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Critical Junctures: Independence Movements and Democracy in Africa

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Abstract: *We show that current levels of democracy in Africa are linked to the nature of its independence movements. Using different measures of political regimes and historical data on anticolonial movements, we find that countries that experienced* rural insurgencies *tend to have autocratic regimes, while those that faced* urban protests *tend to have more democratic institutions. The association between the type of independence movement and democracy is statistically significant for the post-Cold War period and robust to a number of potential confounding factors and sensitivity checks. We provide evidence for causality in this relationship by using an instrumental variables approach and a difference-in-differences design with fixed effects. Furthermore, we adjudicate between two potential mechanisms and find support for a* behavioral path dependence *hypothesis. Urban protests enabled participants to develop norms of peaceful political behavior, which provided cultural bases for liberal democracy. In contrast, armed rebellions generated behavioral patterns that perpetuated political exclusion and the use of violence as a form of political dissent.*

Verification Materials: The data and materials required to verify the computational reproducibility of the results, procedures, and analyses in this article are available on the *American Journal of Political* Science Dataverse within the Harvard Dataverse Network, at: https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/IVILML.

The notion that economic prosperity drives political development in the form of democratic change is intuitive and normatively appealing. Following the seminal work by Lipset (1959), social scientists have looked at the relationship between development and democracy by focusing on the role of income (Barro 1999; Londregan and Poole 1996), growth (Papaioannou and Siourounis 2008; Przeworski and Limongi 1993), education (Glaeser, Ponzetto, and Shleifer 2007), and factor mobility (Boix 2003), among other *modernization*-related variables. These studies provide mixed empirical evidence. According to Acemoglu et al. (2008), the cross-country statistical association between income and democracy becomes insignificant when including country fixed effects. The correlation between income and democracy may be due to the fact that societies embarked on divergent development paths at certain critical historical junctures.

Other influential works in economics, political science, and sociology have also emphasized the lasting impact of choices made during critical moments in history (Collier and Collier 1991; Engerman and Sokoloff 1997; Lipset and Rokkan 1967; Moore 1966). Our study builds on the critical junctures framework and shows that post-Cold War democracy in Africa can be explained by the form of political dissent originated from its

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independence movements. We focus on the decolonization of Africa because of two main reasons. First, Africa exhibits substantial variation in democracy levels, ranging from violent autocratic regimes to functional democracies. Second, there are important similarities in the timing and types of independence movements across the continent. Most independence movements took place between the 1950s and 1960s and were heavily influenced by either Maoist or European socialist ideologies. These unique circumstances facilitate the measurement, conceptualization, and empirical analysis of the long-run impact of such historical movements on democracy.

Using original data on independence movements in Africa, we show that countries that experienced major *rural* insurgencies tend to have autocratic regimes, while those that mostly experienced *urban* mass protests—or nonviolent forms of dissent—tend to have more democratic institutions. Anticolonial mass protests generated norms of peaceful political behavior, which provided cultural bases for liberal democracy. In contrast, armed rebellions perpetuated political exclusion and the use of violence as a form of political dissent. The gap in democracy levels between these two sets of countries is rather narrow during the 1970s, it widens during 1980s, and it becomes statistically significant in the post-1990 period, that is, after the end of the Cold War. We argue that, while important institutional changes preceded the expansion of civil and political rights in many African countries, Cold-War international pressures delayed democratization processes in the region. Therefore, the legacy of independence movements is more visible after the end of the Cold War, once domestic political actors in Africa started playing a more decisive role in shaping local institutions without much international pressure.

Our argument bears some similarity to the work by Chenoweth and Stephan (2011), who explore the effectiveness of violent and nonviolent campaigns in conflicts between nonstate actors and state actors. Using quantitative and qualitative methods to analyze 323 campaigns from 1990 to 2006, the authors provide evidence that nonviolent campaigns are more successful than violent campaigns and are linked to more sustainable democracies. Other scholars, such as Huet-Vaughn (2017), Sharp (2005), and Nepstad (2011), have also shown that nonviolent social movements are more effective than violent strategies in achieving political goals.

The statistical association between type of independence movement and democracy that we document in this study is robust to a number of potential confounding factors, such as geographic features, natural resources, social and institutional changes induced by colonialism, and a host of postindependence controls, including income per capita, population size, ethnic cleavages, and religious diversity. Our baseline results suggest that the average level of democracy among rural insurgency countries is about 0.2 points lower (on a 0–1 scale) than the average level of democracy achieved by urban protest countries during the post-1990 period.

Since anticolonial movements could be endogenous to past quasi-democratic institutions or experiences, we provide evidence for the causality of the relationship between the type of independence movement and democracy by employing an instrumental variables approach that exploits exogenous variation in terrain conditions to predict anticolonial rural insurgencies. This strategy relates the degree of terrain roughness to the level of democracy through its impact on the probability that a country experienced an anticolonial rural insurgency. We rule out alternative accounts by showing that rough terrain does not affect income, violent conflict, ethnic diversity, or religious fractionalization after independence. Additionally, we perform a sensitivity analysis that relaxes the exclusion restriction assumption.

We also conduct difference-in-differences regression analysis with year and country fixed effects to test whether democracy levels changed deferentially after the end of the Cold War in rural insurgency versus urban protest countries. Our findings confirm that democracy levels increased differentially in urban protest countries, relative to rural insurgency ones, in the post-1990 period.

After presenting robust empirical evidence linking current-day levels of democracy in Africa to the type of independence movement experienced by each country, we test potential mechanisms. We adjudicate between two competing hypotheses. One focuses on institutional channels, such as accumulation of democratic capital, constitutional arrangements, and military rule, while the other focuses on behavioral path dependence. We find support for the latter hypothesis. Urban mass protests led to nonradical forms of political expression, such as demonstrations or workers strikes, which facilitated peaceful transfers of power and democratic reforms after the Cold War. The reverse is true where rural armed rebellion was the dominant strategy: armed rebellions created norms of violent collective action and repressive forms of government, which hindered the development of democratic institutions.

Historical Background

The Road to Independence

The decade following the end of World War II is perceived as a foundational moment for African political

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development (Cooper 2002, 2008; Mamdani 1996). The sporadic efforts to resist colonial rule that started at the beginning of the twentieth century evolved into large-scale Pan-African social movements, coinciding with the emergence of political parties, unions, newspapers, and a new generation of highly educated political elites. Among others, this was true of the African Democratic Rally, which pushed for independence from France in West and Equatorial Africa, as well as the Convention People's Party and the Tanganyika African National Union, which campaigned for independence from the British Empire in Ghana and Tanzania, respectively.

These new Pan-African political organizations were integrated into the international socialist and labor movement, and as such, reflected its internal ideological divide. One wing was composed of Western European-style socialists, such as Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana and Julius Nyerere in Tanzania (Cooper 2008). There were also the more radical Maoist leaders, including Frantz Fanon in Algeria, Dedan Kimathi in Kenya, and Ruben Um Nyobé in Cameroon (Mbembé 1996). These two sets of leaders advocated radically different paths toward independence. While Nkrumah and Nyerere advocated mass mobilization and peaceful strategies, Fanon, Kimathi, and Um Nyobé encouraged violent rebellion. For instance, in a May 1958 address to his party, Nyerere stressed the importance of nonviolent opposition to colonialism:

> We shall wage a relentlessly determined battle against [colonialism] until we are free. We shall use no violence. We shall stoop to no dishonest methods. We shall be as clean in our methods as we are in our aims. We shall publicly declare our methods as we publicly declare our aims. (1967, 59–60)

In contrast, Fanon colorfully advocated the use of violence as a necessary strategy of emancipation:

> [At the national level] insurgents' violence unites the people […] At the level of individuals, [it] is a cleansing force. It frees the native from his inferiority complex and from his despair and inaction; it makes him fearless and restores his self-respect. (1961, 94)

In the wake of this ideological divide, by the end of 1959, a dozen African countries had followed Fanon's strategy, conducting long, protracted rural armed rebellions. Several others followed Nyerere and Nkrumah's nonviolent approach, organizing demonstrations against colonial rule. The choice between these contrasting strategies was driven in part by geographic conditions, with enormous consequences for postindependence political institutions. To illustrate how geography dictated the choice between rural insurgency and urban protest, consider the case of Guinea Bissau and Cape Verde. Despite the Maoist ideological leaning of the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC), the leaders of the movement chose the urban protest strategy in the terrain of Cape Verde. The armed resistance occurred in the dense jungle of Guinea-Bissau. PAIGC's founder, Amilcar Cabral, wrote:

> Everyone knows that in general the guerrilla force uses the mountains as a starting point for the armed struggle. We had to convert our people themselves into the mountain needed for the fight in our country, and we had to take full advantage of the jungles and swamps in our country to create difficult conditions for the enemy in his confrontation with the victorious advance of our armed struggle. (1969, 18)

In addition to terrain conditions, demographic characteristics, such as patterns of urbanization or the proportion of European population, may have influenced the strategic choice between rural insurgency and urban protest. Nyerere's movement in Tanzania, for instance, takes place in a context of rapid urban growth. Precolonial and colonial institutions could also have shaped the menu of options for contesting colonial rule. The degree of inclusiveness of colonial institutions (Acemoglu et al. 2008), or the ethnic partitioning during the Scramble for Africa (Michalopoulos and Papaioannou 2013), could have affected the organization of opposition to colonialism.

