Summary and Keywords

European colonialism in Africa was brief, lasting less than a century for most of the continent. Nevertheless, scholars have enumerated myriad long-term political effects of this brief period of colonial rule. First, Europeans determined the number, size, and shape of African states through their partition of the continent, with contemporary implications for state viability, strength, and legitimacy. Second, colonial rule influenced the nature of ethnic boundaries and their salience for politics through the use of indirect rule, language and labor policies, and the location of internal administrative boundaries. Third, colonial rule significantly shaped the nature of postcolonial state-society relations by divorcing the state from civil society during the colonial era and by engendering deep mistrust of the state as a benevolent actor. Fourth, many colonial institutions were preserved at independence, including the marriage of state institutions and customary rule, with deleterious effects. Fifth, differential colonial investments across communities and regions generated significant inequality, with continued political implications in the 21st century. The identification of these long-term effects has largely resulted from empirical comparisons across different forms of colonial rule, especially comparing territories administered by different colonial powers. Future research should move beyond this blunt approach, instead pursuing more disaggregated and nuanced measures of both colonial rule and its political legacies, as well as more scholarship on the long-term interaction between colonial and indigenous political institutions.

Keywords: European colonialism, politics, institutions, ethnicity, inequality, geography, African politics

European Colonialism in Sub-Saharan Africa

European contact with sub-Saharan Africa dates back to the 15th century, during the mercantilist period of colonization (Foa, 2017; Olsson, 2009). During this time, trading companies, primarily Portuguese and Dutch, began establishing ports along the coast. The scale of contact and trade intensified with the Atlantic slave trade, but most European outposts paid tribute to local African authorities and made no claims of political authority. Nevertheless, this early European contact had huge implications for politics in

western and central Africa, as demand for slaves fueled wars and raids far into the hinterland, undermining strong and centralized states in the process (Nunn, 2008).

Colonial rule in Africa, however, began in earnest much later, during the "imperialist period" of colonization. European expansion beyond the coasts was made possible in the mid-19th century by a combination of technological advances (Herbst, 2000), including the Maxim gun, steam-powered vessels, and most importantly quinine, which was developed as a prophylaxis and treatment for malaria.

The demand for exploration, and ultimately conquest, was driven by three forces. First, there was intense imperialist competition within Europe, compounded by the destabilizing effect of both German and Italian unification. Relative power was expressed in this competition through the establishment and expansion of overseas colonies, with sub-Saharan Africa remaining as one of the last available frontiers for colonial conquest. Second, the industrial revolution demanded access to raw materials, and Africa was seen as a potential source after its commercial transition away from a slave-based economy (Clarence-Smith, 2007; Mamdani, 1996). Indeed, empirical work demonstrates that a commodity price boom in the mid- to late 19th century contributed to European imperialist interest and, ultimately, the so-called Scramble for Africa (Frankema, Williamson, & Wotjer, 2015). Third, colonial endeavors were supported by Christian evangelists' desires to "civilize" the continent, primarily through the establishment of missions. Cage and Rueda (2016) documented the extent of missionary investment, showing that by beginning of the 20th century, there were over 700 different Protestant mission stations across the continent.

This imperialist expansion culminated in the Scramble for Africa in the 1880s, and the Berlin Conference in late 1884, at which European powers agreed on the conditions required for colonial claims. Over the next decade, the vast majority of sub-Saharan Africa was colonized, at least on paper, by one of the European colonial powers. Figure 1 shows a map of contemporary sub-Saharan Africa states and the European colonial power that controlled each before World War I.[1] The French dominated western Africa, the British holdings were primarily in the east and south of the continent, the Portuguese held territories around their historic trading outposts, the Italians colonized parts of the Horn of Africa, Belgium held the Congo, and Spain had one small colony in contemporary Equatorial Guinea. German holdings were transferred to other European powers by the League of Nations after World War I: Togoland (Togo) to France, German East Africa (Tanzania) to Britain, Rwanda and Burundi to Belgium, and German Southwest Africa (Namibia) to newly independent South Africa.

Figure 1. Colonial holdings of contemporary sub-Saharan African states prior to World War I.

