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# Decentralized Despotism? Indirect Colonial Rule Undermines Contemporary Democratic Attitudes\*

Marie Lechler<sup>†</sup>      Lachlan McNamee<sup>‡</sup>

March 8, 2017

This paper 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 non-electoral bases of political authority.

**JEL classification:** F54, N27, N47, P16

**Keywords:** Indirect Colonial Rule, Decentralized Despotism, Political Attitudes, Namibia, Democratic Institutions, Spatial RDD

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## 1 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*, p.23)

What factors shape individual and community attitudes towards 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 and Verba, 1963; Inglehart, 1990; Putnam, 1994; Inglehart and Welzel, 2005). Yet, beyond a number of recent findings that show that support for democracy is endogenous to exposure to national democratic institutions (Persson and Tabellini, 2009; Fuchs-Schündeln and Schündeln, 2015; de Aquino, 2015) 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 colonialism for contemporary political and economic outcomes (Acemoglu et al., 2001; Engerman and Sokoloff, 2002; Iyer, 2010; Hariri, 2012), this paper 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 pre-colonial states that were more centralized (Gerring et al., 2011; Hariri, 2012), we usually cannot rule out that pre-state centralization also affects political culture through channels beyond the form of colonial rule. To address this endogeneity issue, this paper 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 and Odenaal, 2010) but rather settled in the more arid southern areas of Namibia which were hardest hit by an 1897 rinderpest epidemic. In order 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, whilst indirectly ruled areas of Namibia were governed through a system of appointed traditional authorities, traditional authorities were given little or no 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 whilst 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 (Mamdani, 1996; Englebert, 2000; Williams, 2004, 2010; Logan, 2008, 2009; Baldwin, 2015).

The paper is structured as follows: we first theorize how the form of colonial rule may affect contemporary political attitudes and describe the historical background in Namibia. We then discuss the data and the regression discontinuity design, which we apply to identify the effect of indirect rule on individual support for democracy. Finally, we provide suggestive evidence that exposure to the institution of traditional leadership is a key mechanism linking the form of colonial rule with contemporary political attitudes.

## 2 Theory

How might the form of colonial rule affect contemporary political attitudes? Directly ruled colonies such as Australia and Singapore can be defined as those that were administered by imperial bureaucrats who enforced written laws, whereas indirectly ruled colonies such as Sierra Leone or Nigeria were administered through local intermediaries such as chiefs or princes who were given the authority to informally enforce customary or “traditional” law (Lange, 2004; Acemoglu et al., 2014). Countries with denser pre-colonial populations, higher rates of settler mortality and stronger pre-colonial states tended to experience indirect colonial rule (Acemoglu et al., 2001; Engerman and Sokoloff, 2002; Gerring et al., 2011) and states that experienced indirect rule tend to be less democratic today (Hariri, 2012). 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 pre-colonial systems of governance to better suit the administrative requirements of indirect rule. In extending their control over indirectly ruled colonies, colonial authorities re-fashioned the existing political landscape by recognizing and bolstering the coercive power of supportive elites, detaching the authority of traditional leaders from the consent of local clansmen, and creating hierarchies of control with different salaried ranks of “headmen” and “chiefs” where previously there existed only amorphous and territorially dispersed clan-based loyalties (Newbury, 1988; Mamdani, 1996). 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 pre-colonial 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. Traditional leaders<sup>1</sup> or “tribal chiefs” were the key administrative stakeholders in indirectly ruled colonies and, barring a radical post-colonial upheaval in local governance of the kind that occurred in Tanzania (Miguel, 2004), still today enjoy unparalleled political, social and economic authority in local governance in indirectly ruled areas of sub-Saharan Africa (Düsing, 2002; De Kadt and Larreguy, 2014; Baldwin, 2014; Acemoglu et al., 2014). As highlighted by many African scholars and political leaders (e.g. Mboya 1956; Luthuli 1962; Ntsebeza 2005; Meer and Campbell 2007), the institution of traditional leadership is incongruous with democratic notions of rule of law, the primacy of individual over group rights, and 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 undemocratic<sup>2</sup> 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. 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 non-democratic bases for legitimacy - hence, support for electoral democracy has been shown to increase the longer that individuals live under a democratic government (Fuchs-Schündeln and Schündeln, 2015; de Aquino, 2015).

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<sup>1</sup>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 i.e. as “rulers” who have power by virtue of their association with the customary mode of governing a place-based community” (p.21).

<sup>2</sup>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).

In sub-Saharan Africa, traditional leaders are often the most widely supported and trusted political actors in society and have an independent, non-electoral base of political legitimacy (Logan, 2008)<sup>3</sup>. We 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. We also expect that ongoing exposure to the institution of traditional leadership in indirectly ruled areas of sub-Saharan Africa has socialized individuals to accept non-democratic systems of government even as national political leaders are increasingly democratically elected. 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 et al. 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 contemporary 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 post-colony presents a significant block to democratic consolidation (Mamdani, 1996; Englebert, 2000; Ntsebeza, 2005; Ribot, 2001). Mamdani (1996) and Englebert (2000) were both particularly influential in arguing that African states and democratic leaders have been engaged a struggle with local traditional leaders over bases of power and political legitimacy amongst subject populations in the post-colonial context.

On the other hand, 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 et al., 2005). As local political actors may be kept accountable and good governance achieved through both electoral and non-electoral 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 co-operation between traditional authorities and elected officials, it may be that legitimacy is a rising tide that lifts all boats (Logan, 2013)<sup>4</sup>. 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:

**H1:** Individuals in indirectly ruled areas are less likely to support democracy as a system

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<sup>3</sup>Logan (2008) explores a number of reasons for this authority including the greater symbolic resonance, responsiveness, proximity to and overall effectiveness of traditional leaders at performing governing functions in their communities compared to elected officials.

<sup>4</sup>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 does not negatively correlate with support for core democratic tenets.

of government

**H2:** Individuals in indirectly ruled areas are less likely to turnout at elections

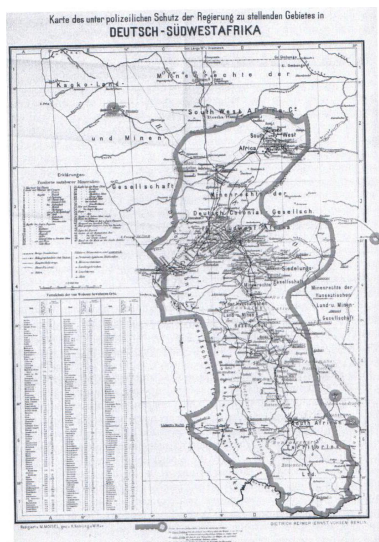
Our theoretical framework moreover predicts that this relationship is likely being driven by greater contact to traditional leaders and greater respect for authorities in indirectly ruled areas. Thus, whilst we primarily focus on support for democracy as our outcome of interest, we will also test the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

**H3:** Individuals in indirectly ruled areas are more likely to contact traditional authorities

**H4:** Individuals in indirectly ruled areas are less likely to support questioning authority

### 3 Historical background

Namibia, or South-West Africa as it was formerly known, was colonized progressively by Germany over the second half of the nineteenth century in the well-known “Scramble for Africa”. Prior to colonization, the dominant ethnic groups in Namibia were Ovambo (Ambo), Herero, Nama (Heikum), Bushmen (Kung) and Damara (Bergdama) (see Figure 3 in the Appendix). They had qualitatively similar political structures as measured by traditional form of succession of the local headman (patrilineal heirs) and none of these groups had individual property rights. However the means of subsistence differed. While the Ovambos depended on agricultural farming, Herero and Nama depended on animal husbandry and Bushmen and Damara on gathering and hunting<sup>5</sup>.



