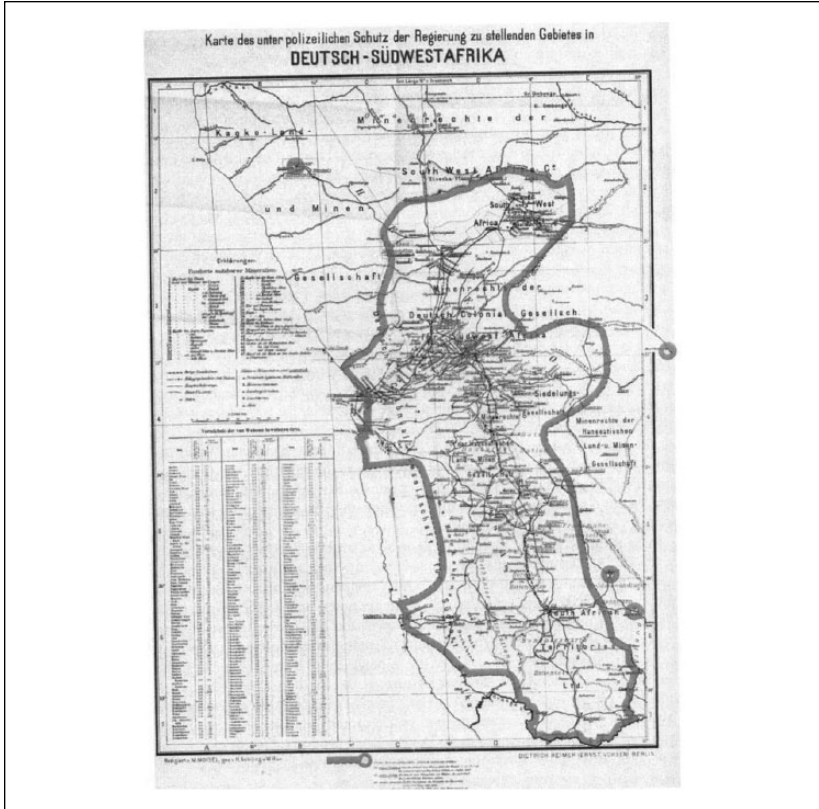


Figure 1. The first map defining the Police Zone, issued in 1907.

those areas where the Germans exerted political control in 1897 were incorporated. No attempt was made to include the areas outside German authority within the fenced territory; as Governor Friedrich von Lindequist optimistically put it, the areas in the far north would “temporarily need to remain outside the cordon” (see Lindequist, letter to Reichskanzler 1897 quoted in Miescher, 2012, p. 25).

The timing of the epidemic, thus, meant that areas such as Grootfontein where the Germans had triumphantly marched to in 1895 were included within the cordon fence. However, settlements such as Sesfontein in Kaoko were not included within the cordon fence because the chief of Sesfontein, Jan Uixamab, refused to allow the cordon to divide his grazing lands (cf. Lindequist to Reichskanzler February 20, 1897, Miescher, 2012, p. 25). In

late 1897, a coalition of Herero chiefs led by Uixamab then rose up in a last ditch effort to expel the Germans from Kaoko, but were defeated in March 1898 (Rizzo, 2009). By 1901, German troops were permanently stationed in Sesfontein (*Deutsche Kolonialzeitung*, 1901).

The timing of the epidemic in 1897 is, thus, of critical significance—given the 1907 Police Zone boundary eventually followed the cordon fence, settlements in northern Namibia such as Grootfontein, Outjo, and Fransfontein where the Germans had consolidated control in the years leading up to the epidemic were incorporated into the German Police Zone, whereas other nearby settlements where the Germans only established control after 1897 such as Sesfontein were not. If the rinderpest epidemic had occurred in 1895 or 1902, different boundaries defining the extent of the Police Zone would have been drawn. Hence, although the fact that the Germans initially colonized central and southern Namibia rather than northern Namibia is indeed endogenous to factors such as strength of precolonial state institutions that are likely to affect contemporary political attitudes, the fact that the border defining the limits of direct German control was drawn around areas of northern Namibia such as Grootfontein rather than Sesfontein was, we argue, driven by the idiosyncratic timing of the rinderpest epidemic in 1897. Thus, we argue for the weaker identifying condition that the geographic extent of direct colonial rule in a small area of northern Namibia can be considered exogenous to precolonial factors likely to affect contemporary political attitudes.¹¹

After the South Africans took control of South West Africa during World War 1, the Police Zone boundary took on new forms and functions. Online Appendix, section 9.2, provides more disaggregated detail on the small changes made to the Police Line between 1907 and 1964. Initially fearing that the remaining German soldiers could ally with indigenous forces in the northern areas beyond the Red Line, the South Africans issued a new Martial Law Regulation in October 1916 restricting all Europeans to the area within the Police Zone as mapped by the Germans (Administrator of South West Africa 1916; Waters, 1918). After World War 1, movement between the two zones continued to be restricted due to the desire of authorities to prevent the spread of veterinary diseases (Moser, 2007).

Following a mandate from the League of Nations to administer South West Africa, the South Africans began, in the 1920s, to try to establish more regular administrative structures through which to indirectly rule the areas north of the Police Zone. Yet, the often amorphous indigenous political structures did not provide the rigid tribal ordering colonial officials had been conditioned to expect, and initial attempts to try and co-opt the paramount chief of areas such as northern Kaoko were met with puzzling failure; no clear

leader could be found (Bennett, 1998). In response, in 1927, the South Africans formally appropriated the power to create “tribes” and set about appointing persons as headman of territories. As Friedman (2005) points out, the bases of appointment to traditional leadership were often contradictory—the government recognized particular persons as traditional leaders

because they were looked upon as such by the people, that is, because their authority was derived “traditionally.” On the other hand, many leaders were often officially warned, for example, that unless they carry out instructions issued to them by officials of the Administration and do everything possible to assist these officials in future, the Administration . . . will be forced to consider whether they should not be deprived of their status. (Friedman, 2005, pp. 29-30)

Provided they complied with the colonial administration, appointed traditional leaders were afforded substantial political authority over subject populations (Keulder, 2000).

The spatial division of South West Africa was further formalized by colonial authorities after the Odendaal Commission of 1964, which created a number of racially demarcated “Homelands” in northern Namibia to be administered by officially recognized chiefs. The consequent construction of a visible physical border between the two parts of the country meant that the internal border became more tightly controlled than ever (Odendaal, 1964). Whereas the north was ruled by traditional authorities and customary pastoral and agricultural practices continued, the indigenous population in the south was employed by the German and later South African colonizers through a system of contract labor on White-owned farms and factories (Moorsom, 1977).¹² Dieckmann (2007) shows that, immediately south of the Red Line, the Heikom initially adapted to the new wage labor system by combining work on European farms with hunting and gathering in unsurveyed land. However, as the amount of farmland occupied by Europeans increased, wage labor became the sole means of subsistence for the Heikom and traditional governance systems became increasingly redundant. Figure S3 in the online appendix section 9.3 documents the progressive extension of European farmland over the first half of the 20th century and, as such, the progressive destruction of traditional modes of governance and subsistence in southern Namibia.