There was significant variation both across and within colonies in terms of the nature of colonial rule. However, most European colonies shared a broadly similar institutional structure. This entailed a European governor general, the highest-ranking official in any colony or protectorate, with a number of district commissions (or *commandant de Cercle* in French territories) who reported to them. Because they were typically few in number, and communication across space was difficult, these district commissioners enjoyed significant autonomy from both their governor and the metropole (Huillery, 2009).

Beyond these European administrators, most colonial apparatuses relied on indigenous staff. This is in response to what Mamdani (1996) called the "native question"—the problem of how to rule a large number of subjects with so few European personnel. The nature of the collaboration between European and African segments of the colonial structure has been conceptually classified in terms of the degree to which Europeans ruled directly. Under more direct rule, authority was centralized in the colonial state, with each level of administration reporting to and receiving orders from the one above it. In this case, indigenous colonial staff constituted the lower rungs of the state, and their authority to rule extended from their clerical position. Such indigenous staff were typically recruited from the mission-educated population rather than from preexisting structures of authority. When traditional authorities such as chiefs were employed, their roles were so significantly altered that it constituted a clear break from any source of authority that preceded it (Crowder, 1964). In contrast, under indirect rule, the colonial state rested above a set of independent traditional authority structures. The heads of such traditional authorities ruled at the pleasure of the colonial state but were largely autonomous in their exercise of it, so long as they contained any resistance to the colonial state and delivered required taxes. Of course, these characterizations are stylized representations of the potential variation in the directness of rule, which were rarely fully realized in practice (Kiwanuka, 1970; Lonsdale, 1997; Schneider, 2006). But just because realities were

messier on their ground than the theoretical distinction between direct and indirect rule would suggest does not render the distinction useless, as it draws attention to real differences in the how colonial power was exercised and how it was experienced by colonial subjects (MacLean, 2010). It is, perhaps, most useful to think of the directness of rule on a spectrum, rather than as the dichotomous distinction between direct and indirect rule that is largely conceptual.

A large body of scholarship has discussed the degree to which different European colonial powers employed different degrees of the directness of rule. Received wisdom was that the British were more likely to use indirect rule than other colonial powers, and that the French, Belgians, Germans, and especially Portuguese employed more direct forms of rule (e.g., Berhard, Reenock, & Nordstrom, 2004; Crowder, 1964; Lange, 2004; Lange, Mahoney, & vom Hau, 2006). However, empirical research suggests that such differences were more theoretical than actual, as all colonial powers used varying degrees of direct rule across and within their colonies (Herbst, 2000; Kiwanuka, 1970; Lange, 2009; Lange, Mahoney, & vom Hau, 2006; Mamdani, 1996). The empirical directness of rule seems to have depended on the demands and capabilities of the particular actors in particular colonial contexts. For example, Mamdani (1996) argued that true direct rule was only possible in urban areas and thus that most of rural colonial Africa was ruled indirectly. Gerring, Ziblatt, van Gorp, and Arevalo (2011) asserted that choice of how directly to rule was driven by the degree to which existing indigenous polities were centralized. There is also evidence that the directness of rule varied significantly over time within the same colony. For example, the highly centralized and direct nature of Portuguese colonial rule prior to 1910 was later relaxed, and more indigenous authorities were incorporated into the colonial apparatus in order to better mobilize more resources for the colonial state (Clarence-Smith, 2007; Bandeira Jerónimo, 2018). Thus, while scholarship on the legacies of colonial rule often assumes that the identity of the colonizer resulted in systematic legacies, the example of the directness of rule suggests that it is often necessary to disaggregate beyond colonial power.

Despite variation in its form, scholars argue that the internal logic of colonial rule was driven almost universally by two primary imperatives: maintaining a minimum degree of control over the population to prevent violent resistance, and raising enough revenue to be self-sufficient. In response to these aims, the colonial state was primarily repressive, coercive, and extractive (Young, 1994), at least in the majority of colonies, which lacked significant numbers of European settlers (Acemoglu, Johnson, & Robinson, 2001). Prior to the last few decades of colonial rule, few rights or services were extended to African populations by the colonial state. Education and health services that were available tended to be provided by Christian missions, only loosely affiliated with official colonial administrations (Wantchekon, Klasnja, & Novta, 2015; Woodberry, 2012; Lankina & Getachew, 2012). In addition, there was virtually no political representation for indigenous subjects until the last days of colonial rule, once decolonization was clearly inevitable.