These historical accounts illustrate the theoretical core of our article. Crucial choices made by countries on their road to independence significantly influenced norms of behavior and the development of postcolonial institutions. But the scope of democratization spread was often obstructed by foreign intrusion into African affairs, particularly during the Cold War (Schmidt 2013).

The Cold War in Independent Africa

The extent to which the type of independence movement shaped political regimes in Africa was inevitably conditioned by geopolitical factors imposed by the Cold War. The intense ideological battles of the superpowers fueled armed conflicts in Africa, having long-lasting impacts on state politics (Adebajo 2014; Scarnecchia 2018). Most civil wars during this period were essentially proxy wars

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between local leaders backed by different major powers (Schmidt 2013).

In a context of widespread corruption and fragile institutions, external intrusion undermined mechanisms of domestic accountability and fostered notoriously undemocratic leadership (Adebayo 2012). African political leaders typically acted in response to external demands. This was true of the US influence in Mobutu's Zaire and Kenyatta's Kenya, for instance, or the former Soviet Union's influence in Angola and Ethiopia. In this regard, Cold War politics contributed to the consolidation of autocratic regimes and delayed democratization processes.

Most of the former French colonies remained under France's security umbrella during the Cold War. The French military intervention also tended to foster authoritarian rule (Collier, Hoeffler, and Rohner 2009; Meredith 2011). This was the case even in countries where independence had been achieved through peaceful protests and where incipient democratic movements had begun to emerge. The paternalistic authoritarianism of Felix Houphouët-Boign in Ivory Coast and the series of military coups in Benin during the 1960s and 1970s exemplify how international pressures during the Cold War obstructed the prospects of earlier democratization. Among the former British colonies, Ghana followed a similar pattern: Nkrumah was overthrown as president by a military coup backed by the United States (Davidson 2019). Likewise, the Cold War was a significant factor in shaping Western responses to the liberation struggle in Portuguese African colonies (Davidson 2017).

Thus, it was not until the end of the Cold War that many African countries became relatively free from the influence of international geopolitical factors, and as a consequence, domestic political actors started playing a more decisive role in shaping local institutions.

Theoretical Argument

Africa is the continent with the greatest variation in political regimes. While a number of countries such as South Africa, Ghana, and Benin have experienced major democratic reforms after the end of the Cold War, others such as Cameroon, Congo, and Zimbabwe either remained autocratic or became unstable democracies plagued with political violence. There is a drastic divergence in democratic trajectories between these two sets of countries. We argue that this divergence in development paths is linked to the type of independence movement experienced by each country.

As described in the previous section, African proindependence leaders, confined by geographic conditions and ideological influences, had to choose between two fundamentally different strategies for organizing their anticolonial movements. One option was to adopt a nonviolent approach, relying on urban mass protests and the creation of clandestine political organizations. We refer to this as the *urban protest* approach. The other option was to organize a Maoist-style armed rebellion in rural areas. We call this the *rural insurgency* approach. The key distinction between these two approaches does not only relate to the use of violence but also to the type of organizational structure—urban protests are more horizontal and inclusive than rural insurgencies.

We posit that urban protest independence movements enabled participants to develop norms of peaceful political expression and compromise, which facilitate the emergence of democracy. In contrast, rural insurgencies generated political exclusion, which tends to perpetuate the use of violence as a form of political expression and conflict resolution. Our argument builds on the notion that democracy is a contingent outcome of conflict (Przeworski 1988). Democracy can be an immediate and direct form of conflict resolution between rival political forces, but conflict can also lead to an intermediate "regime" which may not be democratic yet facilitates the eventual emergence of democracy. This could happen if the conflict helps to develop institutions or norms that promote civic engagement and political participation. But conflict can also generate institutions or norms that induce violent political behavior and autocratic leadership, which can set the stage for autocratic regimes.

The logic of the argument is as follows. The organization of an opposition movement is a risky collective action. Individuals or groups decide to participate in the movement depending on their assessments of the likelihood that others would join them. In other words, independence movements can be regarded as coordination games between groups and individuals. There are at least two possible mechanisms to solve the coordination problem. One is through the use of violent actions to manipulate citizens' beliefs about the unpopularity of the government and to induce participation in the rebellion (Bueno de Mesquita 2010). The other is through organizing a peaceful revolutionary mass movement (Cabrales, Calvó-Armengol, and Wantchekon 2007). The type of public signal chosen—"rural insurgency" or "urban mass protest"—may depend on geography, demography, historical forces, and economic factors.

Now the question is: why do these two types of movements leave opposing political legacies? Mass protests have relatively horizontal organizational

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structures. Chenoweth and Stephan (2011) argue that unarmed resistance enhances legitimacy and increases broad-based participation, attracting diverse groups of participants. Physical and informational barriers to participation are also lower in these campaigns. By their very nature, nonviolent resistance enables participants to learn values of peaceful political participation, political compromise, and openness. As such, mass protests can provide the cultural and perhaps the institutional basis for civil liberties and democracy (Dahl 1971). In contrast, rural insurgencies are violent social movements with hierarchical structures. This affects the formation of state institutions in important ways. For example, access to the state may be restricted to those who "fought in the bush," fostering patronage politics and increased state censorship. Furthermore, there is empirical evidence that those who formerly used violence rarely shift to unarmed strategies (Svensson and Lindgren 2011). Therefore, armed rebellions facilitate the emergence of autocratic regimes.

It is important to take into consideration that, as previously discussed, the development of postcolonial African states was affected by the Cold War in extraordinary ways—mostly by proxy wars and authoritarian leaders promoted by the superpowers. We argue that this resulted in delayed democratization processes in the region. Hence, we expect the legacy of independence movements to have a more direct and visible influence on democracy patterns after the end of the Cold War, once security concerns in the region became less salient, allowing other goals such as economic trade and the spread of democracy to dominate domestic policy concerns.

The specific mechanisms that explain the persistence of this divergence in political outcomes may be *institutional* or *behavioral*. The former refers to formal institutional arrangements (e.g., laws, electoral rules, political systems, and constitutions) that may incentivize or undermine democratic development. The latter refers to path dependence of political attitudes and behavior (e.g., community norms and forms of political expression and mobilization), which often manifest in social movements and are associated with either autocratic or democratic rule. It is also possible that these divergent paths in democratic development are reinforced both by institutional and behavioral mechanisms.

Data

Our study combines cross-sectional and panel data from a number of sources. In this section, we describe our main variables and data sources. Table 1 shows descriptive statistics of key variables used in the analysis.

Democracy

We use Polity IV and Freedom House scores as measures of democracy. The former evaluates the openness of political regimes on a scale from −10 (*strongly autocratic*) to 10 (*strongly democratic*). The latter is an annual assessment of political rights and civil liberties in which each country is evaluated on a scale from 1 (*most free*) to 7 (*least free*). We normalized both scores on a scale from 0 (*strongly autocratic/least free*) to 1 (*strongly democratic/most free*). We use annual scores for all African countries between the year of independence and 2010. Figure 1 shows Polity IV scores across the world as of 2010.