Over the period of South African administration, South West Africa was treated as an effective “fifth province” of South Africa (Jansen, 1995). As such, after the introduction of apartheid in South Africa in the late 1940s, the rule of law and electoral suffrage only extended to the White population. White South West Africans participated in South African elections, lived in

strictly segregated neighborhoods, and monopolized land and political office in directly ruled areas (Werner, 2007; Wolputte, 2007). Hence, although indigenous populations in southern Namibia certainly had greater contact with the colonial state including European farmers, police, and district officials, it would not be accurate to say that indigenous persons had greater access to the colonial state in southern South West Africa. Under both German and South African administration, the colonial state remained closed to all but White South West Africans in directly ruled areas (Aitken, 2007; Melber, 2015).

The 1960s-1980s were marked by increasingly violent contestation over the status of South African rule and apartheid in Namibia. The South West African People's Organization (SWAPO), a liberation party established in 1960 on a platform to end apartheid and secure Namibian independence, quickly emerged as the leading challenger to South African rule (Melber, 2015). SWAPO successfully organized paralyzing strikes in the 1970s and conducted a guerilla war with South African forces (Katjavivi, 1988). SWAPO's leading role in the resistance was crystallized by the United Nations' declaration in 1966 that SWAPO was the sole legitimate representative of the Namibian people (Udogu, 2011). Following a military stalemate between South African- and Cuban-led forces in the Angolan Civil War, the withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola was linked to Namibian independence in peace talks in New York in 1988 (Herbstein & Evenson, 1989). The first fully free and fair UN-monitored elections in Namibia were then held in 1989 and Namibia transitioned to independence (Udogu, 2011).

Since independence in 1990, Namibia has remained a successful, multi-party democracy and it has been governed continuously at the national level by SWAPO. Initially securing a small majority in the 1989 Parliamentary elections, SWAPO has built a broad base of political support by governing effectively and regularly emphasizing its anticolonial credentials (Elischer, 2013). Namibia has been consistently rated as "Free" by Freedom House, has maintained a Polity score above 6 throughout the postindependence period, and is generally regarded as one of sub-Saharan Africa's success stories (Radelet, 2010). Consistent with the development of democracy in other directly ruled colonies (Lange, 2009), therefore, democracy in Namibia was consolidated via early postindependence reforms that expanded racial suffrage and that institutionalized elections as the means of resolving social conflict at all levels of government.

Also reflecting the experience of other colonies, a within-country "reversal of fortune" (Acemoglu et al., 2002) occurred in Namibia, whereby extractive¹³ colonial institutions were set up in the relatively densely populated areas of northern Namibia, which were the poorest in the country at the time

of independence in 1990 (Namibia Statistics Agency, 2011). The Namibia government under SWAPO invested heavily in the northern regions after independence to support the convergence of living standards in the two parts of the country, and differences in poverty rates have gradually declined.

Electoral institutions across the country have been homogenized but the local institutional influence of traditional leaders in the north persists to the present day. Namibians living in the former Police Zone have only experienced a democratic governance system since independence at all levels of government. The existence of elected regional and local governments is enshrined in the Namibian Constitution.¹⁴ In an explicit rejection of the ethnic spatial organization of Namibia during the colonial era, local and regional councils are mandated to cross former ethnic homelands.¹⁵ Although Namibia is highly centralized fiscally, local elected councilors, nevertheless, exercise important oversight over the provision of local education, housing, and utilities.¹⁶

However, in formerly indirectly ruled areas, traditional authorities have proven successful in carving out a sphere of nonelectoral political influence (Düsing, 2002). The legacy of strong, decentralized traditional leadership in northern Namibia posed a challenge to the capacity of the newly independent Namibian state, which was largely unable to penetrate society in northern Namibia without the cooperation of traditional authorities.¹⁷ The administration of communal land proved a locus of conflict given that the new constitution vested all communal land in the state¹⁸ but communal land administration was formerly the sole prerogative of traditional authorities (Devereux, 1996). In a compromise move in 2002, SWAPO instituted a system of Land Boards to regulate communal land resources in northern Namibia staffed by both traditional leader and elected representatives.¹⁹ Similarly, to formalize the role of traditional authorities, a system of traditional leader registration has been progressively rolled out since the 1990s, whereby traditional leaders have been newly able to apply for recognition by the central government (Friedman, 2005).²⁰ SWAPO has tried to insulate the electoral system and, arguably, its own power from challenge by traditional leaders by restricting recognized traditional leaders from running for elected office.²¹

As such, governance in formerly indirectly ruled areas of Namibia since 1990 has been largely characterized by the increasing institutionalization of cogovernance between elected officials and hereditary traditional leaders. In directly ruled southern Namibia, however, traditional leaders play only a symbolically important role. For example, in a well-known case, an offender given a punishment of eight lashes by a traditional leader in southern Namibia in the 1990s successfully had his traditional leader charged by police. Since then, customary courts in southern Namibia have fallen into disuse (Keulder,

2000). Although only traditional leaders in northern Namibia still play important governance roles and have their jurisdiction recognized by the state,²² traditional leaders across both southern and northern Namibia still possess a great deal of informal influence, symbolic legitimacy, and support.

Data and Empirical Strategy

We identify the effect of indirect colonial rule on democratic attitudes and behavior by using the location of the Police Zone boundary in Namibia and applying a spatial RDD analogous to Dell (2010). The northern border between directly and indirectly ruled territories delimited by the German Police Zone followed the spatial extent of direct German control at the end of the rinderpest epidemic of 1897 (Directorate of Veterinary Services 1996; Miescher, 2012). We argue that the border zone where the progressive extension of direct German rule was frozen can be considered plausibly exogenous to precolonial political attitudes.²³ To further establish the exogeneity of the border, we will demonstrate that there is no discontinuous jump in pretreatment geographic characteristics along the Police Zone boundary used in our analysis including elevation, grass cover, rainfall, and livestock density.

We use the original map published by the Odendaal Commission in 1964 as digitized by Mendelsohn (2002) to identify regions directly controlled by the colonizers and those that were governed by traditional authorities during colonial times. To minimize potential endogeneity, we only focus on the northern part of the former Police Zone boundary focused around Etosha National Park as this part still largely represented the original boundary drawn in 1907 by the Germans when the Odendaal Commission of 1964 formalized the border. Other parts of the border experienced significant changes over time. The online appendix section 9.2 provides more historical detail on these changes made to the Police Line between 1907 and 1964 to represent the lack of major changes to the northern border.

We then created a 100-km buffer zone around the plausibly exogenous boundary between these two zones (see Figure 2) and only focus on observations within this buffer to ensure comparability.²⁴ We chose a 100-km buffer because individuals living in this zone live in similar geographic, political, and cultural environments. There is a trade-off between comparing individuals living in very similar environments (as close to each other as possible) and still having enough observations for our analysis. Based on power calculations, we then decided to use a 100-km buffer, which provides us with enough observations to identify our effects of interests. Although the 100 km is our preferred buffer size, we also include estimations using observations from the