**Figure 1:** Map of 1907

When Namibia became a German protectorate in 1884, German settlements 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 in central Namibia for lost landholdings (German Colonial Office, 1919; Ofcansky, 1981). The Germans had planned on progressively 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 percent 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 (Miescher, 2012; Eckl, 2007). 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

<sup>5</sup>Information on local headmen taken from v72, data on property rights from variables v74 and v75 and information on economic structures from variables v1-v5 in (Murdock, 1967).

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 relatively unaffected northern areas of South-West Africa, yet continuing to allow free animal movement across South-West Africa would be to potentially expose German herds to future devastating epidemics. Shortly after the epidemic in 1897, therefore, the German colonial government set up a veterinary cordon fence at the boundaries of where at the time its direct control extended in order to protect southern and central cattle herds from future potentially rinderpest-infected animals from the north (Miescher, 2012).

Irrked by the rising cost of police protection of settlers in South-West Africa, in December 1905 the Reichstag in Berlin passed a resolution stating that police protection in the colonies “should be restricted to the smallest possible area focusing on those regions where our economic interests tend to coalesce”.<sup>6</sup> The veterinary cordon fence in effect then became a Police Zone boundary (see figure 1) 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.<sup>7</sup> Trade and the permanent movement of people between these two parts of South-West Africa was restricted by the German authorities and indigenous political structures within the Police Zone were destroyed.

After the South Africans began to administer South-West Africa after World War I, the South Africans began to try to establish more regular administrative structures through which to indirectly rule the areas north of the veterinary cordon fence. Yet, the often amorphous and territorially fluid indigenous political structures did not provide the tribal ordering colonial officials had been conditioned to expect, and initial attempts to try and co-opt the paramount chief of areas such as Kaokoland were met with puzzling failure; no clear hierarchical political order could be found (Bennett, 1998). In response, in 1927 the South Africans formally appropriated the power to create and dissolve “tribes” and set about appointing persons as chief or headman of rough territorial lands. As Friedman (2006) points out, the bases of consequent appointments to traditional leadership in South-West Africa 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 2006, pp.29-30). Provided they complied with the colonial administration, appointed traditional leaders were allowed untrammelled political authority over subject

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<sup>6</sup>Resolution des Deutschen Reichstags vom 15. Dezember 1905 (NAN-ZBU-L II A 5 vol. 1), see Miescher (2012), p.44.

<sup>7</sup>“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 beschraenkte 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)

populations, including the power to administer communal land and settle disputes (Keulder, 2000).

The spatial division was later formalized by the South African authorities through the Odendaal Commission of 1964 which created a number of racially demarcated “Homelands” in northern Namibia to be administered by officially recognized “tribal chiefs”. According to Miescher (2012), the Odendaal commission’s decision to construct a visible physical border that was regularly patrolled meant that “the intra-Namibian border was more impermeable than ever” (Miescher, 2012, p.173). While the north was ruled by traditional authorities, the indigenous population in the south was exploited by the German and later South African colonizers through a system of temporary contract labor on white-owned farms and factories (Odendaal, 1964; Moorsom, 1977; Melber, 1996). Under effective apartheid, rule of law and electoral suffrage only extended to the white population and the vast bulk of laborers were returned to their racial “homelan” after one or two years working in the south.

Reflecting the experience of other colonies, a within-country “reversal of fortune” (Acemoglu et al., 2002) gradually occurred in Namibia whereby extractive 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). After independence from South Africa, Namibia successfully transitioned to multi-party democracy and it has been governed continuously since 1990 by the liberation party SWAPO. National and regional political structures across the country have been homogenized but the local institutional influence of tribal leaders in the north persists to the present day. Traditional authorities have proven extremely active and successful in mobilizing to protect colonial-era institutional privileges (Düsing, 2002) and so traditional authorities are still very important in administering communal land and enforcing customary law. Moreover, individuals in the north are extremely supportive of their traditional authorities (Keulder, 2000).

On the other hand, Namibians living in the former Police Zone have only experienced a democratic governance system since independence in 1990 at all levels of government. The Namibia government under SWAPO invested heavily in the northern regions after independence in order to support the convergence of living standards in the two parts of the country (Development Expenditure Report by National Planning Commission Namibia). The Namibian Household Income and Expenditure Survey (NHIES), which was first conducted in 1993, documents this convergence process in its 2010 report by showing that differences in terms of poverty rates between northern and southern regions have declined since independence.

#### **4 Data and Empirical Strategy**

We identify the effect of indirect colonial rule on democratic attitudes and behavior by using the exogenous location of the Police Zone boundary in Namibia and applying a spatial regression discontinuity design analogous to Dell (2010). The northern part of the border between directly and indirectly ruled territories was shaped by the spatial extent of direct German control at

the end of the rinderpest epidemic of 1897. The border zone where the progressive extension of direct German rule was frozen in 1905 can thus be considered exogenous to pre-colonial political attitudes<sup>8</sup>.

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 as this part still represented the original boundary drawn by the Germans when the Odendaal Commission of 1964 formalized the border. Other parts of the border were changed over time<sup>9</sup>. We then created a 100km 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<sup>10</sup>. We chose a 100km buffer because individuals living in this zone live in similar geographic, political and cultural environments. There is a tradeoff 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 100km buffer, which provides us with enough observations to identify our effects of interests. While the 100km is our preferred buffer size we also include estimations using observations from the entire country and observations from a 50km buffer zone as robustness checks.

The outcome variables of interest used in this paper stem from the Afrobarometer survey. Between 1999 and 2008, four survey rounds (1999, 2003, 2005, 2008) were conducted, which covered questions about attitudes towards politics, the economy and civil society<sup>11</sup>. We limit our analysis to the indigenous population in both the formerly directly and indirectly ruled areas and therefore exclude whites from the sample. 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 (see Appendix for original questions). 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<sup>12</sup>. Finally, to test our hypothesis that different attitudes towards authority and contact

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<sup>8</sup>“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. In the north the Police Zone boundary generally followed the course of the former cordon line.” (Miescher, 2001, p.47)

<sup>9</sup>In 1947 the Police Zone was enlarged in the west and in the east based on recommendations from the Lardner-Burke Commission. The northern part - near Kaoko, Owambo, and Kavango - however remained unchanged (Miescher, 2012, p.143).