Rural Insurgency versus Urban Protest

Our independent variable of interest distinguishes countries that experienced major rural insurgencies as their dominant type of independence movement, from those that achieved independence through urban protests. "Rural insurgency" refers to armed rebellions, predominantly based in rural settings and organized in the style of Mao's Red March. This involves guerrilla-like tactics, which are often associated with rough terrain (Fearon and Laitin 2003). On the other hand, "urban protest" refers to social movements that rely heavily on nonviolent forms of dissent and are more likely to occur in urban settings (Opp 2009). This includes the organization of mass protests and demonstrations, as well as the creation of underground political organizations that operate without violence. Based on in-depth reviews of African independence movements, we coded each country as either having a legacy of rural insurgency or urban protest. While these two forms of struggle are not mutually exclusive, we found that most African independence movements relied on strategies that were either mostly rural (armed rebellion) or mostly urban (mass protest). A country is coded as having a legacy of rural insurgency if it meets the following criteria: (1) a major episode of anticolonial *organized* violence took place as part of the independence movement; (2) the rebel group originated in a rural area or in the country's periphery; (3) the political goal of the rebel group was explicitly framed as independence or regime change; (4) guerrilla-like tactics were employed during the conflict; and (5) the estimated death toll was at least 1,000. Cases not coded

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TABLE 1 Summary of Descriptive Statistics

Variables	Observations	Mean	*SD*	Min.	Max.
Dependent variables					
Post-1990 Polity IV	47	0.50	0.24	0.05	1
Post-1990 Freedom House	49	0.39	0.28	0.00	0.99
Independent variables of interest					
Rural insurgency	49	0.43	0.50	0.00	1
Rough terrain	49	1.59	1.29	0.00	4.31
Geographic controls					
Fertile soil	49	3.17	0.94	0.01	4.49
Desert	49	0.83	1.33	0.00	4.33
Tropical climate	49	2.99	1.94	0.00	4.62
Distance to coast	49	0.32	0.24	0.00	0.81
Land size	49	9.89	2.14	3.85	12.38
Oil	49	0.07	0.16	0.00	0.45
Gems	49	0.29	0.46	0.00	1
Colonial controls					
Urban growth 1950s	47	3.32	1.82	0.00	8.50
French colony	49	0.39	0.49	0.00	1
British colony	49	0.39	0.49	0.00	1
Slave exports	49	8.85	5.12	0.00	15.10
European Descent	47	0.56	0.93	0.00	3.75
Contemporaneous controls					
GDP per capita	46	6.29	1.07	4.63	8.81
Population	47	15.89	1.38	12.99	18.65
Ethnic fractionalization	44	0.67	0.24	0.04	0.95
Religious fractionalization	44	0.44	0.23	0.00	0.78

Notes: The *post-1990 Polity IV* and *post-1990 Freedom House* variables measure the average level of democracy for each country between 1991 and 2010; *Rural insurgency* is coded as 1 if a country experienced rural insurgency, and 0 if urban protest; *Rough terrain* is the natural log of the percent of a country's area covered by mountains; *Fertile soil* is the log of the percentage of a country's land area that has fertile soil; *Desert* is the log of the percentage of desert; Tropical climate is the log of the percentage of tropical climate; *Distance to coast* is the log of the average distance to the closest ice-free coast; *Land size* is the log of the land area; *Oil* is a dummy equal to 1 if a country has oil; *Gems* is a dummy equal to 1 if a country has gem-quality diamonds; *Urban growth 1950s* is the average urban population growth rate between 1950 and 1955; *British* and *French* are colonial origin indicators; *Slave exports* is the log of the estimated number of slaves exported between 1400 and 1900; *European descent* is the log of the percentage of European descent; *GDP per capita* is the log of the 1991–2010 average GDP per capita; *Population* is the log of the average population size during the 1991–2010 period; and *Ethnic* and *Religious* fractionalization measures are the average levels during the 1990s.

as rural insurgency are considered cases of urban protest or unarmed resistance. Figure 2 shows the dominant type of movement experienced by each country.

One objection to this coding protocol is that if a country experienced both riots and demonstrations, it is considered a case of urban protest or unarmed resistance. Ghana, for instance, is coded as a case of urban protest, despite experiencing violence during the Accra riots. Some cases are not clean cut. However, very few countries experienced both mass protests and major episodes of organized violence. To illustrate our coding decisions in such cases, consider the Algerian War for independence, which took the form of both large-scale guerrilla and urban mass protests. We coded Algeria as

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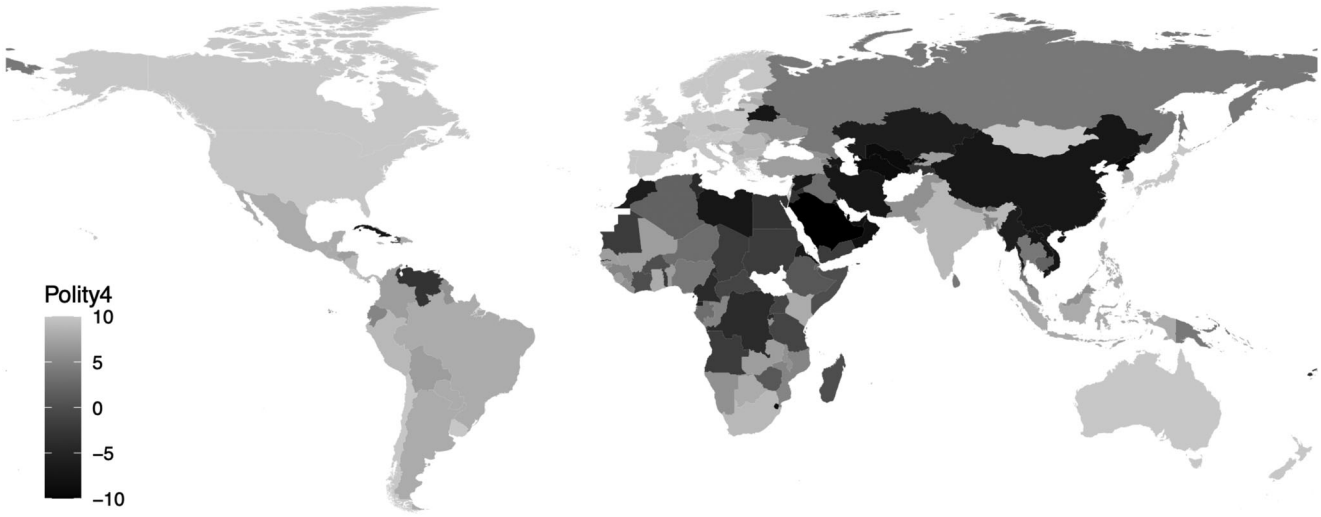
FIGURE 1 Democracy Levels around the World



Notes: Democracy levels as of 2010, based on the 21-point scale of the Polity IV index. Lighter gray indicates more democratic regimes.

a rural insurgency because the Front of National Liberation had an explicit military wing, the Army of National Liberation, which killed several civilians, and evolved into a disciplined fighting force by gaining control of mountainous of mountainous regions.[1] We conduct several sensitivity tests to address measurement concerns.

[1]A summary of coding decisions and additional details are available from the authors' websites.

FIGURE 2 Types of Independence Movements in Africa

Notes: This map shows countries where independence movements relied heavily on either *rural insurgency* or *urban protests*.

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Geographic Conditions

Theories about the feasibility of civil war emphasize the role of terrain conditions and natural resources (Ross 2006; Weinstein 2005). The presence of rough terrain is an important determinant of violent conflict, as it is ideal for guerrilla warfare (Buhaug and Gates 2002; Fearon and Laitin 2003; Hegre and Sambanis 2006). We use the percentage of a country's area covered by mountains as a measure of rough terrain, based on Collier and Hoeffler (2004). We incorporate other relevant geographic characteristics in the analysis: land size, fertile soil, desert, climate, distance to the coast, an indicator for presence of oil, and an indicator for the presence of gem-quality diamonds, based on Nunn and Puga (2012).