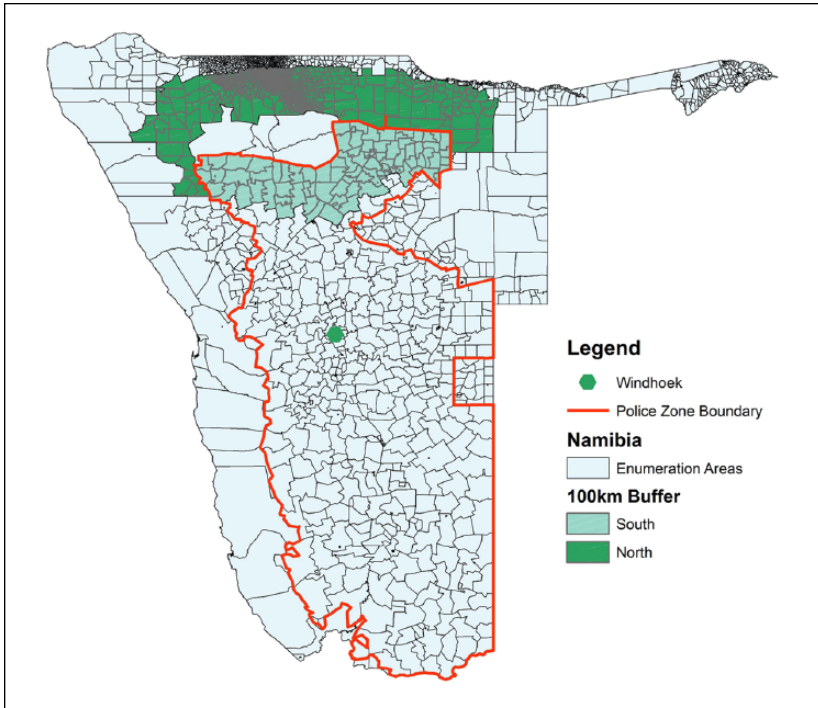


Figure 2. Enumeration areas and buffer.

entire country and observations from a 50-km buffer zone as robustness checks.

The outcome variables of interest used in this article stem from the Afrobarometer (1999, 2003, 2005, 2008) survey. Between 1999 and 2008, four survey rounds were conducted, which covered questions about attitudes toward politics, the economy, and civil society. Afrobarometer uses random sampling methods, which are conducted with probability proportionate to population size (i.e., more densely populated areas have a higher probability of being sampled). Thus, “the sample design is a clustered, stratified, multi-stage, area probability sample” (Afrobarometer.org).

The relevant question about “demand for democracy” (Bratton, 2004; de Aquino, 2015), our main outcome variable, asks about support for democracy.²⁵ The main behavioral outcome that we focus on is voter turnout. We measure individual turnout using a question asking whether the individual voted in the most recent national election.²⁶ Finally, to test our hypothesis that

different attitudes toward authority and contact with traditional leaders are important mechanisms for the development of different attitudes toward democracy, we analyze responses to (a) a question about the frequency of contact with traditional leaders and (b) a question which asked whether authorities should be respected or whether one should be allowed to question authority in general (see exact wording of the questions in the online appendix).

The geographical location of the surveyed individuals is identified by enumeration area (EA).²⁷ The Namibian Statistics Agency divided Namibia into 4,080 enumeration areas for the 2001 census (see Figure 2), each comprises between 80 and 100 households. Therefore, there are more enumeration areas in more densely populated regions. The number of enumeration areas within the 100-km buffer zone is 1,247. Of these 1,247 enumeration areas, the Afrobarometer survey covered between 42 and 47 in each round. This constitutes a random sample of all enumeration areas in the buffer zone. There are more enumeration areas in the northern part of the buffer as this part is more densely populated than the southern part. We observe eight individuals per enumeration area in each survey round. This gives us a maximum number of 1,426 observations for the 100-km buffer. This number of observations, however, differs between specifications as not each question is asked in every survey round and we eliminated observations where the respondent answered “don’t know.”

Precolonial political structures and attitudes were ethnic group specific. The Police Zone border cuts through the precolonial territories of five different ethnic groups (Ovambo, Kavango, Nama/Damara, Herero, and Caprivi; see Figure S1 in the online appendix). The Murdock (1967) data suggest that precolonial modes of subsistence differed between these communities, which may in turn have affected the political structures and thereby political attitudes. We, therefore, include ethnic fixed effects in all specifications so as only to compare individuals from the same ethnic group, and thereby ensure that pretreatment attitudes did not differ between the directly and indirectly ruled areas. We use self-reported ethno-linguistic data from Afrobarometer and all ethnic groups are represented in both parts of the buffer.

Survey round fixed effects are included to account for the different timings of the Afrobarometer survey rounds. The border also cuts through seven (out of 14) administrative regions²⁸ so that we can compare individuals who face the same regional institutions with each other by including region fixed effects. This is important to account for differential institutional performance, which is an important predictor of support for democracy (Bratton et al., 2005). Although Namibia is highly centralized politically, elected regional councilors, nevertheless, play an important role in lobbying for and allocating central funds.

There are no significant differences in terms of income, education, gender, and age between individuals in the northern and southern parts of the buffer zone (see discussion in section “Individual Characteristics”).²⁹ We, nevertheless, add individual-level controls to some specifications as they are also important determinants of political attitudes (Bratton et al., 2005) and help us to identify the effects more precisely. We measure individual income through a lived poverty index based on Mattes, Bratton, and Davids (2003) by taking the principal component of responses to questions about access to food, water, health care, fuel, and cash income. We also constructed measures of education (highest level attained), age (in years), and gender (binary) using responses from Afrobarometer (see exact wording of the questions in the online appendix). For summary statistics, see Table S2 in the online appendix.

In our preferred specification, we include distance to Windhoek as a control variable because it is likely to capture variation in observables and unobservables that affect political attitudes such as trade or information penetration. It, thus, ensures that we are not only picking up a linear trend in terms of proximity to the capital.

For robustness and to help rule out alternative mechanisms, we also include specifications with the following controls: subjective evaluation of the performance of local government councilors, livestock suitability, and an urban/rural dummy. Bratton et al. (2005) found that the most important predictor of support for democracy in sub-Saharan Africa is the performance of the government. We, therefore, control for the performance of local governance councils measured with the respective Afrobarometer question (see the online appendix) to ensure that our estimated effects are not driven by differences in institutional quality at the local level. We include livestock suitability³⁰ as further proxy for economic well-being in each of the predominantly rural communities, which rely on cattle rearing as an important source of income (Mendelsohn, 2002). Moreover, it helps to eliminate concerns about precolonial differences in pastoral and agricultural suitability, which may in turn have affected the political processes of different communities within the same ethnic group.

We are aware that some of these control variables may be “bad controls,” and thereby lead to posttreatment control bias (Angrist & Pischke, 2008). The perceived performance of local government officials, urbanization, as well as income are potential outcomes of our treatment. We, therefore, also present specifications without these controls.

Our baseline specification includes ethnicity and survey round fixed effects because these are both crucial requirements for our identification strategy. These specifications are spatial RDDs, as discussed in Dell (2010),

with distance to Windhoek as running variable because distance to the capital is the politically and economically most relevant geographic dimension in our context. In addition, we present specifications that control flexibly for geographic location.³¹

The baseline RDD estimation equation is, thus,

$$Y_{idres} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Indirectrule}_d + \mathbf{X}'_{idres} \Gamma + \eta_e + \mu_s + \psi_r + \epsilon_{idres},$$

where Y expresses demand for democracy of individual i , living in enumeration area d in region r , belonging to the ethnic group e , being surveyed in round s . *Indirectrule* is a dummy variable indicating whether the individual lives in an enumeration area that belonged to the indirectly or the directly ruled part of Namibia. \mathbf{X} is a set of control variables, which includes individual-level characteristics such as age, gender, and dummies for income and education³² as well as distance to Windhoek. η_e are ethnicity fixed effects, μ_s are survey round fixed effects, and ψ_r are region fixed effects.

We identify the effect of indirect colonial rule on democratic attitudes by ordinary least squares (OLS) estimation and also show specifications using (ordered) probit estimations because our outcome variables are discrete.