On the whole then, European colonialism was relatively short lived and involved minimal tangible investments. Despite this, many scholars view the colonial period as transformative in African history and the genesis of contemporary political realities. An early assessment of the links between colonial and postcolonial political structures argued that there had, in fact, been no clear disruption: Colonialism simply segued into neocolonialism with a persistence of foreign rule through other means (e.g., Nkrumah, 1965; Sartre, 1964). More moderate claims have instead focused on how colonial rule shaped the nature and structure of postcolonial states and societies. For example, Young asserts that "the colonial state lives, absorbed into the structures of the independent polity" (Young, 1994, p. 2), and Mamdani argues that the "core legacy" of how power is organized in contemporary Africa was "forged through the colonial experience" (Mamdani, 1996, p. 3). The following section discusses the particular forms of political legacies left by the colonial state in Africa.

Political Legacies of Colonialism

The following sections discuss five legacies of European colonialism in Africa: the size, shape, and composition of states; ethnic identities and the salience of ethnic differences; state-society relations; institutional design; and inequality.

The Size, Shape, and Composition of States

One of the most visible legacies of European colonialism in Africa is the physical demarcation of the continent. Griffiths (1995) goes so far as to characterize colonially derived borders as a "political straight-jacket for modern Africa" (p. 3). The contemporary boundaries of African states were created during the imperial Scramble for Africa in the late 19th century and maintained after independence, with few exceptions. The creation of these boundaries has multiple implications for the politics of 21st-century Africa.

First, Herbst (2000) argued that the imposition of discrete territorial boundaries to mark the extents of political authority was the most significant transformation of politics to result from colonization. This is because the nature of African geography and demography—with relatively homogenous land quality and low population densities—requires more fluid boundaries such as those observed among precolonial polities. The ultimate upshot of combining discrete boundaries and a political reality that is incompatible with them was the origin of Africa's weak states. While the nature of boundaries changed, the logic of actual political control remained—degrading with distance from the center of power, in concentric circles—meaning that most colonial and postcolonial capitals exercised little control over much of the territory that was, at least in theory, under their authority. Such weak states persisted because they were born into an international legal system that recognized and sustained such "juridical statehood" (Jackson & Rosberg, 1982).

Second, colonial boundaries produced many states with shapes and sizes that are impractical for exercising effective political rule (Herbst, 2000). Such difficult geographies include large states, such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo or Angola, where the

extension of power over the entire territory is prohibitively expensive. On the other end of the spectrum, colonial partition created microstates that are too small, in terms of both area and population, to be viable in the global system, as they cannot capitalize on economies of scale (Griffiths, 1995). In addition, some states, such Senegal or Somalia, have impractical shapes that make it difficult to exercise authority over some constituent regions. Such states would be unlikely to exist if boundaries had been determined through endogenous processes of state expansion and consolidation rather than colonial division (Herbst, 2000). As evidence of the artificiality of African states, up to 40% of state borders in Africa are straight lines (Barbour, 1961), and 80% follow latitudinal or longitudinal lines (Alesina, Easterly, & Matuszeski, 2011).

Third, colonial boundaries were determined without regard for existing patterns of cultural or political affinity. In addition to low levels of legitimacy that result from the mismatch between precolonial spheres of power and postcolonial states (Englebert, 2000), the European partition of Africa resulted in what anthropologist Clifford Geertz termed "suffocation" and "dismemberment" (Geertz, 1973). Suffocation refers to the amalgamation of many disparate ethnic communities into a single state, with resulting Africa states constituting some of the most ethnically diverse in the world (Englebert, Tarango, & Carter, 2002). Such ethnic diversity has been tied to negative economic, social, and political outcomes, including low trust (Alesina & La Ferrara, 2002; Bahry, Kosolapoy, Kozyreva, & Wilson, 2005; Knack & Keefer, 1997; Robinson, 2017), slow growth (Easterly & Levine, 1997; Alesina & La Ferrara, 2005), the under-provision of public goods (Miguel & Gugerty, 2005; Habyarimana, Humphreys, Posner, & Weinstein, 2009), and market segmentation (Robinson, 2016A). Dismemberment, in turn, is the partition of ethnic communities into multiple different states (Asiwaju, 1985; Bienen, 1983; Englebert, Tarango, & Carter, 2002). By one estimate, around half of the populations of African states are members of partitioned ethnic groups (Alesina, Easterly, & Matuszeski, 2011). Such partitioned groups potentially destabilize modern states through irredentism and other forms of violent conflict (Horowitz, 1985; Michalopoulos & Papaioannou, 2016; Cederman, Gleditsch, Salehyan, & Wucherpfennig, 2013), and they are more likely to suffer from state-based discrimination and exclusion (Michalopoulos & Papaioannou, 2016).