Precolonial and Colonial Data

Democracy levels may be correlated with changes induced by colonialism, such as demographic adjustments and institutions. More politically sophisticated colonial societies may have become naturally suitable for democracy and the use of nonviolent forms of political dissent. Likewise, variation in democracy levels across Africa may be explained by the type of institutions or policies implemented by colonizers, which may also correlate with the type of independence movement. We use the urban population growth rate from 1950 to 1955 (World Bank), indicators for British and French colonial rule, estimates of the number of slaves exported between 1400 and 1900 (Nunn and Wantchekon 2011), and the percentage of European descent population (Nunn and Puga 2012). Our analysis also includes measures of precolonial institutions (Murdock 1959), ethnic partitioning (Michalopoulos and Papaioannou 2016), and settler mortality (Acemoglu et al. 2008).

Postindependence Data

The core of our econometric analysis is cross-sectional and excludes posttreatment (postindependence) covariates to avoid biases in our estimates of the effect of rural insurgency on democracy. However, our results are robust to the inclusion of postindependence and contemporaneous controls. Specifically, we incorporate measures of GDP per capita and population size for the 1960–2010 period (World Bank), as well as measures of ethnic and religious fractionalization during the 1990s (Fearon and Laitin 2003). We also use data on the number of attempted coups d'état, armed rebellions, peaceful demonstrations, and workers' strikes during the 1960s (Morrison et al. 1972).

The Effect of Independence Movements on Democracy

Ordinary Least Squares Estimates

Democracy in Africa has been unevenly distributed. Figure 3 displays the relationship between the type of independence movement and democracy levels over time. Countries with a legacy of rural insurgency tend to be less democratic than their counterparts. This trend coincides with the "third wave of democratization" and is very clear after the end of the Cold War. Figure 4 shows point estimates from bivariate ordinary least squares (OLS) regressions of the average level of democracy on the rural insurgency indicator by decade.

Rural insurgency and democracy are negatively and significantly correlated during the 1990s and 2000s. Rural insurgency decreases average democracy scores by about 0.2 points on a 0–1 scale. This post-Cold War effect is consistent with our argument that it was not until the collapse of the Soviet Union that African countries became relatively free from the influence of international geopolitical factors, and as a consequence, domestic political actors started playing a more decisive role in shaping local institutions. In other words, democracy levels in Africa tended to be lower during the Cold War for reasons that provisionally nullified the effect of the type of anticolonial movement. This is also consistent with evidence presented by Boix (2011) that the great powers blocked, either directly or indirectly, a number of democratic transitions in the ideologically polarized context of the Cold War.[2]

We provide evidence that the statistical association between rural insurgency and post-1990 democracy is robust to several potential confounding factors and sensitivity checks. Specifically, we estimate the following cross-sectional regression:

$$Y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 RURAL_i + X_i'\phi + \varepsilon_i \quad (1)$$

where y_i is the post-1990 average level of democracy, as measured by either Polity IV or Freedom House, for country i; $RURAL_i$ is a dummy variable that takes on a value of 1 if a country is coded as having a legacy of rural insurgence; and X_i' is a vector of control variables, which

[2]Other studies have shown that the end of the Cold War reduced the influence of geopolitical criteria in promoting democracy worldwide (Dunning 2004; Gleditsch and Ward 2006; Levitsky and Way 2005; Meernik, Krueger, and Poe 1998).

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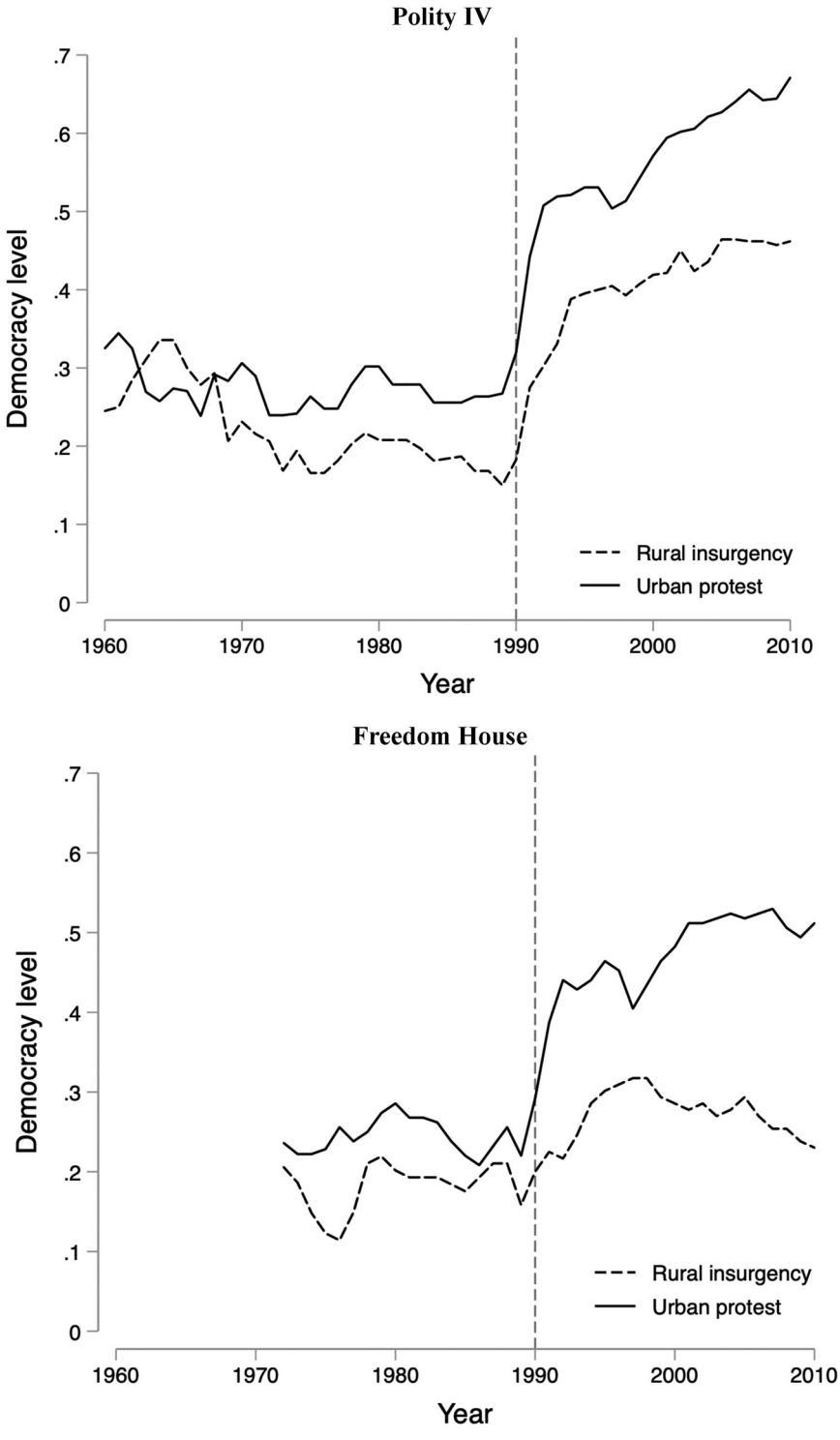
FIGURE 3 Democracy Levels, by Type of Independence Movement



Notes: Annual changes in the average level of democracy in rural insurgency versus urban protest countries, based on data from Polity IV and Freedom House.