As discussed above, the identifying assumption for this RD identification strategy is that all other unobservable factors are continuously related to distance to the northern Red Line border. This assumption implies a testable implication that observable pretreatment covariates will have a continuous distribution across the northern Red Line. Ideally, we could show that pre-1897 political and economic characteristics do not change discontinuously at the Police Zone boundary. However, no such data exist. We can demonstrate that the border cuts through precolonial political territories (see Figure S1). Moreover, as geographic variables are commonly seen as important determinants of precolonial development, we collected data on a number of geographic variables to substantiate the continuity of “pretreatment” variables across the northern Red Line. We compiled EA-level data on elevation, grass cover, savannah cover, carrying capacity, and livestock density from Mendelsohn (2002).

Table 1 demonstrates that these geographic covariates do not differ discontinuously at the northern Red Line border.³³ This test of continuity of observed covariates is evidence in favor of the identifying assumption of continuity of unobservables and, therefore, that the RDD is a valid one (Lee & Lemieux, 2010).

Results

Living in the formerly indirectly ruled part of Namibia decreases the probability that people think that a democratic government is preferable to any

Table 1. Indirect Rule and Geographic Characteristics.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Variables	Savanna	Grass cover	Average rainfall	Elevation	Carrying capacity	Livestock density
Indirect colonial rule	0.131 (0.121)	12.27 (11.45)	0.523 (1.694)	4.853 (20.36)	-0.377 (0.307)	15.00 (11.03)
Distance Windhoek	-0.0343 (0.0330)	-5.417 (7.095)	0.115 (0.847)	3.145 (11.14)	0.0106 (0.179)	26.01*** (8.301)
Observations	1,418	1,410	1,418	1,418	1,418	1,418
R ²	.105	.302	.786	.369	.803	.539
Region FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mean of DV	0.99	54.97	41.17	10.58	4.21	75.21

Results from OLS regressions including regional fixed effects and an urban/rural dummy. The sample consists of observations from the 100-km buffer zone. Standard errors (clustered by enumeration area) in parentheses. FE = fixed effects; DV = dependent variable; OLS = ordinary least squares.

* $p < .1$. ** $p < .05$. *** $p < .01$.

other type of government. Figure 3 demonstrates the discontinuous drop in support for democracy at the Police Zone border.³⁴ The plot confirms that attitudes toward democracy discretely change at the internal border dividing formerly directly and indirectly ruled areas of Namibia.

Columns 1 and 4 in Table 2 present raw comparisons of political attitudes and behavior between indirectly and directly ruled areas. These specifications include only ethnicity, region, and survey round fixed effects, which are minimally required to draw causal inference in our context. Columns 2 and 5 present our preferred RDD specification including also individual-level controls³⁵ and distance to Windhoek as running variable. Columns 3 and 6 show that the effects are also statistically significant when applying a (ordered) probit model because the dependent variables are discrete.

The magnitude of the effect on democratic attitudes is in the range of a fourth of a standard deviation of the dependent variable (i.e., living in the formerly indirectly ruled areas decreases support for democracy by 0.2 on a scale from 1 to 3). The coefficient decreases slightly when adding distance to Windhoek and individual-level controls.

Moreover, people in the indirectly ruled part of the buffer report that they vote significantly less (15–20 percentage points) than people living in the directly ruled part. This corresponds to around a third of the standard deviation of the dependent variable. This indicates that weaker democratic attitudes are associated with less reported voting—the essential political act in a democracy—and, thus, that indirect colonial rule indeed presents a block to

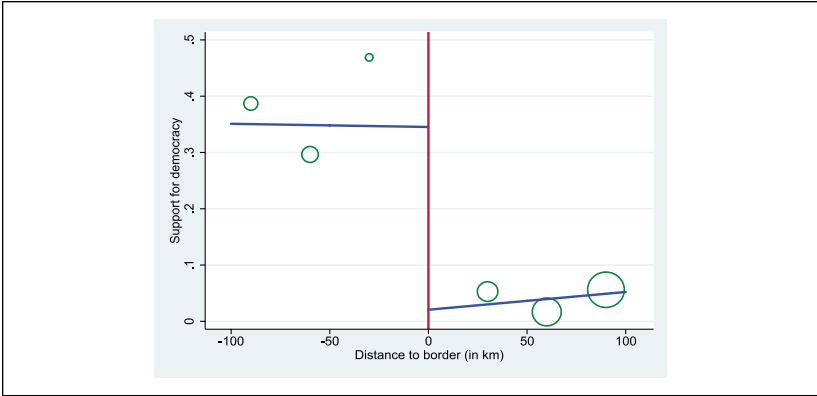


Figure 3. A local linear regression discontinuity plot representing how support for democracy differs according to distance from the Red Line border, obtained from a multivariate regression model with a vector of binary indicator variables identifying respondent ethnicity, survey round, and region. Circle size corresponds to the number of respondents in each bin.

democratic consolidation both in an attitudinal and behavioral sense. These results provide confirmatory evidence for Hypotheses 1 and 2: People living in formerly indirectly ruled areas indeed support democracy less as a system of government and turnout less at elections.

Table 3 presents evidence on potential mechanisms linking indirect colonial rule and contemporary political attitudes as outlined in the “Theory” section. We theorized that contact to traditional authorities is an important mechanism for persistence in the effects of indirect colonial rule on contemporary democratic consolidation in sub-Saharan Africa. Our results (Table 3, columns 1-3) confirm Hypothesis 3 as contact to traditional leaders increases by around 0.4 points (on a scale of 0-3) if an individual lives in an indirectly ruled area of Namibia rather than in a directly ruled area. We also theorized that living under a hierarchical local governance system in indirectly ruled areas has socialized individuals into having greater respect for authority. The results in columns 4, 5, and 6 provide suggestive evidence in favor of Hypothesis 4 as the evidence indicates that people in the north do tend to respect authorities more.³⁶ We discuss further empirical evidence against other potential causal mechanisms in section “Discussion of Other Potential Mechanisms.”

Alternative RD Polynomials

This section shows that the effect of indirect colonial rule on contemporary political attitudes holds when controlling for the geographic location of the

Table 2. Effect of Indirect Rule on Support for Democracy and Voting.

Variables	(1)		(2)		(3)		(4)		(5)		(6)	
	Support democracy	OLS	Support democracy	OLS	Support democracy	O Probit	Voting	OLS	Voting	OLS	Voting	Probit
Indirect colonial rule	-0.262*** (0.0950)		-0.203* (0.119)		-0.309* (0.179)		-0.211*** (0.0483)		-0.162* (0.0880)		-0.549** (0.310)	
Distance Windhoek			-0.0346 (0.0752)		-0.0399 (0.113)				-0.0373 (0.0565)		-0.0904 (0.212)	
Observations	1,347		1,322		1,322		734		718		716	
R ²	.029		.051				.059		.291			
Ethnicity FE	✓		✓		✓		✓		✓		✓	
Survey round FE	✓		✓		✓		✓		✓		✓	
Region FE	✓		✓		✓		✓		✓		✓	
Individual-level controls	x		✓		✓		x		✓		✓	
Number of clusters	165		165		165		91		91		91	
Mean of DV	2.399		2.399		2.399		0.722		0.721		0.721	

Results from OLS and (ordered) probit regressions. Individual-level control variables are age, gender, education dummies, and poverty index dummies. The sample consists of observations from the 100-km buffer zone. Standard errors (clustered by enumeration area) in parentheses. OLS = ordinary least squares; FE = fixed effects; DV = dependent variable.

* $p < .1$. ** $p < .05$. *** $p < .01$.

Table 3. Effect of Indirect Rule on Contact With Traditional Leaders and Respect for Authority.