<sup>10</sup>We excluded Etosha National Park from the buffer area.

<sup>11</sup>We do not use the two most recent survey rounds because they do not ask detailed questions about our outcomes of interest.

<sup>12</sup>We rely on self-reported data because official turnout data is not available at the EA level. This level of disaggregation is necessary in order to clearly identify whether people live in the directly or indirectly ruled

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

The geographical location of the surveyed individuals is identified by enumeration area. The Namibian Statistics Agency divided Namibia into 4080 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 100km buffer zone is 1247. Out of these 1247 enumeration areas, the Afrobarometer survey covered between 42 and 47 in 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 1426 observations for the 100km 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”.

Pre-colonial political structures and attitudes were ethnic-group specific. The Police Zone border cuts through the pre-colonial territories of five different ethnic groups (Ovambo, Kavango, Nama/Damara, Herero and Caprivi). The Murdock (1967) data suggests that pre-colonial 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 pre-treatment attitudes did not differ between the direct and indirectly ruled areas. We use self-reported ethnicity data from Afrobarometer and all ethnic groups are represented in both parts of the buffer.

Survey round fixed effects are included in order to account for the different timing of the Afrobarometer survey rounds. The border also cuts through seven (out of fourteen) administrative regions<sup>13</sup> so that we can compare individuals who face the same regional institutions with each other by including region fixed effects. This is important in order to account for differential institutional performance, which is an important predictor of support for democracy (Bratton et al., 2005). Whilst Namibia is highly centralized politically, elected regional councillors 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 part of the buffer zone (see Table 1). We nevertheless add individual-level controls to all specifications as they are also important determinants of political attitudes (Bratton et al., 2005) and help us to identify the effects more precisely. We use a Afrobarometer question about how often an individual has gone without food over the

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part of the country.

<sup>13</sup>The border cuts through Kavango, Kunene, Ohangwena, Omusati, Oshana, Oshikoto, Otjozondjupa



past year as proxy for income and a question about the highest level of education and about age as measures for education and age respectively (see exact wording of the questions in the Appendix). For detailed summary statistics of the variables of interests see Table 11 in the Appendix.

**Table 1:** Balancing table for the buffer zone

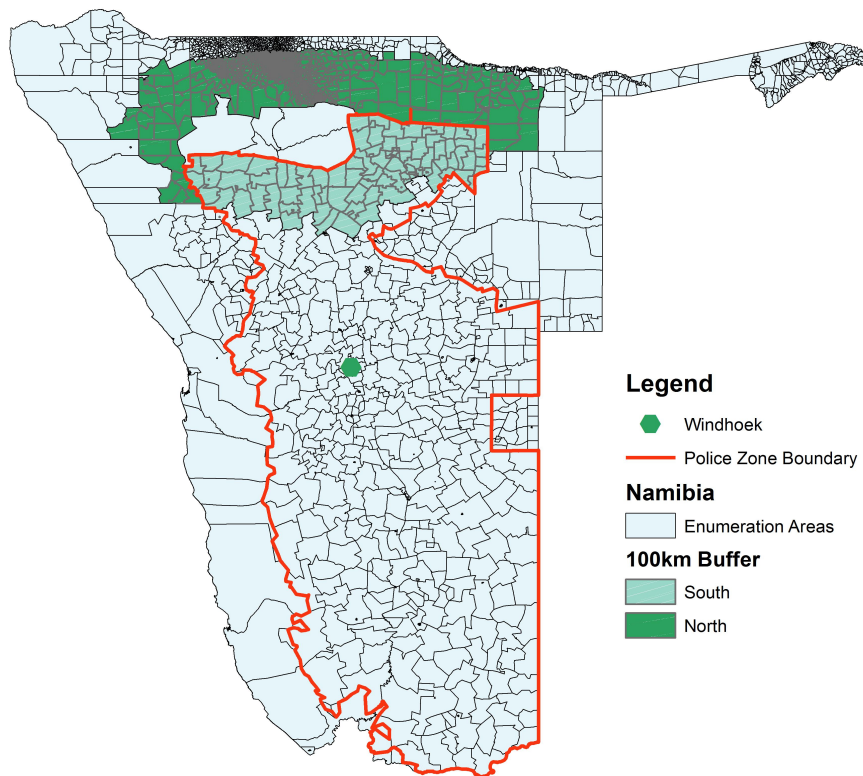
VARIABLES	(1) Without food	(2) Education	(3) Gender	(4) Age
Indirect colonial rule	0.0398 (0.163)	-0.274 (0.193)	0.0232 (0.0306)	1.606 (1.043)
Observations	1,417	1,406	1,060	1,413
Ethnicity FE	yes	yes	yes	yes
Survey round FE	yes	yes	yes	yes
Mean of DV	1.140	3.814	0.490	35.82

Results from OLS regressions. The sample consists of observations from the 100km buffer zone. Standard errors (clustered by Enumeration Area) in parentheses. \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1.

In our baseline specification we include distance to Windhoek (in decimal degrees) 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 a 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 Appendix) to ensure that our estimated effects are not driven by differences in institutional quality at the local level. We include livestock suitability<sup>14</sup> 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 pre-colonial differences in pastoral and agricultural suitability, which may in turn have affected the political processes of different communities within the same ethnic group.

<sup>14</sup>Livestock suitability is measured as “maximum biomass of livestock that can be supported on a long-term, sustainable basis by the available grazing” in kg/hectare (Mendelsohn, 2002, p. 150). We assume that these geographic conditions are constant over time and therefore use a ten-year average (1995-2005) of the variable.



**Figure 2:** Enumeration areas and buffer

We are aware that some of these control variables may be “bad controls” and thereby lead to post-treatment control bias (Angrist and 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. Moreover, we include distance to Windhoek as control for effects of the geographic location, regional fixed effects as further geographic control but also control for institutional quality and finally individual- level controls (age, income and education), which are major determinants of political attitudes. These specifications are spatial regression discontinuity designs, 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, which control flexibly for geographic location<sup>15</sup>.

The baseline RDD estimation equation is thus:

$$Y_{idres} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Indirectrule_d + \mathbf{X}'_{ides} \mathbf{\Gamma} + \eta_e + \mu_s + \psi_r + \epsilon_{idres}$$

$Y$  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 which 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 and dummies for income and education<sup>16</sup> as well as distance to Windhoek.  $\eta_e$  are ethnicity fixed effects,  $\mu_s$  are survey-round fixed effects and  $\psi_r$  are region fixed effects.