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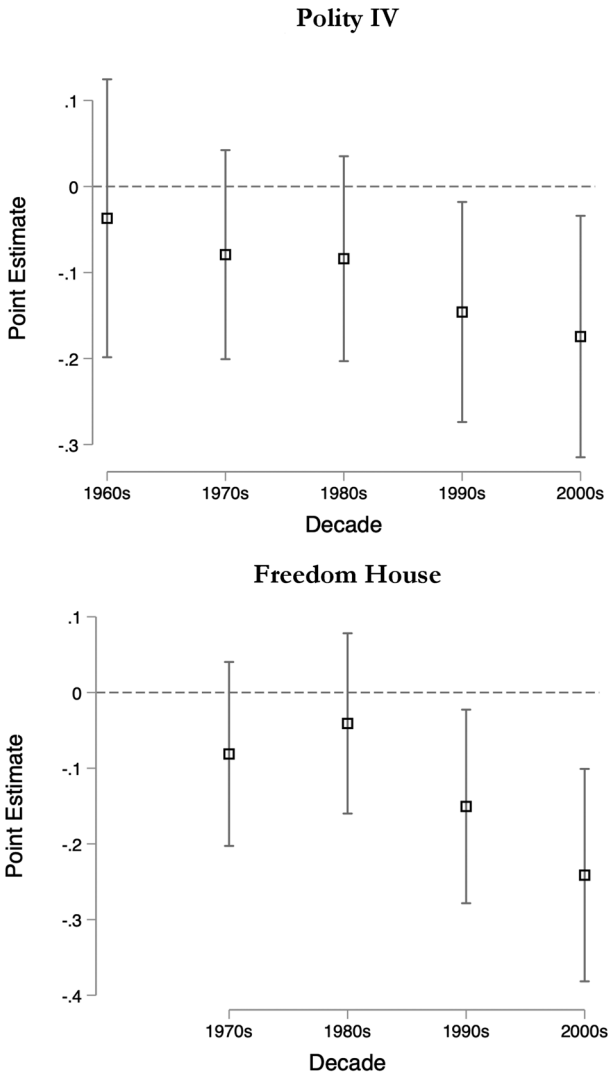
FIGURE 4 Estimated Effect of Rural Insurgency on Democracy, by Decade



Notes: The small squares represent point estimates from ordinary least squares regressions of the average democracy score by decade on the rural insurgency dummy. Vertical bars indicate 95% confidence intervals.

varies across specifications. As usual, β_0 is a constant, and ε_i is a disturbance term. The parameter of interest is β_1, which measures the effect of rural insurgency on democracy.

Main Results. The results in Table 2 confirm that the statistical association between rural insurgency and democracy is robust to a number of geographic, colonial, and contemporaneous controls. Estimates in columns (1) and (5) represent the effect of rural insurgency on democracy without controls, which is 0.16 (*SE* 0.07) based on Polity IV data, and −0.21 (*SE* 0.07) using Freedom House. These are fairly large effects since the mean Polity IV and Freedom house scores during the post-1990 period in Africa are 0.50 and 0.39, respectively.

In columns (2) and (6), we control for country-level geographic factors that are likely to be correlated with both rural insurgency and democratic development: the percentages of fertile soil, desert, and tropical climate, the average distance to the closest coast, land area, a dummy variable for the presence of oil, and a dummy variable for the presence of gem-quality diamonds. The estimated effect is about the same size as previously estimated and remains statistically significant at the conventional levels. Additionally, in columns (3) and (7), we incorporate colonial-era variables that could be potential confounders: urban growth during the 1950s, colonial rule (British and French), slave exports, and European descent. We obtain nearly identical results as those reported in columns (1) and (5). This is our benchmark specification, as it includes the full set of "pretreatment" covariates. Finally, the results in columns (4) and (8) include contemporaneous variables such as average post-1990 GDP per capita, population size during the same period, and average levels of ethnic and religious fractionalization during the 1990s. The estimated effect of rural insurgency on democracy remains negative and significant.

Sensitivity to Specific Countries and Subregions. One concern is the possibility of miscoding types of independence movements. Our findings could be sensitive to the exclusion or inclusion of countries that may have been miscoded or in which there is potentially a dual legacy of both rural insurgency and urban protest. Similarly, one could worry that the observed effect is largely driven by one single case, or by a specific subregion. We test the sensitivity of our results to the exclusion of individual countries and entire subregions. The results visualized in Figure A1 in the online supporting information indicate that our main findings remain statistically significant regardless of which country or subregion is excluded from the analysis. We also estimate a series of regressions that allow for interactions between the rural insurgency variable and subregion dummies. This exercise allows us to assess whether independence movements had more pronounced effects in some regions than others. It also allows us to account for potential miscoding issues and large differences in the type and timing of (de)colonization and national policies, among other factors. Figure 5 shows the marginal effects conditional on the five major subregions in the continent. The effects seem larger and more precisely estimated for North Africa, Southern Africa, and West Africa. The estimated

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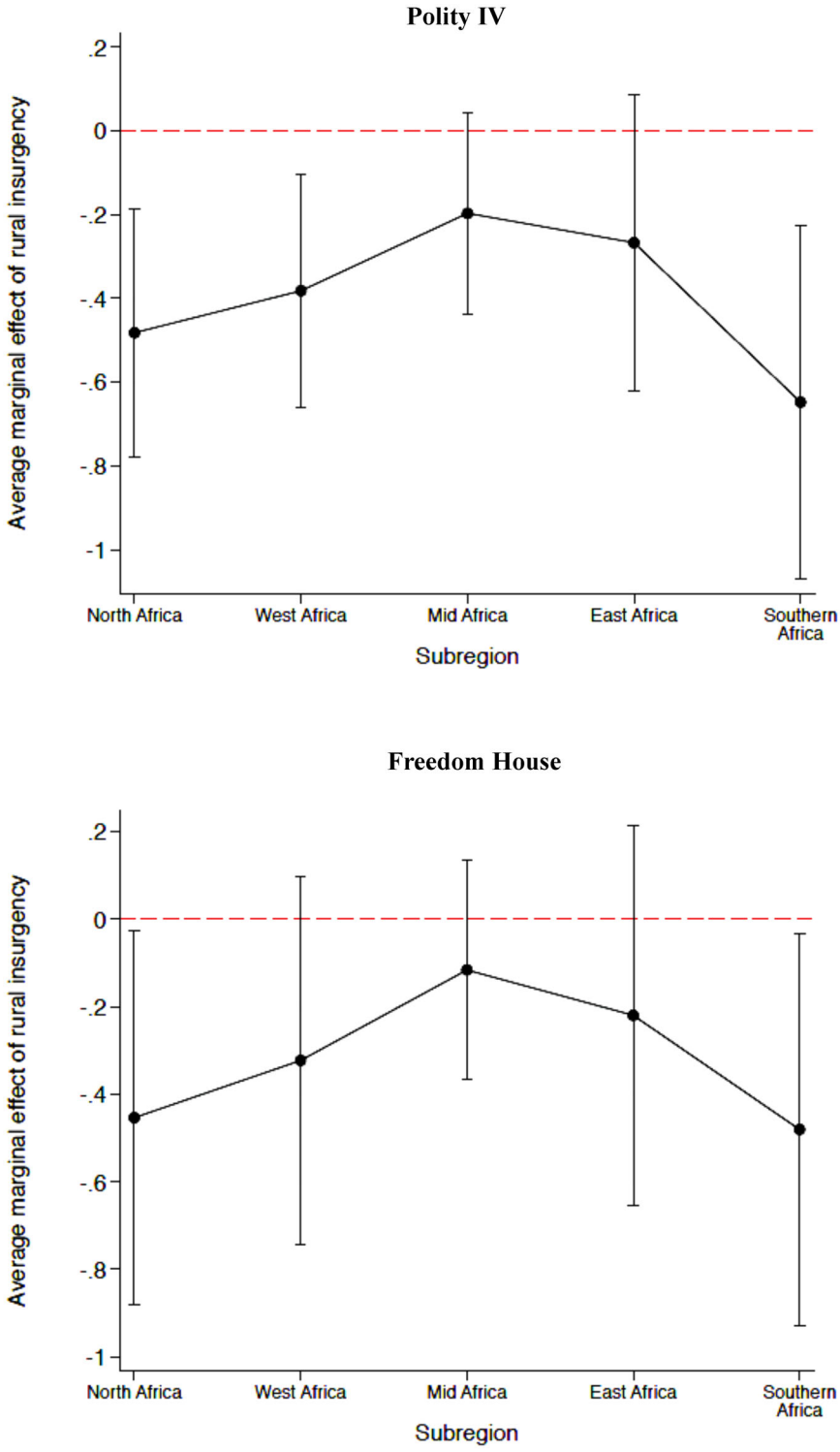
FIGURE 5 Marginal Effects Conditional on Subregion



Notes: This figure shows point estimates and 95% confidence intervals from a series of regression models that allow for interactions between *Rural insurgency* and subregion dummies, including the full set of covariates used in Table 2.