Variables	(1)		(2)		(3)		(4)		(5)		(6)	
	Contact TL	OLS	Contact TL	OLS	Contact TL	O Probit	Respect authority	OLS	Respect authority	OLS	Respect authority	O Probit
Indirect colonial rule	0.388** (0.170)		0.417* (0.244)		0.734* (0.405)		0.269** (0.115)		0.268* (0.161)		0.322* (0.186)	
Distance Windhoek			-0.0240 (0.141)		-0.0360 (0.212)				-0.00524 (0.0967)		-0.0169 (0.109)	
Observations	1,413		1,387		1,387		1,361		1,335		1,335	
R ²	.150		.185				.133		.148			
Ethnicity FE	✓		✓		✓		✓		✓		✓	
Survey round FE	✓		✓		✓		✓		✓		✓	
Region FE	✓		✓		✓		✓		✓		✓	
Individual-level controls	x		✓		✓		x		✓		✓	
Number of clusters	165		165		165		165		165		165	
Mean of DV	0.696		0.702		0.702		2.431		2.432		2.432	

Results from OLS and (ordered) probit regressions. Individual-level control variables are age, gender, education dummies, and poverty index dummies. Columns 4 to 6 additionally include contact with traditional leaders as control variable. The sample consists of observations from the 100-km buffer zone. Standard errors (clustered by enumeration area) in parentheses. TL = traditional leaders; OLS = ordinary least squares; FE = fixed effects; DV = dependent variable.

*p < .1. **p < .05. ***p < .01.

individuals in a flexible manner. We first control for a local linear polynomial in longitude and latitude as suggested by Gelman and Imbens (2014), which allows us to take the multidimensionality of the discontinuity into account (Dell, 2010). We also present specifications with a one-dimensional running variable (distance to Windhoek as in the baseline and distance to the Police Zone boundary³⁷). To control for these one-dimensional measures more flexibly, we include second-order polynomials.

Table 4 shows that the negative effect of indirect colonial rule on turnout and support for democracy is largely robust across different spatial regression discontinuity specifications. The positive effect of indirect colonial rule on contact to traditional leaders and respect for authorities is similarly robust across different spatial regression discontinuity specifications (see Table S4 in the online appendix). Hence, the evidence is largely supportive of Hypotheses 1 to 4.

Robustness Checks

To test the robustness of our results to the inclusion of more controls, we also included performance of the government, livestock suitability, and an urban/rural dummy as control variables because these factors may bias the estimated coefficients (see Tables 5 and 6). The size of the effect of indirect colonial rule on support for democracy is -0.29 when adding all controls at the same time (column 5). That corresponds to around a third of a standard deviation of the dependent variable. It is, however, larger than the baseline effect (column 1), which may be caused by bad controls, which are outcomes of the treatment themselves. Nevertheless, the results confirm that there is still a significant negative effect of indirect rule on support for democracy even when taking potential confounders into account. The effect of indirect rule on voting also remains statistically significant negative throughout all but one specifications (Table 6). The effect size is also substantially larger when compared with the baseline and should similarly be interpreted with caution.

The results for support for democracy also hold when not only focusing on observations in the 100-km buffer zone but also using a sample from the entire country and also when using a 50-km buffer zone (see online appendix Tables S5 and S6). The results for voting are not robust to changing the buffer size. The sample size reduces to 390 when restricting the sample to the 50-km buffer and, therefore, there is likely not enough variation left to estimate the effect on voting precisely given that we include a number of fixed effects and control variables.

In addition, we created placebo buffers by shifting the location of the former Police Zone boundary 1° latitude north and south, respectively. When

Table 4. Different Specifications of RD Polynomial.

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	Support democracy	Support democracy	Support democracy	Voting	Voting	Voting
Indirect colonial rule	-0.208* (0.111)	-0.246* (0.127)	-0.259*** (0.0956)	-0.192*** (0.0952)	-0.127 (0.0815)	-0.216*** (0.0496)
Observations	1,347	1,347	1,347	734	734	734
R ²	.022	.029	.029	.052	.063	.060
Latitude/longitude	✓	x	x	✓	x	x
Distance Windhoek quadratic	x	✓	x	x	✓	x
Distance boundary quadratic	x	x	✓	x	x	✓
Ethnicity FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Survey round FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Region FE	x	✓	✓	x	✓	✓
Number of clusters	165	165	165	91	91	91
Mean of DV	2.399	2.399	2.399	0.722	0.722	0.722

Results from OLS regressions. Columns 1 and 4 include local linear polynomials in longitude and latitude. Columns 2 and 5 include a quadratic polynomial in distance to Windhoek. Columns 3 and 6 include a quadratic polynomial in distance to the boundary. The sample consists of observations from the 100-km buffer zone. Standard errors (clustered by enumeration area) in parentheses. RD = regression discontinuity; FE = fixed effects; DV = dependent variable; OLS = ordinary least squares.
 *p < .1. **p < .05. ***p < .01.

Table 5. Effect of Indirect Rule on Support for Democracy.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Variables	Support democracy	Support democracy	Support democracy	Support democracy	Support democracy
Indirect colonial rule	-0.203* (0.119)	-0.310** (0.121)	-0.234** (0.118)	-0.215* (0.121)	-0.294** (0.128)
Distance Windhoek	-0.0346 (0.0752)	-0.00746 (0.0787)	-0.0302 (0.0767)	-0.0326 (0.0767)	-0.00593 (0.0788)
Performance government		0.00192 (0.0289)			-0.00661 (0.0284)
Carrying capacity			-0.0103 (0.0357)		-0.0357 (0.0422)
Urban				-0.0205 (0.0713)	-0.0491 (0.0874)
Observations	1,322	1,291	1,347	1,347	1,266
R ²	.051	.028	.029	.029	.052
Ethnicity FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Survey round FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Region FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Individual-level controls	✓	x	x	x	✓
Number of clusters	165	165	165	165	165
Mean of DV	2.399	2.398	2.399	2.399	2.397

Results from OLS regressions. Individual-level control variables are age, gender, education dummies, and poverty index dummies. The sample consists of observations from the 100-km buffer zone. Standard errors (clustered by enumeration area) in parentheses. FE = fixed effects; DV = dependent variable; OLS = ordinary least squares.

* $p < .1$. ** $p < .05$. *** $p < .01$.

running these regressions, we do not find any significant effects on support for democracy or voting (Tables S7 and S8), which confirms that our results are unique to this historical meaningful Police Zone boundary.

As an additional robustness check, we clustered the standard errors on a constituency level, which reduces the number of clusters from 165 to 44 (see online appendix Table S9). The main results still hold.

Discussion of Other Potential Mechanisms

It is difficult to move from cleanly identifying the effect of compound “treatments” such as indirect colonial rule to pinpointing the precise causal

Table 6. Effect of Indirect Colonial Rule on Voting.

Variables	(1) Voting	(2) Voting	(3) Voting	(4) Voting	(5) Voting
Indirect colonial rule	-0.162* (0.0880)	-0.201** (0.0808)	-0.148 (0.0903)	-0.169* (0.0916)	-0.217** (0.100)
Distance to Windhoek (decimal degrees)	-0.0373 (0.0565)	-0.00726 (0.0519)	-0.0384 (0.0575)	-0.0333 (0.0572)	-0.00465 (0.0566)
Performance government		0.0324 (0.0251)			0.0207 (0.0231)
Carrying capacity			0.0105 (0.0231)		0.00227 (0.0325)
Urban				0.00622 (0.0455)	0.0304 (0.0604)
Observations	718	698	734	734	682
R ²	.291	.059	.060	.060	.291
Ethnicity FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Survey round FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Region FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Individual-level controls	✓	x	x	x	✓
Number of clusters	91	91	91	91	91
Mean of DV	0.721	0.723	0.722	0.722	0.723

Results from OLS regressions. Individual-level control variables are age, gender, education dummies and poverty index dummies. The sample consists of observations from the 100-km buffer zone. Standard errors (clustered by enumeration area) in parentheses. FE = fixed effects; DV = dependent variable; OLS = ordinary least squares.