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

## 5 Results

Living in the formerly indirectly ruled part of Namibia decreases the probability that people think that a democratic government is preferable to any other type of government and decreases the probability of voting (Table 2). Columns (1) and (4) present raw comparisons of political attitudes and behavior between indirectly and directly ruled areas. These specifications include only ethnicity 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 region fixed effects, individual level controls and distance to Windhoek. Columns (3) and (6) show that the effects are also statistically significant when applying a (ordered) probit model because the dependent variables are discrete. In order to facilitate the interpretation of the size of the coefficients we will focus on the linear probability model rather than on the probit estimations.

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 increases in magnitude when adding distance to Windhoek, regional fixed effects and individual level controls. Moreover, people in the indirectly ruled part of the buffer report that they vote significantly less (10-20%) than people living in the directly ruled part. 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 democratic consolidation both in an attitudinal

<sup>15</sup>Second order polynomials of distance to Windhoek and to the Police Zone boundary as well as local linear polynomial in longitude and latitude.

<sup>16</sup> $\mathbf{X}_{idres} = \sum_{n=0}^4 incom e_{idres}^n + \sum_{m=0}^8 education_{idres}^m + age_{idres}$

and behavioral sense. These results provide confirmatory evidence for **H1** and **H2**: people living in formerly indirectly ruled areas indeed support democracy less as a system of government and turnout less strongly at elections.

**Table 2:** Effect of indirect rule on support for democracy and voting

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	Support	Support	Support	Voting	Voting	Voting
VARIABLES	democracy	democracy	democracy			
	OLS	OLS	O Probit	OLS	OLS	Probit
Indirect colonial rule	-0.178** (0.0746)	-0.223* (0.133)	-0.357* (0.198)	-0.122*** (0.0409)	-0.166** (0.0824)	-0.590* (0.305)
Distance to Windhoek		-0.0228 (0.0790)	-0.0142 (0.118)		-0.0389 (0.0574)	-0.0919 (0.223)
Observations	1,347	1,329	1,329	734	723	721
$R^2$	0.019	0.043		0.049	0.287	
Ethnicity FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Survey round FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Region FE	no	yes	yes	no	yes	yes
Individual-level controls	no	yes	yes	no	yes	yes
# clusters	165	165	165	91	91	91
Mean of DV	2.399	2.401	2.401	0.722	0.719	0.718

Results from OLS regressions. Individual-level control variables are age, education dummies and income dummies. The sample consists of observations from the 100km buffer zone. Standard errors (clustered by Enumeration Area) in parentheses. \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$ .

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 **H3** 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 **H4** as the evidence indicates that people in the north do tend to respect authorities more. Whilst the direction of

the effect is stable the statistical significance of the coefficient on indirect rule does, however, vary across specifications.

**Table 3:** Effect of indirect rule on support for democracy, voting and contact with traditional leaders

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	0.391*** (0.104)	0.408* (0.236)	0.714* (0.395)	0.125 (0.0867)	0.347* (0.203)	0.422* (0.239)
Distance to Windhoek		-0.0488 (0.137)	-0.0624 (0.207)		-0.134 (0.126)	-0.170 (0.146)
Observations	1,418	1,400	1,400	1,365	1,009	1,009
$R^2$	0.142	0.183		0.121	0.195	
Ethnicity FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Survey round FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Region FE	no	yes	yes	no	yes	yes
Individual-level controls	no	yes	yes	no	yes	yes
# clusters	165	165	165	165	123	123
Mean of DV	0.695	0.699	0.699	2.431	2.458	2.458

Results from OLS regressions. Individual-level control variables are age, education dummies and income dummies. The sample consists of observations from the 100km buffer zone. Standard errors (clustered by Enumeration Area) in parentheses. \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$ .

### 5.1 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 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; Dell et al., 2015). In the context of a regression discontinuity design, the local linear polynomial in longitude and latitude can be interpreted as the running variable, which controls for smooth functions of geographic location. We also present specifications with a one-dimensional running variable (distance to Windhoek as in the baseline and distance to the Police Zone boundary<sup>17</sup>). In order to control for these one-dimensional measures more flexibly

<sup>17</sup>In these specifications we also add regional fixed effects to better account for the exact geographic location of the individuals.

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. Table 12 in the Appendix shows the respective results for the outcomes contact with traditional leaders and respect for authority. Whilst the positive effect of indirect colonial rule on contact to traditional leaders is robust across different spatial regression discontinuity specifications, this is not the case for respect for authorities. Hence, there is strong evidence in favor of hypotheses **H1**, **H2** and **H3** but only suggestive evidence in favor of **H4**.

**Table 4:** Different specifications of RD polynomial

VARIABLES	(1) Support democracy	(2) Support democracy	(3) Support democracy	(4) Voting	(5) Voting	(6) 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
$R^2$	0.022	0.029	0.029	0.052	0.063	0.060
Lat/Lon	yes	no	no	yes	no	no
Dist. Windhoek quadr	no	yes	no	no	yes	no
Dist. Boundary quadr	no	no	yes	no	no	yes
Ethnicity FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Survey round FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
# 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 a 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 100km buffer zone. Standard errors (clustered by Enumeration Area) in parentheses. \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$ .

## 5.2 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 -0.32 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 much larger than the baseline effect (Column 1), which may be caused by bad controls, which are outcomes of the treatment themselves. The effect sizes in this tables should therefore be interpreted with caution. 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 specifications (Table 6). The effect size is also substantially larger when compared to the baseline estimates and should be interpreted with caution.

**Table 5:** Effect of indirect rule on support for democracy

VARIABLES	(1) Support democracy	(2) Support democracy	(3) Support democracy	(4) Support democracy	(5) Support democracy
Indirect colonial rule	-0.223* (0.133)	-0.313** (0.141)	-0.237* (0.135)	-0.222* (0.126)	-0.320** (0.147)
Distance to Windhoek	-0.0228 (0.0790)	0.00163 (0.0821)	-0.0212 (0.0792)	-0.0185 (0.0761)	0.00273 (0.0830)
Performance government		-0.00667 (0.0288)			-0.00652 (0.0289)
Livestock suitability			-0.0197 (0.0363)		-0.0414 (0.0421)
Urban				-0.00178 (0.0713)	-0.0486 (0.0865)
Observations	1,329	1,274	1,329	1,334	1,274
$R^2$	0.043	0.043	0.043	0.046	0.044
Ethnicity FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Survey round FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Region FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Individual-level controls	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
# clusters	165	165	165	165	165
Mean of DV	2.401	2.399	2.401	2.397	2.399

Results from OLS regressions. Individual-level control variables are age, education dummies and income dummies. The sample consists of observations from the 100km buffer zone. Standard errors (clustered by Enumeration Area) in parentheses. \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$ .