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TABLE 2 Rural Insurgency and Democracy

	Post-1990 Polity IV				Post-1990 Freedom House			
Rural insurgency	−0.16	−0.19	−0.21	−0.33	−0.21	−0.21	−0.20	−0.29
	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.09)	(0.07)	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.11)
Geographic controls?	—	Yes	Yes	Yes	—	Yes	Yes	Yes
Colonial controls?	—	—	Yes	Yes	—	—	Yes	Yes
Contemporaneous controls?	—	—	—	Yes	—	—	—	Yes
N	47	47	47	43	49	49	47	43
R^2	0.12	0.24	0.41	0.64	0.13	0.33	0.49	0.60
σ	0.23	0.23	0.22	0.18	0.27	0.26	0.23	0.22

Notes: All estimates are based on ordinary least squares regressions. Robust standard errors are shown in parentheses. The *post-1990 Polity IV* and *post-1990 Freedom House* variables measure the average level of democracy for each country between 1991 and 2010, which ranges from 0 (*strongly autocratic*) to 1 (*strongly democratic*). Geographic, colonial, and contemporaneous controls include those described in Table 1.

effects are negative in all cases, which is reassuring given the small sample size. The full set of results from these interaction models is reported in Table A1 in the online supporting information.

Additional Robustness Checks. In the online supporting information, we also show that our main results are robust to the inclusion of measures of precolonial institutions, ethnic partitioning, and settler mortality, which are strong predictors of regional development in Africa (Michalopoulos and Papaioannou 2013) and may be correlated with both democracy and the probability of having experienced a particular kind of anticolonial movement (see Tables A2–A4). We also conduct a coefficient stability test based on the method developed by Oster (2019). As shown in Figure A2 in the online supporting information, even when the proportion of selection on unobservables is large, our main estimates remain negative and statistically significant.

Instrumental Variable Estimates

To address additional concerns of reverse-causality, we employ an instrumental variable (IV) approach that exploits exogenous variation in a country's terrain to predict rural insurgency. This strategy relates the percentage of rough terrain to the level of post-1990 democracy through its impact on the probability of having experienced rural insurgency as the dominant form of struggle for independence. The first stage can be represented as follows:

$$RURAL_i = \beta_0 + \gamma TERRAIN_i + X_i'\rho + \nu_i \qquad (2)$$

where $TERRAIN_i$ is the log of the percentage of country i's area covered by mountains. The second stage is given by:

$$Y_i = \beta_0 + \lambda \widehat{RURAL}_i + X_i'\eta + \omega_i \qquad (3)$$

Equations (2) and (3) are estimated via two-stage least squares (2SLS). A causal interpretation of these estimates requires a valid first stage and the exclusion restriction to be satisfied. Variation in terrain roughness is plausibly exogenous to democratic institutions and strongly correlated with rural insurgency. Table 3 shows results from logit and linear probability models (LPM) of the first-stage relationship between rough terrain and rural insurgency. The 0.22 coefficient reported in the first column indicates that a country twice as mountainous as another has a 15-percentage-point higher probability of having a rural insurgency legacy. This finding is robust to control variables and statistically significant at the 1% level.[3]

Table A8 in the online supporting information shows that higher levels of rough terrain are associated with less democracy in the reduced-form regressions, controlling for different subsets of covariates. This is the first piece of evidence suggesting that terrain conditions affect democratization. The second-stage equation estimates are reported in Table 4. The results are robust to a number of controls and statistically significant at the conventional levels. The point estimates for our preferred specification—which includes geographic and colonial controls—imply that all else equal, rural insurgency

[3]We also show that rough terrain is a strong predictor of rural insurgency even after controlling for precolonial institutions, ethnic partitioning, and settler mortality (see Tables A5–A7 in the online supporting information).

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TABLE 3 Effect of Rough Terrain on Rural Insurgency (First-Stage Estimates)

Rough terrain	0.22	1.13	0.19	1.22	0.22	1.25	0.19	1.41
	(0.04)	(0.35)	(0.04)	(0.40)	(0.05)	(0.37)	(0.06)	(0.49)
Geographic controls?	—	—	Yes	Yes	—	—	Yes	Yes
Colonial controls?	—	—	—	—	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
N	49	49	49	49	47	47	47	47
R^2	0.31		0.42		0.36		0.44	
σ	0.42		0.42		0.43		0.45	
Estimation	LPM	Logit	LPM	Logit	LPM	Logit	LPM	Logit

Notes: Estimates are based on linear probability models (LPM) and logistic (Logit) regressions. Robust standard errors are shown in parentheses. The *Rough terrain* variable is measured as the natural log of the percent of a country's area covered by mountains. Geographic and colonial controls include those described in Table 1.

countries are about 0.28 or 0.41 points less democratic than their counterparts.

Estimates from this instrumental variable approach should be interpreted as a local average treatment effect (LATE), that is, the average treatment effect for the compliers. In our model, the compilers are the countries in which the type of independence movement was chosen according to the random variation in terrain conditions. As noted in the historical background section, we argue that the choice between urban versus rural strategies was driven in part by geographic conditions. But there may be cases in which the adoption of a particular type of independence movement was dominated by ideological influences, or partly determined by precolonial and colonial factors, regardless of geography. Would the effects of rural insurgency on democracy be different in such cases? Following our theoretical argument, we should not expect to observe significant heterogeneous effects, since the mechanisms that are associated with either autocratic or democratic rule refer to institutional or behavioral path dependence which originates at the critical juncture of independence movements.[4]

Potential Violations of the Exclusion Restriction. To satisfy the exclusion restriction, rough terrain should affect post-1990 democracy levels only through its effect on the adoption of rural insurgency as a means to achieve independence. One potential violation of the exclusion restriction is that terrain conditions may affect democracy through income-related channels. Irregularities in the terrain may block access to resources and hence affect both income and democracy.[5] One could also argue that

[4]Precolonial and colonial factors that could influence both the type of independence movement and the development of political institutions have been incorporated in our regression analysis to alleviate potential concerns in this regard.

[5]Recent work by Nunn and Puga (2012) indicates that ruggedness is positively correlated with economic development in Africa since more rugged countries experienced less slave exports. However, the authors focus on "small-scale terrain irregularities" (2012, 21).

TABLE 4 Effect of Rural Insurgency on Democracy Using Instrumental Variables Approach

	Post-1990 Polity IV				Post-1990 Freedom House			
Rural insurgency	−0.21	−0.26	−0.21	−0.28	−0.32	−0.38	−0.32	−0.41
	(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.13)	(0.13)	(0.13)	(0.12)	(0.15)
Geographic controls?	—	Yes	—	Yes	—	Yes	—	Yes
Colonial controls?	—	—	Yes	Yes	—	—	Yes	Yes
N	47	47	47	47	49	49	47	47
R^2	0.11	0.22	0.26	0.39	0.09	0.26	0.31	0.39
σ	0.22	0.21	0.20	0.19	0.27	0.24	0.23	0.21

Notes: Estimates are based on two-stage least-squares regressions. Robust standard errors are shown in parentheses. Rural insurgency is instrumented by *Rough terrain*, which is measured as the natural log of the percent of a country's area covered by mountains. Geographic and colonial controls include those described in Table 1.

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mountainous terrain may affect the prospects for democracy through mobility or mixing of the population—ethnolinguistic or religious diversity are often viewed as determinant of political development (Michalopoulos 2012). A more plausible violation of the exclusion restriction is the possibility that rough terrain facilitates the adoption of guerrilla tactics, not only before, but also after independence.

We address these concerns in two ways. First, we conduct a series of falsification exercises that estimate the potential effects of rough terrain on postindependence measures of economic performance (income and economic growth), social diversity (ethnic and religious fractionalization), and violent conflict (number of civil wars and civil war years). If rough terrain affects democracy through any of these channels, we should then observe that there is a significant statistical association between rough terrain and the measure of the channel in question. We report the results from these falsification exercises in the online supporting information. As shown in Table A9, rough terrain is not statistically associated with a country's economic performance, degree of social diversity, or civil war incidence between the year of independence and 1989. Based on these results, we feel confident that rough terrain does not affect democracy levels through any of these alternative channels.

Second, we explore the sensitivity of our IV estimates to different degrees of violation of the exclusion restriction, following Conley, Hansen, and Rossi (2012). We provide evidence that our IV estimates remain statistically significant even assuming large departures from perfect exogeneity. Figures A3 and A4 in the online supporting information show that the direct effect of rough terrain on democracy should be between 40% and 50% of the estimated effect in the reduced-form regressions so that our results become insignificant. This is unlikely to be the case since we have already ruled out alternative accounts such as income, violent conflict, ethnic diversity, and religious fractionalization after independence. Further details about these tests can be found in the online supporting information.