*p < .1. **p < .05. ***p < .01.

mechanisms at work. Many institutional, social, and economic factors differed between indirectly and directly ruled areas of Namibia during the colonial era. To substantiate the institution of traditional leadership as a likely causal mechanism connecting colonial-era governance structures and postcolonial political attitudes, we have shown that greater contact to traditional leaders and greater respect for authority is still persistent in indirectly ruled areas of Namibia.

In this section, we demonstrate that other potentially important causal mechanisms—including economic development, education, political socialization, sorting, contemporary institutional quality—do not differ across formerly indirectly and directly ruled areas of northern Namibia. Thus, this section demonstrates that there is an absence of evidence in favor of other potentially important causal mechanisms connecting the form of colonial rule and contemporary democratic attitudes in northern Namibia.

Table 7. Balancing Table for the Buffer Zone: Individual Characteristics.

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Poverty index	Education	Gender	Age
Indirect colonial rule	-0.226 (0.310)	-0.139 (0.394)	0.0392 (0.0444)	3.441 (2.690)
Distance Windhoek	0.0110 (0.168)	-0.0457 (0.215)	-0.00166 (0.0217)	-0.479 (1.632)
Observations	1,404	1,406	1,418	1,418
Ethnicity FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
Survey round FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
Region FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mean of DV	2.55	3.81	0.50	35.80

Results from OLS regressions controlling for distance to Windhoek and an urban/rural dummy. The sample consists of observations from the 100-km buffer zone. Standard errors (clustered by enumeration area) in parentheses. FE = fixed effects; DV = dependent variable; OLS = ordinary least squares.

* $p < .1$. ** $p < .05$. *** $p < .01$.

Individual Characteristics

Income, education, age, and gender are important individual characteristics that determine political attitudes. None of these factors differs significantly between indirectly and directly ruled areas (see Table 7), suggesting that there is an absence of evidence that demography is an important causal mechanism linking the form of colonial rule and contemporary political attitudes.³⁸

Economic Conditions

Table 8 provides further evidence that economic conditions do not differ significantly today across directly and indirectly ruled areas of our buffer zone. Whether measuring economic development through nighttime lights, infrastructure development, or homelessness,³⁹ levels of economic development do not also differ significantly between indirectly and directly ruled areas of our buffer zone. There is, thus, an absence of evidence that contemporary differences in terms of political attitudes are driven by different levels of economic development.

In any case, as we have demonstrated in our main results, controlling flexibly for respondent poverty, education, age, and gender does not alter the robust relationship between the form of colonial rule and contemporary political attitudes and, in fact, tends to strengthen the magnitude of the estimated effects.

Table 8. Balancing Table for the Buffer Zone: EA Characteristics.

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)
	Night lights	Bad infrastructure	Homeless
Indirect colonial rule	-2.034 (2.045)	0.217 (0.176)	-28.83 (25.49)
Distance to Windhoek	3.468** (1.528)	-0.0725 (0.102)	8.652 (7.179)
Observations	1,418	1,418	1,418
Region FE	✓	✓	✓
Mean of DV	6.98	0.36	4.15

Results from OLS regressions controlling for distance to Windhoek and an urban/rural dummy. The sample consists of observations from the 100-km buffer zone. Standard errors (clustered by EA) in parentheses. EA = enumeration area; FE = fixed effects; DV = dependent variable; OLS = ordinary least squares.

*p < .1. **p < .05. ***p < .01.

Political Socialization

Political socialization over one’s lifetime is of course an important determinant of future political attitudes, and different colonial experiences in the north and south may have led to different attitudes toward democracy. Importantly, however, the indigenous population of Namibia across the directly and indirectly ruled areas of Namibia had the same (absence of) experience with electoral democracy during the colonial era. In South West Africa, the “rule of law” and electoral democracy only applied to the White population. Different lengths of participation in democracy, thus, does not represent a confounder between the north and the south.

It could be, however, that the introduction of democracy was seen as a greater “liberation” in the south relative to the north. For example, it may have been that differences in levels of repression during the liberation struggle of the 1970s and 1980s may have led to a greater demand for democracy in the south. To test this argument, we see whether the effect of indirect colonial rule differs for individuals who experienced liberation and those who did not. Table S10 in the online appendix demonstrates that there is no interaction effect between age and living in the formerly indirectly ruled areas. That means that the effect of living in the north on democratic attitudes does not differ between young and old people. These results also hold when using a binary age measure⁴⁰ (see Table S10 in online appendix). Given the *persistent* effects of indirect rule on contemporary political attitudes of both young and old Namibians, there is an absence of evidence that

our effects are being driven by historical factors such as memories of the liberation struggle.

Sorting

During German and South African rule, permanent migration between the two parts of the country was prohibited and, thus, colonial-era sorting is not a confounder. We cannot entirely rule out the effect of selective sorting after independence in 1990; however, we believe this is unlikely to act as an important confounder. In northern areas of Namibia, land is communally held and community ties to are consequently extremely close. Moreover, migration statistics from the Namibian Statistics Agency suggest that permanent migration from the north, where it has occurred, has been economic in nature as the young have moved to the larger cities of the south such as Windhoek or Walvis Bay far south of our study area to look for jobs. To control for the factors that might affect individual propensity to migrate, we control for age and education in our specifications—neither of which changes the results. Hence, though it cannot be completely ruled out, it is unlikely that selective sorting explains our results (Melber, 1996; Moorsom, 1977).

Contemporary Institutions

Other than the greater importance of traditional leaders in northern Namibia, contemporary institutions do not differ between the northern and southern areas in our sample. To ensure that our effects are not different by differing performance of local government officials as theorized by Williams (2010) and Logan (2013), we have previously included controls for the individual evaluation of the performance of local government councils. Moreover, Namibia is extremely centralized politically because, after independence, the Namibian government made a great effort to homogenize governance between the two parts of the country (Düsing, 2002; Keulder, 2000; Melber, 2015; Werner & Odendaal, 2010). Finally, we can use Afrobarometer data to show that people living north and south of the border do not systematically evaluate the effectiveness of government institutions differently in a way that would bias toward our results (see Table 9).

Individuals on both sides of the former Red Line border think that governmental officials are similarly receptive. The coefficient on fear of unjust arrest, which is an indicator for despotism of officials, also does not differ significantly. Trust in courts does not differ between the two parts. Trust in police is even significantly higher in the north, which would bias against finding a negative effect of indirect colonial rule on support for democracy.

Table 9. Balancing Table.

	(1)	(2)	(3)
	Direct rule	Indirect rule	Difference
Government officials listen	1.22 (1.06)	1.26 (1.08)	-0.048 (0.11)
Trust in police	1.78 (0.85)	1.91 (0.88)	-0.13* (0.070)
Trust in courts	1.83 (0.92)	1.91 (0.95)	-0.085 (0.067)
Fear of unjust arrest	3.93 (0.73)	3.83 (0.93)	0.097 (0.091)
SWAPO support	0.35 (0.48)	0.53 (0.50)	-0.18*** (0.034)
Observations	254	1,164	1,418

SWAPO = South West African People’s Organization.