**Table 6:** Effect of indirect colonial rule on voting

VARIABLES	(1) Voting	(2) Voting	(3) Voting	(4) Voting	(5) Voting
Indirect colonial rule	-0.166** (0.0824)	-0.212** (0.0872)	-0.173* (0.0888)	-0.181* (0.0920)	-0.224** (0.0970)
Distance to Windhoek	-0.0389 (0.0574)	-0.00556 (0.0564)	-0.0371 (0.0592)	-0.0367 (0.0586)	-0.00636 (0.0572)
Performance government		0.0137 (0.0223)			0.0125 (0.0226)
Livestock suitability			-0.00430 (0.0194)		0.0121 (0.0304)
Urban				0.0247 (0.0418)	0.0494 (0.0598)
Observations	723	687	723	723	687
$R^2$	0.287	0.285	0.287	0.287	0.286
Ethnicity FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Survey round FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Region FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Individual-level controls	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
# clusters	91	91	91	91	91
Mean of DV	0.719	0.721	0.719	0.719	0.721

Results from OLS regressions. Individual-level control variables are age, education dummies and income dummies. The sample consists of observations from the 100km buffer zone. Standard errors (clustered by Enumeration Area) in parentheses. \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$ .

The results for support for democracy also hold when not only focusing on observations in the 100km buffer zone but using a sample from the entire country and also when using a 50km buffer zone (see Appendix Table 13). The results for voting are less robust to changing the buffer size. The sample size reduces to 390 when restricting the sample to the 50km 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 one degree latitude north and south respectively. When running these regressions we do not find any significant effects on support for democracy or voting (Tables 15 and 16), 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 40 (see Appendix table 17). The main results still hold.

## 6 Alternative explanations

Whilst as in all historically oriented work we cannot rule out all other alternative explanations for the mechanisms that bring about the effect of indirect colonial rule on contemporary political attitudes, we here address the most likely potential confounders including political socialization, sorting, contemporary institutional quality, income and education.

### 6.1 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 did not experience democracy in either the direct or indirectly ruled areas of Namibia during colonial times. Whereas northern Namibia was ruled by authoritarian traditional authorities and, to a lesser extent by the colonial administration, the indigenous population in southern and central Namibia was exploited by the German and later South African colonizers through a system of contract labor (Moorsom, 1977; Melber, 1996; Odendaal, 1964). 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 on the other hand that the introduction of democracy was seen as a greater “liberation” in the south relative to the north. 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 19 (in the 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. If different political socialization or the experience of liberation is an important confounder then the effect of living in the north should be much stronger for older people, who experienced the different political socialization between indirectly and directly ruled areas much longer. These results also hold when using a binary age measure<sup>18</sup> (see Table 19 in Appendix).

### 6.2 Sorting

During the German rule, permanent migration between the two parts of the country was prohibited. After taking control of Namibia after 1914, the South Africans established a migrant labor system that brought workers from the north to work in the south in order to satisfy white

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<sup>18</sup>Dividing the sample into those younger than the median age (31 years) and those older than median age. Those younger than median age experienced the most part of their political socialization after 1990.

farmers' demand for cheap farmhand labor. These laborers were required to return to their racial homeland after a period of 18-24 months and re-apply for the temporary labor scheme, and so there was no permanent sorting. 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 ties to one's family, one's community and to ancestral land rights are extremely close (Paul, 1933; Eirola, 1992)<sup>19</sup>. 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 (Moorsom, 1977; Melber, 1996).

### 6.3 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. In order 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 individuals' evaluation of the performance of local government councils which do not actually appear to have a significant effect on democratic attitudes. 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 and improve institutional infrastructure and efficiency in the previously neglected north where state capacity was previously low (Werner and Odendaal, 2010; Melber, 2015; Düsing, 2002; Keulder, 2000). 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 towards our hypothesis (see Table 5).

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<sup>19</sup>“Both home-sickness and social and family ties made almost all the workers come back” (Eirola,1992, p.214)

**Table 7: Balancing Table**

	(1) Direct rule	(2) Indirect rule	(3) 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)
Observations	253	1,163	1,416

Individuals on both sides of the border think that governmental officials listen sometimes to what the people say. The coefficient on fear of unjust arrest, which is an indicator for despotism of officials, does also not differ significantly between formerly directly ruled and indirectly ruled areas of Namibia. As further measures of the reliability of contemporary institutions we use trust in courts and police. 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 an negative effect of indirect colonial rule on support for democracy.

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 national and regional institutions nowadays.

#### 6.4 Income

Income differed substantially between areas within and outside the Police Zone during colonial times. After independence however the government introduced policies to reduce the large income disparities between the north and the south. The effect of indirect rule on income should therefore not be highly persistent. We compare only people living close to each other, so that potential income gaps should have closed after independence. Table 8 demonstrates that indirect colonial rule does not have a statistically significant impact on income and thus suggests that the effect of indirect rule on income is not persistent in the buffer zone. Moreover, including dummies for different income groups in our specifications does not change our results.

**Table 8:** Indirect colonial rule and income

VARIABLES	(1) OLS	(2) OLS	(3) OLS	(4) OLS	(5) Ordered Probit
Indirect colonial rule	-0.204 (0.134)	0.0398 (0.163)	-0.0551 (0.210)	0.226 (0.286)	0.279 (0.227)
Distance to Windhoek				-0.235 (0.175)	-0.165 (0.111)
Observations	1,417	1,417	1,400	1,400	1,400
$R^2$	0.004	0.055	0.133	0.136	
Ethnicity FE	no	yes	yes	yes	yes
Survey round FE	no	yes	yes	yes	yes
Region FE	no	no	yes	yes	yes
Individual-level controls	no	no	yes	yes	yes
Mean of DV	1.140	1.140	1.132	1.132	1.132

Results from OLS regressions. Control variables are age and education dummies. The sample consists of observations from the 100km buffer zone. Standard errors (clustered by Enumeration Area) in parentheses. \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$ .

## 6.5 Education

Education does not differ between the northern and southern part of the buffer among the indigenous Namibian population. This is 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 and the Namibian government after 1990 has not favored the north or south disproportionately in terms of education. Table 9 shows statistically that areas formerly under indirect rule do not have significantly lower levels of education. Hence, as education does not differ between the directly and indirectly ruled areas of Namibia, it can be ruled out as a likely channel through which indirect colonial rule affects political attitudes. In any case, including dummies for individual level of education in our specifications does not change the results.