Difference-in-Differences Estimates

Given the time-invariant nature of our treatment, most of our econometric analysis is cross-sectional. One obvious drawback of this approach is that it precludes the estimation of country fixed effects, given that the unit-effect dummies and the rural insurgency variable would be perfectly collinear. To incorporate country fixed effects in our analysis, that is, to account for time-invariant characteristics of the countries, we exploit the structural break in the democracy data generated by the collapse of the Soviet Union.

As previously discussed, we argue the effect of rural insurgency on democracy is more noticeable after 1990 because foreign political actors exerted power and influence in African politics during the Cold War. If this argument is correct, we should see that democracy levels changed differentially after 1990 in rural insurgency versus urban protest countries. To empirically test this hypothesis, we employ a difference-in-differences (DID) approach with country and year fixed effects, which compares democracy levels before and after the end of the Cold War in rural insurgency versus urban protest countries. Specifically, we estimate:

$$Y_{it} = \alpha_i + \tau_t + (RURAL_i \; x \; POST_t)\theta + X'_{it}\psi + \epsilon_{it} \quad (4)$$

Here, Y_{it} is the level of democracy for country i in year t; α_i are country fixed effects that control for time-invariant characteristics of the countries; τ_t are year fixed effects that capture time-specific shocks common to all countries; $RURAL_i \; x \; POST_t$ interacts the rural insurgency variable with a post-1990 indicator; X'_{it} is a vector of time-varying controls; and ϵ_{it} is a disturbance term. The coefficient of interest is θ, which captures the dierential change in expected levels of democracy in rural insurgency versus urban protest countries after the end of the Cold War. We estimate Equation (4) via OLS using robust standard errors clustered by country.

The results are reported in Table 5. In columns (1) and (5), we estimate the effect of rural insurgency on Polity IV and Freedom House scores, respectively, controlling for geographic characteristics of the countries interacted with the post-1990 indicator. In columns (2) and (6), we incorporate the set of colonial controls interacted with the post-1990 indicator. Additionally, in columns (3) and (7), we control for per capita income and population size.[6] We also acknowledge the possibility that democracy trends vary between subregions by incorporating subregion-specific linear time trends in columns (4) and (8). The data confirm our previous findings, strengthening the plausibility of causation. On average, rural insurgency countries became between −0.18 and −0.12 less democratic than urban protest countries after the end of the Cold War.[7]

[6]The models that include annual income per capita and population size should be interpreted with caution, since their inclusion may cause posttreatment bias in our estimates.

[7]Note that these estimates can be interpreted as a lower bound on the effect size of rural insurgency if independence movements had any effect on democracy before 1990.

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TABLE 5 Effect of Rural Insurgency on Democracy Using Difference-in-Differences Approach

	Post-1990 Polity IV				Post-1990 Freedom House			
Rural insurgency	−0.14	−0.18	−0.17	−0.13	−0.14	−0.13	−0.17	−0.12
	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.06)	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.07)
Country fixed effects?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year fixed effects?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Geographic controls × post-1990?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Colonial controls x post-1990?	—	Yes	Yes	Yes	—	Yes	Yes	Yes
Contemporaneous controls?	—	—	Yes	Yes	—	—	Yes	Yes
Subregion-specific time trends?	—	—	—	Yes	—	—	—	Yes
N	2,196	2,196	1,945	1,945	1,855	1,784	1,621	1,621
Countries	47	47	46	46	49	47	46	46
R^2	0.38	0.45	0.46	0.48	0.24	0.32	0.31	0.36
σ	0.18	0.16	0.16	0.16	0.18	0.17	0.17	0.16

Notes: Estimates are based on ordinary least squares regressions. Geographic and colonial controls include those described in Table 1 interacted with a post-1990 indicator. Contemporaneous controls include annual measures of GDP p.c. and population. Subregion specific linear time trends are defined based on the following subregions: North Africa, East Africa, West Africa, Middle Africa, and Southern Africa. Robust standard errors clustered by country are shown in parentheses.

Potential Mechanisms

We consider two alternative pathways through which African independence movements could affect contemporary political outcomes: institutional and behavioral mechanisms.[8] Our first hypothesis focuses on institutional path dependence. We examine the role of postindependence constitutional arrangements in shaping future democratic development. Anticolonial rural insurgencies may have generated exclusive institutions immediately after independence, reflecting the "zero-sum" nature of violent conflicts, whereas urban protests may have generated inclusive constitutional arrangements, reflecting the broad diversity of mass movements. In other words, formal institutions resulting from the type of independence movement experienced by each country may account for present-day variation in democracy levels.

Our second hypothesis is about behavioral path dependence. Following Avidit, Blackwell, and Sen (2018), we conceptualize behavioral path dependence as a process in which divergent political cultures persist due to political attitudes, collective behavior, and community norms being passed down over time. Within the context of our study, we hypothesize that rural insurgencies may have perpetuated political violence, making postcolonial armed rebellions, attempted coups d'etat, and civil wars more likely to occur in countries that fought violently for their independence. This could be because rural insurgencies legitimated the use of violence as a form of political expression and facilitated the spread of arms. Conversely, urban mass protests may have facilitated the emergence of a civil society and democratic norms by normalizing the use of peaceful protest as a form of political dissent.

We operationalize these hypotheses as follows. First, independence movements could have influenced accumulation levels of "democratic capital" (periods of representative institutions) during the Cold War years. To examine this specific mechanism, we construct a measure of democratic capital based on Persson and Tabellini (2009). This measure takes into account a country's historical experience with democracy between independence and 1989 and assumes that democratic experience is more valuable the closer to the present it is.[9] We also investigate the relationship between rural insurgency and alternative institutional outcomes. Specifically, we test whether rural insurgency is associated with military rule,

[8]See Avidit et al. (2018), Nunn and Wantchekon (2011), and Wittenberg (2006) for illustrations of institutional versus behavioral and cultural mechanisms behind historical legacies.

[9]According to this measure, democratic capital accumulates in years of democracy and depreciates geometrically in years of autocracy at a rate (1- δ). Further details on how this is estimated can be found in Persson and Tabellini (2009).

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TABLE 6 Institutional Outcomes as Potential Mechanisms of the Relationship between Rural Insurgency and Democracy

	Democratic Capital		Competitiveness		Direct Legislature		Military Rule	
Rural insurgency	−0.11	−0.09	−0.35	−0.25	−0.10	−0.08	0.09	0.12
	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.21)	(0.25)	(0.08)	(0.10)	(0.16)	(0.18)
Geographic controls?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Colonial controls?	—	Yes	—	Yes	—	Yes	—	Yes
N	45	45	45	45	44	44	44	44
R^2	0.22	0.55	0.24	0.49	0.25	0.30	0.29	0.43
σ	0.20	0.17	0.82	0.72	0.23	0.24	0.47	0.45

Notes: Estimates are based on ordinary least squares regressions. Outcomes are measured from Independence to 1989. Geographic and colonial controls include those described in Table 1. Robust standard errors are shown in parentheses.

the existence of an at least partly elected legislature, and levels of political competitiveness, from independence to 1989, as defined in the Political Institutions and Political Events (PIPE) data set (Przeworski et al. 2013) and Polity IV (Marshall, Jaggers, and Gurr 2011).

Second, we test whether the type of independence movement is associated with the incidence of antidemocratic and prodemocratic social movements during the Cold War. Following Zald and Berger (1978), we distinguish between three major forms of social movements: coup d'état, insurgency, and mass movements. Using data from the Black Africa Handbook (Morrison et al. 1972), we constructed measures of attempted coups, armed rebellions, peaceful demonstrations, and workers' strikes from independence to 1969. We also test whether the type of independence movement is associated with the incidence of insurgencies during the Cold War, measured as the number of civil wars, total civil war years, and the fraction of civil war years between independence and 1989, based on data from Collier and Hoeffler (2004) and the Correlates of War Project (Sarkees and Wayman 2010). Additionally, as we discuss later, we use individual-level survey data to assess whether rural insurgency is associated with higher levels of support for antidemocratic behavior and authoritarian rule.