Ethnic Identities and the Salience of Ethnic Differences

Some scholars identify the political salience of ethnicity as one of the most pernicious long-term effects of European colonialism in Africa. While definitions of ethnicity abound, most recognize ethnic categories as social identities in which membership is reckoned by descent or descent-based attributes (e.g., Chandra, 2012). Thus, the argument is that colonial rule in Africa created, reshaped, and reified the relevant ethnic categories within African states and made them relevant for political competition.

For example, Mamdani (1996), argued that colonial rule resulted in the "containerization" of indigenous subjects into disparate tribes through the philosophy and structure of indirect rule. Each purported group was ruled by chiefs or other traditional authorities under the auspices of the colonial state. The fact that centralized traditional authorities

and chiefly structures were not universal was ignored, as colonists operated with "a single model of customary authority in precolonial Africa" that "presumed a king at the center of every polity, a chief on every piece of administrative ground, and a patriarch in every homestead or kraal" (Mamdani, 1996, p. 39). If no relevant authority structure existed, colonial leaders would simply create them, either by appointing opportunistic local headmen or elders as chiefs, or by subsuming acephalous groups into more centralized neighboring groups' authority structures. To the degree that rule was organized indirectly, all local authority—fiscal, judicial, and legislative—was concentrated in the chiefs, who also controlled all land under "customary" law.

More indirect forms of rule resulted in the reification of differences between ethnic groups and the increased salience of ethnic belonging for all aspects of day to day life, in what Chandra (2012) would recognize as an ethnicized "institution of cognition." In some cases, colonial powers pushed this further into what can be characterized as "divide and rule," where the state created and exploited rivalries among ethnic communities by favoring some groups over others in colonial employment (Horowitz, 1985; Laitin, 1986; Vail & White, 1991) or by allowing one group to militarily constrain resistance by other groups (Ali, Fjeldstad, Jiang, & Shifaz, 2018; Clapham, 1985). Empirical evidence shows that citizens of former British colonies—typically considered more likely to use divide-and-rule tactics—express stronger ethnic identification relative to national identification (Robinson, 2014; Ali et al., 2018) and experience more ethnic violence (Blanton, Mason, & Athow, 2001). Evidence levering variation in the directness of rule within colonial southwest Africa (Namibia) confirms that more indirect forms of rule are associated with increased salience of ethnicity (McNamee, 2016).

Colonial powers also shaped ethnic realities through other means. For example, Posner (2003) documents the demographic shift in ethno-linguistic identification in northern Rhodesia (contemporary Zambia). He finds that colonial rule restructured the relevant categories for ethnic identification from small-scale tribal identities to larger-scale language-based identities. This shift was the result of education and media language policies, colonial-induced labor migration, and mission outposts. Similarly, Vail (1991) attributed the origins of ethnic consciousness to the linguistic, historic, and cultural project of European missionaries and their indigenous converts. Finally, administrative boundaries within colonies, which were largely maintained after independence, tended to fall along ethnic lines (Bates, 1983; Blanton et al., 2001), forging bureaucratic substance to ethnic differences.

The long-term implications of the structure and salience of ethnic diversity in Africa states are manifold. For example, salient ethnic differences are potentially dangerous for the emergence and stability of democracy (Horowitz, 1985, 1993). Dowd and Driessen (2008) indeed found that the quality of democracy is poorer in African countries where ethnicity is central to politics. Salient ethnic differences have also been tied to poorer development outcomes (Easterly & Levine, 1997; Posner, 2004A). This association is typically attributed to rent-seeking and the under-provision of public goods resulting from group competition at the national level (Alesina, Baqir, & Easterly, 1999) or local collective ac-

tion failures (Miguel & Gugerty, 2005; Habyarimana et al., 2009). Further, ethnic divisions —especially those accompanied by inequality—may make violence more likely (Horowitz, 1985; Blanton et al., 2001; Wucherpfennig, Hunziker, & Cederman, 2016).