**Table 9:** Indirect colonial rule and contemporary education levels

VARIABLES	(1) OLS	(2) OLS	(3) OLS	(4) OLS	(5) Ordered Probit
Indirect colonial rule	0.0147 (0.189)	-0.274 (0.193)	-0.294 (0.232)	-0.128 (0.296)	-0.0870 (0.176)
Distance to Windhoek				-0.139 (0.203)	-0.00139 (0.0961)
Observations	1,406	1,406	1,400	1,400	1,400
$R^2$	0.000	0.025	0.242	0.243	
Ethnicity FE	no	yes	yes	yes	yes
Survey round FE	no	yes	yes	yes	yes
Region FE	no	no	yes	yes	yes
Individual-level controls	no	no	yes	yes	yes
Mean of DV	3.814	3.814	3.821	3.821	3.821

Results from OLS regressions. The sample consists of observations from the 100km buffer zone. Individual-level control variables are age, and income dummies. Standard errors (clustered by Enumeration Area) in parentheses. \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$ .

## 7 Conclusion

The results presented in this paper 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 a 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 amongst members of the same ethnic group<sup>20</sup>. 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 institution of traditional leadership. We argue that the ongoing local role that traditional authorities play in formerly indirectly ruled areas of Namibia acts as a parallel undemocratic hierarchical

<sup>20</sup>Based on this empirical design, McNamee (2016) further analyzes the relationship between indirect colonial rule and the political salience of ethnicity in Namibia.

governance structure and socializes individuals in indirectly ruled areas to accept non-electoral bases of legitimacy. This paper thereby contributes to a long-running debate in comparative politics (Mamdani, 1996; Englebort, 2000; Williams, 2010; Logan, 2013; Baldwin, 2015) - it does appear that the hereditary system of traditional leadership institutionalized by indirect colonial rule may present a stumbling block to contemporary democratic political consolidation in sub-Saharan Africa.

Our findings have potentially broad implications for our understanding of processes of democratization in the post-colonial context. Indirectly ruled countries are on average relatively autocratic today, which Hariri (2012) influentially attributed to the reinforcement of traditional authority in indirectly ruled areas and a relative lack of institutional transplantation by European settlers. Our evidence suggests that a causal mechanism underlying this important aggregate cross-national relationship is potentially cultural - indigenous 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, be due in part to weaker general “demand” for electoral democracy as a system of government<sup>21</sup>.

Whilst our evidence suggests that indirect colonial rule plays an important role in shaping individual attitudes towards 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, whilst 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, it is likely in part because non-electoral 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 a currently fruitful area of research.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>We depart slightly, however, from Hariri’s understanding of indirect rule by emphasizing the extent to which indigenous political structures were also drastically changed in indirectly ruled areas of Namibia.

<sup>22</sup>As Baldwin and Mvukiyehe (2015) show, introducing elections for traditional authorities may actually have

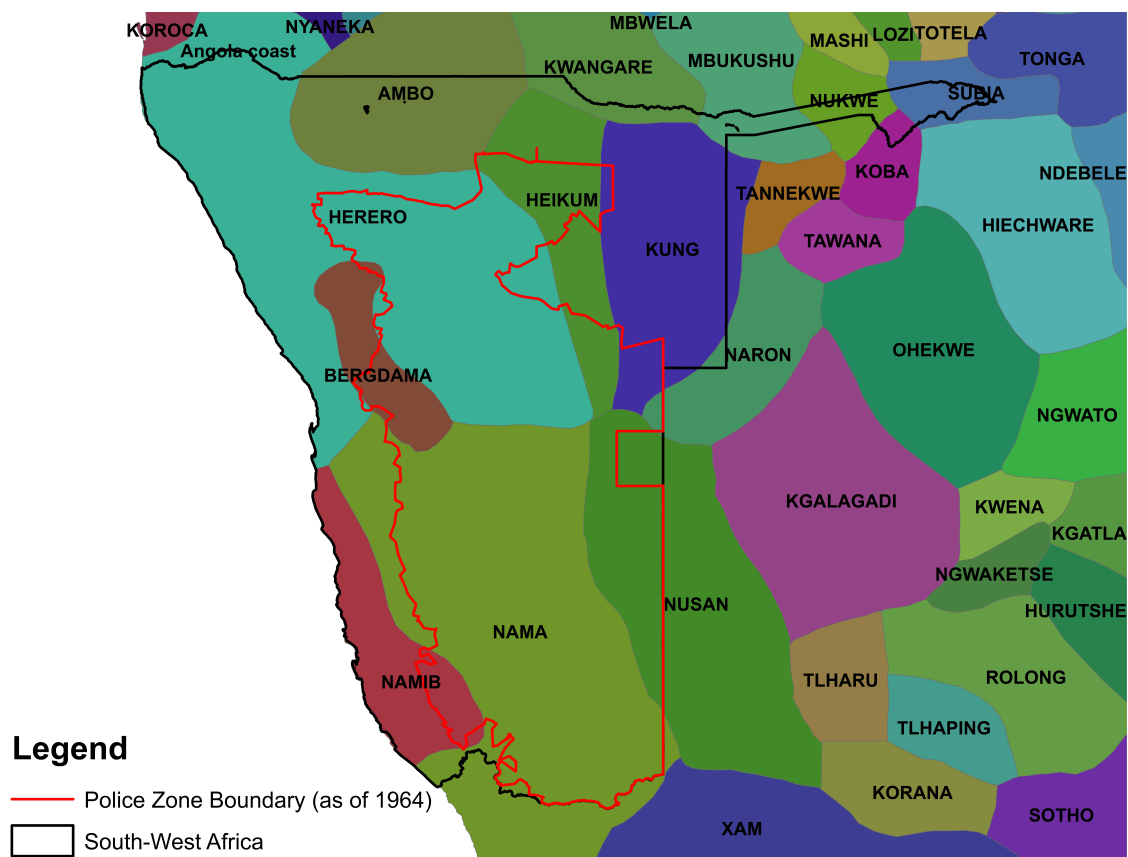
Ultimately, we hope that our findings documented in this paper encourage further research about the competing legitimacy of different institutional configurations and the historical legacies that continue to shape political culture in both sub-Saharan Africa and the wider world.

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counter-productive effects on community collective action.

## 8 Appendix

### 8.1 Ethnic groups prior to colonization



**Figure 3:** Ethnic groups prior to colonization (Murdock, 1967)

### 8.2 Comparison to other African countries

Table 10 shows Afrobarometer survey results from 2008 (survey round 4) for 19 other African countries<sup>23</sup> in comparison to the Namibia results. Contact to traditional leaders is lower in Namibia than in other African countries. This shows that traditional leadership is an important institutions in many African countries and that it is important to study its implications for the viability of democratic systems. There is no clear difference in support for democracy between Namibians and other sub-Saharan Africans in the sample.