Finally, support for the ruling party SWAPO is also higher in previously indirectly ruled areas than in directly ruled areas. That suggests that lower support for democracy in the north is not driven by frustration at the outcome of the electoral process.⁴¹

Moreover, we include fixed effects for the seven regions that the settlement boundary cuts through in our baseline specification. This ensures that we only compare individuals living close to each other on the same part of the boundary, who are governed by the same contemporary national and regional institutions.

External Validity

Although we have chosen to focus on Namibia to try to cleanly identify the effect of colonial rule on contemporary support for democracy, it is natural to question whether results stemming from a single country are generalizable. Theoretically, we believe that the “demand-side” mechanisms outlined in this article are generalizable because contemporary contact with traditional leaders is actually more frequent elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa than in Namibia and it has been suggested that the legitimacy of traditional leaders has undermined the consolidation of democracy elsewhere on the continent (Englebert, 2000; Mamdani, 1996; Ntsebeza, 2005).⁴²

Moreover, we show in online appendix section 9.9 that there is empirical evidence that the relationship between indirect colonial rule, contact to

traditional leaders, and lower support for democracy is generalizable across the continent. Pooling Afrobarometer responses from across countries and controlling for, standard demographic characteristics, and level of development, indirect colonial rule is negatively associated with individual support for democracy, turnout,⁴³ and positively associated with contact to traditional leaders. Although these results cannot be interpreted as causal, they are, nonetheless, suggestive that the documented within-country effects of indirect colonial rule in Namibia are generalizable to the rest of the continent.

Conclusion

The results presented in this article show that indirect colonial rule has persistent effects on contemporary political attitudes and behavior. We identified the effect of indirect rule by exploiting a unique natural experiment in Namibia. Due to the effects of an 1897 rinderpest epidemic, Namibia was divided into a southern region directly settled and ruled by colonial authorities and a northern region that was indirectly ruled through a system of appointed indigenous tribal elites, leading to exogenous variation in the form of colonial rule among members of the same ethnic group. Applying a spatial RDD, we found that individuals in indirectly ruled areas of Namibia are less likely to support democracy as a form of governance and participate in voting at elections.

Our evidence suggests that the mechanisms underlying this relationship are not demographic factors such as education or income but rather are institutional—specifically, the legacy of colonial governance institutions (Lange, 2009). Despite the low procedural inclusiveness of hereditary systems of traditional leadership in indirectly ruled areas of sub-Saharan Africa, traditional leaders are, nonetheless, usually seen as far more effective and trustworthy than elected leaders (Baldwin, 2015; Logan, 2008). We, therefore, theorize that the institution of traditional leadership in sub-Saharan Africa has acted as a parallel legitimate governance system that has socialized individuals in indirectly ruled areas to accept nonelectoral systems of government. This article, thereby, contributes to a long-running debate in comparative politics (Englebert, 2000; Logan, 2013; Mamdani, 1996; Williams, 2010)—our results suggest that the hereditary system of traditional leadership institutionalized by indirect colonial rule may indeed present a stumbling block to contemporary democratic consolidation in sub-Saharan Africa.

Our findings have potentially broad implications for our understanding of processes of democratization in the postcolonial context. Indirectly ruled countries are, on average, relatively autocratic today (Hariri, 2012; Lange, 2009). Our evidence suggests that a causal mechanism underlying

this important aggregate cross-national relationship is potentially cultural—Namibians in indirectly ruled areas are less likely to believe that democracy is the only legitimate form of government or participate in the electoral process. The relatively autocratic nature of indirectly ruled areas of the world today may, therefore, not only be due to a lack of “supply” of democracy from postindependence elites who successfully captured less inclusive political systems. Rather, it may also be due to weaker general “demand” for electoral democracy as a system of government in indirectly ruled areas.

Although our evidence suggests that indirect colonial rule plays an important role in shaping individual attitudes toward democracy, we do not wish to imply a mono-causal explanation for variance in contemporary political culture in sub-Saharan Africa. Colonization is not destiny—the legacy of indirect colonial rule, although important, can only explain part of the variance in Namibia’s contemporary political culture. Rather, we want to highlight the fact that the ongoing parallel existence of undemocratic local governance structures can partially undermine support for democracy even in the context of a functional, largely successful national democratic polity. This has potentially broad implications for democratization processes in other indirectly ruled sub-Saharan African countries, where systems of traditional leadership still play an important role in local governance, and national democracy is not as consolidated as in Namibia.

Moreover, the fact that the institutional legacies of indirect rule may weaken support for core democratic tenets in sub-Saharan Africa does not invalidate the extremely important and valuable governing roles that traditional authorities currently play in their communities. Indeed, we have argued that it is likely, in part, because nonelectoral mechanisms such as strong social ties have proven so effective in keeping traditional leaders accountable and responsive to the needs of their communities and, thus, more effective than elected officials (Baldwin, 2015) that support for electoral democracy as a system of government is weakened in areas with influential traditional leaders. Despite the presence of a trade-off between influential local traditional institutions and democratic consolidation, therefore, the policy mechanisms for improving overall quality of governance in sub-Saharan Africa in the future remain more unclear and is currently a fruitful area of research.⁴⁴

Ultimately, we hope that our findings documented in this article encourage further research about the competing legitimacy of different institutional configurations and the historical legacies that continue to shape political culture in both sub-Saharan Africa and the wider world.

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Notes

1. We do not mean to imply an endorsement of claims to traditional notions of legitimacy when using the term traditional leader. Rather, we follow Baldwin (2015) by defining traditional leaders with reference to contemporary customs, that is, as “rulers” who have power by virtue of their association with the customary mode of governing a place-based community” (p. 21).
2. See Michalopoulos and Papaioannou (2015) for an overview of the literature about the role of traditional leaders in Africa.
3. In using the term “undemocratic” to describe traditional leadership, we are only referring to its lack of procedural democracy and make no claim about the substantive democratic qualities of traditional leaders, which may exceed those of elected political leaders (Baldwin, 2015).
4. Lange (2009) provides persuasive evidence for this structural or “supply-side” mechanism by comparing how different levels of institutional inclusiveness during the colonial transition in Guyana and Mauritius ultimately set these two states on different political trajectories as politics in postindependence Guyana

retained a confrontational, zero-sum, and autocratic character.