The results in Table 6 show that the relationship between rural insurgency and institutional outcomes during the Cold War is not significantly different from zero. Rural insurgency is negatively correlated with the accumulation of democratic capital, but this association is not statistically significant when controlling for geographic and colonial characteristics. The results in columns (3)–(6) indicate that there is no significant difference between urban protest and rural rebellion countries in terms of pre-1990 competitiveness and the use of elections in legislatures. In addition, the results in columns (7) and (8) suggest that the type of independence movement is not significantly correlated with the likelihood of military rule.

We find support for the second hypothesis. As shown in Table 7, rural insurgency countries exhibit higher incidence of political violence in the form of coups and armed rebellions and lower incidence of peaceful social movements (demonstrations and strikes). Furthermore, rural insurgency countries exhibit a higher incidence of violent conflict, measured by either the number of civil wars, the number of civil war years, or the fraction of years affected by civil war, between independence and 1989 (Table 8). The most conservative estimate suggests that rural insurgency countries experienced almost seven times as many years of civil war during the Cold War as urban protest countries.

Table 9 presents the results from a mediation analysis based on the approach proposed by Imai et al. (2011). We estimate three different models to assess the role of coups, peaceful movements (demonstrations and strikes), and armed rebellions, as causal mechanisms that transmit the effect of rural insurgency on democracy. Each model produces four relevant estimates: (1) the average causal mediation effect (ACME), which captures the amount of the effect can be attributed to the mechanism; (2) the average direct effect of rural insurgency, that is, the amount of the effect that is not mediated by the mechanism; (3) the total effect; and (4) the percent mediated, which is the percentage of the effect that is mediated by the mechanism. We estimate these models via OLS including the full set of covariates and running 1,000 simulations for quasi-Bayesian approximation of parameter uncertainty.

Our mediation analysis suggests that the percent of the total effect of rural insurgency mediated by peaceful social movements ranges between 29% and 49% on average, whereas the percent mediated by coups ranges

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TABLE 7 Social Movements as Potential Mechanisms of the Relationship between Rural Insurgency and Democracy

	Attempted Coups		Armed Rebellions		Demonstrations		Workers Strikes	
Rural insurgency	0.28	5.21	0.42	1.97	−1.22	−2.18	−1.55	−1.48
	(0.64)	(2.13)	(0.50)	(0.96)	(0.60)	(1.16)	(0.39)	(0.70)
Geographic controls?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Colonial controls?	—	Yes	—	Yes	—	Yes	—	Yes
N	29	29	29	29	29	29	29	29
Pseudo R^2	0.19	0.42	0.34	0.42	0.26	0.48	0.32	0.37

Notes: Estimates are based on Poisson regressions. Outcomes are measured from Independence to 1969. Geographic and colonial controls include those described in Table 1. Robust standard errors are shown in parentheses.

between 18% and 23%. We consider these results only as suggestive, since they are not statistically significant at the conventional levels (we only have 29 observations in this subset of the analysis). The percent of the total effect of rural insurgency mediated by the incidence of civil wars during the Cold War ranges between 30% and 32%. These results are based on a sample of 42 countries and are statistically significant. Taken together, these findings indicate that social movements—either prodemocratic or antidemocratic ones—stemming from the type of independence were key in determining the future of democracy in post-Cold War Africa.

We provide additional evidence in support of the behavioral hypothesis in Table A12 in the online supporting information. We present results from a series of regressions using Afrobarometer survey data to compare political attitudes in rural insurgency versus urban protest countries. We find that respondents in rural insurgency countries are less likely to support democracy and more likely to support one-party rule and the use of violence in politics. These results remain unchanged after controlling for respondent-level characteristics and are statistically significant at the conventional levels using robust standard errors clustered by country. See the online supporting information for additional details.

Concluding Remarks

This study underscores the importance of historical events and behavioral path dependence on democratic change. Based on a critical junctures approach, we show that choices made at a foundational moment in African political history map onto current levels of democratic development. Major anticolonial insurgencies

TABLE 8 Civil Wars as Potential Mechanisms of the Relationship between Rural Insurgency and Democracy

	Civil Wars (Collier and Hoeffler)		Civil Wars (COW)		Civil War Years		Fraction of Civil War Years	
Rural insurgency	1.89	1.94	2.14	2.31	1.89	2.16	0.23	0.17
	(0.53)	(0.64)	(0.51)	(0.70)	(0.45)	(0.77)	(0.08)	(0.09)
Geographic controls?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Colonial controls?	—	Yes	—	Yes	—	Yes	—	Yes
N	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42
Pseudo R^2	0.54	0.64	0.57	0.72	0.54	0.67	—	—
R^2	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.38	0.56

Notes: Estimates are based on Poisson regressions, except those reported in the last two columns, which are based on ordinary least squares. Outcomes are measured from independence to 1989. Geographic and colonial controls include those described in Table 1. Robust standard errors are shown in parentheses.

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TABLE 9 Mediation Analysis of the Role of Coups, Peaceful Movements, and Armed Rebellions as Causal Mechanisms

	Post-1990 Polity IV	Post-1990 Freedom House
Mechanisms		
Attempted coups		
ACME	−0.05 [−0.19, 0.03]	−0.04 [−0.19, 0.05]
Direct effect of Rural Insurgency	−0.15 [−0.36, 0.07]	−0.15 [−0.41, 0.11]
Total effect of Rural Insurgency	−0.19 [−0.42, 0.03]	−0.19 [−0.47, 0.09]
Percent mediated	23	18
N	29	29
Demonstrations and workers strikes		
ACME	−0.06 [−0.23, 0.06]	−0.11 [−0.32, 0.02]
Direct effect of Rural Insurgency	−0.13 [−0.37, 0.11]	−0.08 [−0.35, 0.20]
Total effect of Rural Insurgency	−0.19 [−0.41, 0.05]	−0.19 [−0.45, 0.10]
Percent mediated	29	49
N	29	29
Civil Wars		
ACME	−0.07 [−0.17, −0.00]	−0.07 [−0.18, −0.00]
Direct effect of Rural Insurgency	−0.16 [−0.29, −0.02]	−0.15 [−0.29, −0.00]
Total effect of Rural Insurgency	−0.23 [−0.37, −0.08]	−0.22 [−0.38, −0.06]
Percent mediated	30	32
N	42	42

Notes: Estimates obtained via ordinary least squares including the full set of covariates. Quasi-Bayesian approximation of parameter uncertainty based on 1,000 simulations. 95% confidence intervals are shown in brackets.

contributed to the formation of autocratic regimes, while peaceful protests against colonial rule fostered democracy. In the context of African political development, our findings emphasize that colonial history matters not only because of "extractive" or inefficient policies and institutions created by colonial administrations but also because of the way African proindependence leaders chose to oppose colonizers.

Our focus on past political events does not imply that structural factors such as current levels of economic development, inequality, ethnic diversity, and education are not important in explaining political change. We argue that social movements, broadly defined, mediate the relationship between structural variables and institutional change. For example, economic inequalities and ethnic diversity may contribute to the radicalization of social movements, which in turn facilitates the emergence of autocratic regimes. In contrast, economic prosperity and urbanization may lead to the emergence of moderate mass movements which facilitate the implementation of democratic reforms. In other words, we do not contradict previous explanations of democratization or democratic consolidation (Przeworski et al. 2000; Teorell 2010). Instead, we show that historical social movements help understand the link between structural conditions and democratic development.

Our study suffers from data limitations. We would have benefited from rich microlevel data to draw more robust causal inferences about the relationship between historical social movements and contemporary institutional outcomes. One way to do this would be to look at within-country variation in social movements (in Africa and elsewhere). Social movements' tactics vary between and within countries, and this variation may be crucial to understand why some movements are more successful than others at achieving their political goals and fostering democratic rule (Schock 2005; Wood 2000). This is beyond the scope of our study, but a more fine-grained analysis of the use of violent and nonviolent tactics within countries would improve our understanding of the mechanisms that generate democratic norms and institutions.

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Supporting Information

Additional supporting information may be found online in the Supporting Information section at the end of the article.

Appendix A: Robustness to Pre-colonial Institutions, Ethnic Partitioning, and Settler Mortality
Appendix B: Coefficient Stability
Appendix C: Sensitivity Analysis of Instrumental Variables Estimates
Appendix D: Additional Evidence: Replicating Fearon and Laitin (2003) within Africa
Appendix E: Afrobarometer Analysis
Appendix F: Tables
Appendix G: Figures

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