<sup>23</sup>Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe



**Table 10:** Summary statistics of variables of interest for 20 African countries, covered in Afrobarometer survey round 4

	(1) 19 African countries	(2) Namibia	(3) Difference
Contact traditional ruler	0.55 [0.99]	0.38 [0.78]	0.17*** (0.029)
Trust traditional leaders	4.37 [1.44]	4.16 [1.17]	0.21*** (0.042)
Support for democracy	2.86 [0.34]	2.86 [0.35]	0.0062 (0.012)
Respect authority	2.22 [1.13]	2.52 [1.02]	-0.30*** (0.033)
Observations	26,513	1,200	27,713

### 8.3 Summary statistics

Table 11 summarizes the main variables of interests for the buffer zone. The number of observations differs as some variables are not available in all four survey rounds.

**Table 11:** Summary statistics for buffer zone

	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Obs
Support for democracy	2.40	0.83	1	3	1352
Contact traditional leader	0.69	1.01	0	3	1426
Trust traditional leaders	1.91	0.91	0	3	1029
Respect authority	2.43	1.01	1	4	1373
Performance government	2.88	0.79	1	4	1360
Livestock suitability	4.21	1.05	2	6	1426
Urban	1.82	0.39	1	2	1426
Gender	0.49	0.50	0	1	1060
Age	35.75	14.81	18	92	1421
Education	3.81	1.85	0	8	1414
Without food	1.14	1.19	0	4	1425

## 8.4 Robustness Checks

### 8.4.1 RDD specification

**Table 12:** Indirect rule and support for democracy

VARIABLES	(1) Contact TL	(2) Contact TL	(3) Contact TL	(4) Respect authority	(5) Respect authority	(6) Respect authority
Indirect colonial rule	0.189 (0.223)	0.485* (0.292)	0.391** (0.172)	0.245 (0.152)	0.204 (0.186)	0.210* (0.114)
Observations	1,418	1,418	1,418	1,365	1,365	1,365
$R^2$	0.144	0.150	0.152	0.122	0.127	0.129
Lat/Lon	yes	no	no	yes	no	no
Dist. Windhoek quadr	no	yes	no	no	yes	no
Dist. Boundary quadr	no	no	yes	no	no	yes
Ethnicity FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Survey round FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
# clusters	165	165	165	165	165	165
Mean of DV	0.695	0.695	0.695	2.431	2.431	2.431

Results from OLS regressions. Individual-level control variables are age, education dummies and income dummies. The sample consists of observations from the 100km buffer zone.. Standard errors (clustered by Enumeration Area) in parentheses. \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$ .

### 8.4.2 Different buffer sizes

The results are robust to using observations for the entire country and for a 50km buffer rather than only focusing on the buffer zone. When decreasing the size of the buffer the number of observations is too small using voting as an outcome and therefore the effect cannot be precisely estimated.

**Table 13:** Indirect rule and support for democracy

VARIABLES	(1) Entire country	(2) Entire country	(3) 50km Buffer	(4) 50km Buffer
Indirect colonial rule	-0.0941*** (0.0328)	-0.0952* (0.0505)	-0.161* (0.0881)	-0.185** (0.0877)
Distance to Windhoek		-0.0227 (0.0251)		-0.0173 (0.0880)
Constant	2.540*** (0.0455)	2.672*** (0.281)	2.189*** (0.151)	1.877*** (0.434)
Observations	4,656	4,598	620	607
$R^2$	0.008	0.037	0.044	0.091
Ethnicity FE	yes	yes	yes	yes
Survey round FE	yes	yes	yes	yes
Region FE	no	yes	no	yes
Individual-level controls	no	yes	no	yes
# clusters	571	571	77	77
Mean of DV	2.424	2.421	2.382	2.386

Results from OLS regressions. Individual-level control variables are age, education dummies and income dummies. The sample consists observations for the entire country and a 50km buffer respectively. Standard errors (clustered by Enumeration Area) in parentheses. \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$ .

**Table 14:** Indirect rule and voting

VARIABLES	(1) Entire country	(2) Entire country	(3) 50km Buffer	(4) 50km Buffer
Indirect colonial rule	0.0200 (0.0240)	-0.0487 (0.0417)	-0.0963 (0.0638)	-0.0703 (0.0645)
Distance to Windhoek		0.00509 (0.0177)		-0.142*** (0.0527)
Observations	2,711	2,680	392	387
$R^2$	0.036	0.186	0.066	0.242
Ethnicity FE	yes	yes	yes	yes
Survey round FE	yes	yes	yes	yes
Region FE	no	yes	no	yes
Individual-level controls	no	yes	no	yes
# clusters	335	335	48	48
Mean of DV	0.733	0.733	0.747	0.749

Results from OLS regressions. Individual-level control variables are age, education dummies and income dummies. The sample consists observations for the entire country and a 50km buffer respectively. Standard errors (clustered by Enumeration Area) in parentheses. \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$ .

### 8.4.3 Placebo Buffer

**Table 15:** Indirect rule and support for democracy: Placebo buffers

VARIABLES	(1) Support for democracy	(2) Support for democracy	(3) Support for democracy	(4) Support for democracy
Placebo indirect (south)	0.0532 (0.119)	-0.167 (0.166)		
Placebo indirect (north)			-0.105 (0.0840)	-0.0252 (0.102)
Distance to Windhoek		0.246* (0.125)		-0.0526 (0.121)
Observations	324	320	927	917
$R^2$	0.067	0.154	0.028	0.092
Ethnicity FE	yes	yes	yes	yes
Survey round FE	yes	yes	yes	yes
Region FE	no	yes	no	yes
Individual-level controls	no	yes	no	yes
# clusters	42	42	114	114
Mean of DV	2.349	2.356	2.383	2.382

Results from OLS regressions. Individual-level control variables are age, education dummies and income dummies. The sample consists of observations from the 100km buffer zone. Standard errors (clustered by Enumeration Area) in parentheses. \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$ .

**Table 16:** Indirect rule and voting: Placebo buffers

VARIABLES	(1) Voting	(2) Voting	(3) Voting	(4) Voting
Placebo indirect (south)	-0.00805 (0.0800)	-0.142 (0.104)		
Placebo indirect (north)			0.0278 (0.0591)	0.110* (0.0622)
Distance to Windhoek		0.0304 (0.106)		-0.0275 (0.0596)
Observations	186	184	546	540
$R^2$	0.078	0.340	0.073	0.287
Ethnicity FE	yes	yes	yes	yes
Survey round FE	yes	yes	yes	yes
Region FE	no	yes	no	yes
Individual-level controls	no	yes	no	yes
# clusters	23	23	68	68
Mean of DV	0.720	0.717	0.722	0.722

Results from OLS regressions. Individual-level control variables are age, education dummies and income dummies. The sample consists of observations from the 100km buffer zone. Standard errors (clustered by Enumeration Area) in parentheses. \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$ .

#### 8.4.4 Different clustering

The results are robust to clustering the standard errors on the constituency level (table 17).