5. Logan (2008) explores a number of reasons for this legitimacy including the greater symbolic resonance, responsiveness, proximity to and overall effectiveness of traditional leaders at performing governance functions in their communities compared with elected officials.
6. Such an argument has recently received support from Logan (2008, 2013) who has used cross-national individual survey data to illustrate that greater trust and support for traditional authorities do not negatively correlate with support for core democratic tenets.
7. Information on local headmen taken from v72, data on property rights from variables v74 and v75, and information on economic structures from variables v1 to v5 in Murdock (1967). Given that we will only compare support for democracy among individuals from the same ethnic group, the ethnic group-specific precolonial differences reported in Murdock (1967) are not confounders for our empirical design.
8. Taking care to again note that we refer to democracy in a procedural rather than substantive sense.
9. Resolution des Deutschen Reichstags vom December 15, 1905.
10. "The activities of the administration were concentrated in the southern and central regions of the protectorate, the so-called Police Zone." In the German original, "Die Taetigkeit der Verwaltung beschaenkte sich auf das Zentrum und den Sueden des Schutzgebietes, die sogenannte 'Polizeizone,' waehrend der noerdliche Teil von der deutschen Verwaltung vorlaufig ausgenommen war" (Zimmerer, 2001, p. 114).
11. Indeed, the fact that European settlement never expanded further north meant that the most potentially lucrative areas of Namibia never experienced direct rule—as the 1964 Odendaal commission put it, "Okavangoland and Eastern Caprivi are undoubtedly the areas with the highest agricultural potential in South West Africa" (Odendaal, 1964, p. 291), yet both areas experienced no European settlement.
12. To supply growing farm labor needs in southern Namibia, a great number of temporary laborers were also brought from north of the Red Line on a temporary permit system; such workers were required to return to their racial "homeland" after 1 or 2 years working in the south (Melber, 1996).
13. Colonial institutions in directly ruled Namibia cannot be considered "inclusive" from the perspective of the indigenous population, but nevertheless inclusive institutions as defined by Acemoglu, Johnson, and Robinson (2002) such as an independent judiciary, universal schooling, and individual property rights were instituted in directly ruled areas of Namibia that underpinned economic development.
14. Chapter 12 Article 102(1) states, "For purposes of regional and local government, Namibia shall be divided into regional and local units, which shall consist of such region and Local Authorities as may be determined and defined by Act of Parliament" and 102(3) states that "Every organ of regional and local government shall have a Council as the principal governing body, freely elected."
15. Article 102(2), Chapter 12 of Namibian Constitution.
16. M. Amutse, Regional Councilor Oshikuku Constituency, personal

- communication, September 2015. M. Mutonga, Director of National Planning Commission of Namibia, personal communication, August 2015.
17. As one well-respected traditional leader put it to us when asked about the regional council, “if they want to put up road or a clinic, then they have to come to me first” (P. Kauluma, personal communication, September 2015). The necessity of traditional leader cooperation was corroborated by the Deputy Director Rural Services in Ohangwena Region who, when asked about the possibility of ever implementing an entirely top-down project, said “Of course the headman would not let you do that” (N. Ndaitwa, personal communication, September 2015). See, more generally, Keulder (2000).
 18. “Land, water and natural resources . . . shall belong to the State if they are not otherwise lawfully owned” Article 124, Constitution of Namibia.
 19. The Communal Land Reform Act (2002), the implications of which were analyzed by Werner (2003).
 20. Recognition provides a number of benefits to leaders including receipt of an official salary, eligibility for a position on the Council of Traditional Leaders, which advises the government and the right to sit on constituency and regional development committees where development projects in Namibia are planned (E. H. Weyulu, senior traditional leader Oukwayenama, personal communication, August 2015; G. Kamseb, chief regional officer of Kunene Region Council, personal communication, August 2015; K. Sinvula, deputy director of planning, Kunene Regional Council, personal communication, August 2015).
 21. Düsing (2002), N. J. P. Muharukua (Kunene regional councilor for Democratic Turnhalle Alliance [DTA], personal communication, August 2015), and M. Tjimuiene (Kunene regional director for DTA, personal communication, August 2015).
 22. The effectiveness of traditional leaders as “development brokers” (Baldwin, 2015) is appreciated even by government officials who, one might think, would find their competing authority bothersome—as one regional official who works closely with traditional leaders in implementing development projects put it, “in general they are commendable. They are doing a good job” (N. Ndaitwa, personal communication, September 2015).
 23. In summary, “the Police Zone border was determined in Berlin, its location resulted from geographical considerations, previous colonial experiences in boundary-drawing, and arbitrary decisions disconnected from actual on-site conditions” (Miescher, 2012, p. 47).
 24. We excluded those EAs inside Etosha National Park from the buffer area.
 25. Which of these three statements is closest to your own opinion?

Statement 1: Democracy is preferable to any other kind of government.

Statement 2: In some circumstances, a nondemocratic government can be preferable.

Statement 3: For someone like me, it does not matter what kind of government we have.

26. We rely on self-reported data because official turnout data are not available at

- the EA level. This level of disaggregation is necessary to clearly identify whether people live in the directly or indirectly ruled areas.
27. Details for how to apply for the restricted geographic data used in this project are available at <http://www.afrobarometer.org/data/data-use-policy>
 28. The border cuts through Kavango, Kunene, Ohangwena, Omusati, Oshana, Oshikoto, Otjozondjupa.
 29. As these variables are posttreatment characteristics and may be affected by the treatment itself, we consider them as potential mechanisms rather than as suitable balancing variables.
 30. Livestock suitability is measured as “maximum biomass of livestock that can be supported on a long-term, sustainable basis by the available grazing” in kilogram/hectare (Mendelsohn, 2002, p. 150). We assume that these geographic conditions are constant over time and, therefore, use a 10-year average (1995-2005) of the variable.
 31. Second-order polynomials of distance to Windhoek and to the Police Zone boundary as well as local linear polynomial in longitude and latitude.
 32.
$$\mathbf{X}_{idres} = \sum_{n=0}^4 \text{income}_{idres}^n + \sum_{m=0}^8 \text{education}_{idres}^m + \text{age}_{idres} + \text{gender}_{idres}.$$
 33. We use contemporary data assuming that geographic conditions are roughly constant over time.
 34. Negative values correspond to EAs located inside the Police Zone (south) and positive values correspond to EAs outside the Police Zone (north). The smallest bin only contains 24 observations and we are, therefore, not able to credibly graphically represent the effects for smaller bin sizes. The size of the circles corresponds to the number of observations per bin.
 35. The coefficients on the individual-level control variables are reported in the online appendix in Table S3. Figure S4 in the online appendix section 9.7 represents the regression discontinuity plot when adding individual-level controls.
 36. This effect goes beyond the effect on contact with traditional leaders as we hold contact with traditional leaders constant across specifications in columns 4, 5, and 6.
 37. In these specifications, we also add regional fixed effects to better account for the exact geographic location of the individuals.
 38. The difference in support for democracy has remained persistent despite efforts on the part of the Namibian government to raise the incomes of Namibians north of the Red Line after independence. Moreover, education levels do not differ significantly likely because missionaries founded schools long before the first colonizers reached Namibia. Even during colonial times, missionaries were as active at providing education for indigenous Namibians in the south as in the north.
 39. Satellite data on night lights come from The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and are averaged over the period 2001-2008. We use composites, which are “made using all the available archived DMSP-OLS smooth resolution data for calendar years.” The infrastructure index is calculated

by taking the first principal component of a series of Afrobarometer questions about the existence of a paved road, a sewage system, electricity grid, and water systems in the enumeration area and data on EA-level homelessness stem from the 2001 census published by the Namibia Statistics Agency.

40. Dividing the sample into those younger than the 25th age percentile (24 years) and those older than that. The younger people experienced the most part of their political socialization after 1990.
41. The greater support for South West African People's Organization (SWAPO) may, in part, reflect the institutional capacity of traditional leaders to mobilize support for the ruling party in indirectly ruled areas, as in contemporary South Africa (de Kadt & Larreguy, in press).
42. Indeed, as Lange (2009) points out in the context of postcolonial Sierra Leone,

the system of rule through chiefs was hardly questioned because it was accepted and viewed by both officials and the public as appropriate. Indeed, even the Sierra Leoneans who rebelled against the chiefly misrule in the mid-1950s asked for new chiefs, not a new system of rule. (p. 197)

43. This result is not statistically significant, though the coefficient is in the theorized direction.
44. As Baldwin and Mvukiyehe (2015) show, introducing elections for traditional authorities may actually have counterproductive effects on community collective action.

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