**Table 17:** Indirect rule and support for democracy and voting: clustering SE on a constituency level

VARIABLES	(1) Support for democracy	(2) Support for democracy	(3) Voting	(4) Voting
Indirect colonial rule	-0.178** (0.0768)	-0.223* (0.130)	-0.122* (0.0615)	-0.166** (0.0802)
Distance to Windhoek		-0.0228 (0.0752)		-0.0389 (0.0469)
Observations	1,347	1,329	734	723
$R^2$	0.019	0.043	0.049	0.287
Ethnicity FE	yes	yes	yes	yes
Survey round FE	yes	yes	yes	yes
Region FE	no	yes	no	yes
Individual-level controls	no	yes	no	yes
# clusters	44	44	38	38

Results from OLS regressions. Individual-level control variables are age, education dummies and income dummies. The sample consists of observations from the 100km buffer zone. Standard errors (clustered by Constituency) in parentheses. \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$ .

## 8.5 Interaction effects

In addition, we tested whether there is an interaction effect between indirect colonial rule and survey round fixed effects. The results in table 18 indicate that there is no such interaction effect. Hence, the effect of indirect colonial rule on political attitudes does not decrease (or increase) over time, which suggests that political attitudes are indeed persistent.

**Table 18:** Interaction between indirect colonial rule and survey round fixed effects

VARIABLES	(1) Support for democracy	(2) Support for democracy	(3) Voting	(4) Voting
Indirect colonial rule	-0.329** (0.160)	-0.400** (0.178)	-0.0949 (0.0587)	-0.130 (0.0866)
Indirect rule x round 2	0.169 (0.191)	0.200 (0.210)		
Indirect rule x round 3	0.0924 (0.199)	0.141 (0.207)	-0.0521 (0.0795)	-0.0922 (0.0793)
Indirect rule x round 4	0.288 (0.204)	0.315 (0.223)		
Distance to Windhoek		-0.0156 (0.0788)		-0.0312 (0.0545)
Round = 2	-0.0646 (0.176)	-0.0960 (0.191)		
Round = 3	0.104 (0.182)	0.0282 (0.189)		
Round = 4	-0.141 (0.188)	-0.179 (0.208)	-0.194** (0.0748)	-0.247*** (0.0744)
Observations	1,347	1,329	734	723
$R^2$	0.022	0.046	0.049	0.288
Ethnicity FE	yes	yes	yes	yes
Survey round FE	yes	yes	yes	yes
Region FE	no	yes	no	yes
Individual-level controls	no	yes	no	yes
# clusters	165	165	91	91

Results from OLS regressions including interaction terms between colonial rule and survey round fixed effects as well as ethnicity and survey round fixed effects. Individual-level control variables are age, education dummies and income dummies. The sample consists observations for the 100km buffer zone only. Standard errors (clustered by Enumeration Area) in parentheses. \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$ .



Finally, we analyzed interactions between indirect rule and age using both the reported age and a binary age measure (table 19). The binary measure divides the sample in people older and younger than 31, which is the median age in the sample. Neither of the estimations yields statistically significant effects of the interaction. This demonstrates that the effect of indirect colonial rule on political attitudes does not depend on age. The effect is thus not stronger for older people who experienced colonial rule longer than younger people.

**Table 19:** No interaction effect between indirect colonial rule and age

VARIABLES	(1) Support for democracy	(2) Support for democracy	(3) Voting	(4) Voting
Indirect colonial rule	-0.115 (0.188)	-0.225* (0.128)	-0.338** (0.153)	-0.241** (0.0942)
Indirect rule x age	-0.00338 (0.00450)		0.00527 (0.00343)	
Age	0.00312 (0.00426)		0.0112*** (0.00320)	
Distance to Windhoek	-0.0205 (0.0788)	-0.0184 (0.0762)	-0.0402 (0.0566)	-0.0432 (0.0553)
Indirect rule x Old dummy		0.00571 (0.109)		0.183** (0.0877)
Old dummy		-0.00154 (0.0981)		-0.0248 (0.0784)
Observations	1,329	1,334	723	723
$R^2$	0.043	0.046	0.290	0.299
Ethnicity FE	yes	yes	yes	yes
Survey round FE	yes	yes	yes	yes
Region FE	yes	yes	yes	yes
Individual-level controls	yes	yes	yes	yes
# clusters	165	165	91	91

Results from OLS regressions including interaction terms between colonial rule and age as well as ethnicity and survey round fixed effects. Individual-level control variables are age, education dummies and income dummies. The sample consists observations for the buffer zone only. Standard errors (clustered by Enumeration Area) in parentheses. \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$ .

## 8.6 Afrobarometer survey questions

Afrobarometer survey questions used in this paper (Afrobarometer, 2008).

### Outcome variables

- **Support for democracy:** 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 non-democratic government can be preferable.  
Statement 3: For someone like me, it does not matter what kind of government we have.  
1= Statement 2: Non-democratic preferable, 2=Statement 3: For someone like me, it does not matter what kind of government we have, 3=Statement 1: Democracy preferable
- **Voting:** With regard to the most recent national elections, which statement is true for you?  
0= You decided not to vote  
1= You voted in the elections  
*We dropped observations from respondents who reported that they could not find the polling station, were prevented from voting, did not have time to vote or not vote for some other reason. This constitutes less than 3% of the sample.*
- **Contact traditional leader:** During the past year, how often have you contacted any of the following persons about some important problem or to give them your views: A traditional ruler?  
0=Never, 1=Only once, 2=A few times, 3=Often
- **Respect for authority:** Let's talk for a moment about the kind of society we would like to have in this country. Which of the following statements is closest to your view? Choose Statement 1 or Statement 2.  
Statement 1: Citizens should be more active in questioning the actions of leaders.  
Statement 2: In our country, citizens should show more respect for authority.  
1=Agree very strongly with Statement 1, 2=Agree with Statement 1, 3=Agree with Statement 2, 4=Agree very strongly with Statement 2
- **Trust traditional leader:** How much do you trust each of the following, or haven't you heard enough about them to say: Traditional leaders  
0=Not at all, 1=Just a little, 2=Somewhat, 3=A lot

### Control variables

- **How often gone without food:** Over the past year, how often, if ever, have you or your family gone without: Enough food to eat?  
0=Never, 1=Just once or twice, 2=Several times, 3=Many times, 4=Always
- **Education:** What is the highest level of education you have completed?  
0=No formal schooling, 1=Informal schooling, 2=Some primary schooling, 3=Primary school completed, 4=Some secondary school/ High school, 5=Secondary school completed/High

school, 6=Post-secondary qualifications, other than university, 7=Some university, 8=University completed, 9=Post-graduate

- **Performance of local government councilor:** Do you approve or disapprove of the way the following people have performed their jobs over the past twelve months, or haven't you heard enough about them to say: Your Elected Local Government Councillor?  
1=Strongly Disapprove, 2=Disapprove, 3=Approve, 4=Strongly Approve

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