State–Society Relations

Citizen perceptions of the state in contemporary Africa, and the nature of state–society relations, were also shaped by European colonialism. Ekeh (1975) famously discussed the colonial legacy of the "two publics." He asserts that the nature of colonial rule, and the ideologies that sustained it, bifurcated the public realm into a civic public and a primordial public. Because the civic realm originated from interactions with foreign rule, and was sustained by ideologies that divorced it from moral obligation, engagement with the civic realm in postcolonial Africa is not constrained by morality. The state was seen as a resource for any who were able to access it but not an entity to which citizens had meaningful obligations. Instead, morality and obligations were reserved for the primordial public, from which citizens gain a sense of belonging and to which they owe loyalty and assistance. The result, according to Ekeh, is a system of kinship-based clientelism and a plundering of the state.

Other scholars note similar manifestations. For example, Mamdani (1996) sees postcolonial prebendalism and corruption as the result of efforts to stitch the state, bifurcated into rural and urban, back together after independence. Schneider (2006) traced the way in which postcolonial leaders have imagined the role of the state—primarily as a paternalistic provider of development, alienated from the citizenry—to its origins in the colonial state's self-image. Young (1994) tied the existence a "mentality of assistance" vis-à-vis the state to the late colonial strategy of seeking legitimacy through the provision of welfare, in a form of externalized paternalism. Young also paints a more general picture of an alienated citizenry. He asserts that the anticolonial movements promised too much and adopted a strategy of full domination over society in order to try and deliver on those promises. The so-called integral state that resulted required that citizens be passive subjects except in their expressions of loyalty to the state. The culmination of the integral state was a form of perverted neopatrimonialism and the personalization of rule (Young, 1994).

Colonial rule also generated mistrust through its actions toward the colonial population, which persist through the intergenerational cultural transmission of suspicion. For example, Lowes and Montero (2018) carefully documented the long-term effects of invasive and ineffective health campaigns by the French in early-20th-century central Africa. They find that local areas subjected to these colonial-era vaccine campaigns, and their horrific side effects, express less trust in 21st-century medicine and are thus less likely to seek state-provided health care or vaccinate their children, resulting in worse health outcomes. Similar colonial-era policies and campaigns beyond the health sector are likely to similarly affect trust and thus willingness to engage with state services in the 21st century.

Alienation from and low trust in the state also manifest in more explicitly political behavior. For example, Ali et al. (2018) argued that such alienation should be stronger in indirectly ruled former British colonies than more directly ruled French ones. They find that attitudes about the legitimacy of taxation are indeed weaker in British administered regions of west Africa than in French administered regions just across an international border.

Institutional Design

Colonial state institutions were largely maintained at independence, and thus many scholars have focused on the implications of these institutional legacies. In particular, a robust literature has developed on the economic implications of colonial-era institutions (e.g., Acemoglu, Johnson, & Robinson, 2001, 2002; Bertocchi & Canova, 2002; Grier, 1999; Englebert, 2000; Price, 2003). There are also potential institutional legacies for political outcomes as well.

Most prominently, Mamdani (1996) identified the "bifurcated state" as a key institutional legacy at the core of postcolonial African politics. The bifurcation to which Mamdani refers is between the civic and urban, on the one hand, and the customary and rural, on the other. He describes a form of institutional segregation between a legal-rational system that applied to colons and settlers and the customary law that applied to colonial subjects. The latter consisted of separate customary laws for each purported tribe within a colony, but the full concentration of power over land and other material resources was in the hands of traditional chiefs. The empowerment of customary rulers resulted in a form of "decentralized despotism," in which chiefly rule over the "local state" was absolute. This bifurcation of the state is still apparent in the 21st century, with the urban middle and upper classes being subject to the systems and laws of the state, while much of the governance of rural populations is maintained as customary (Acemoglu, Reed, & Robinson, 2014; Eggen, 2011; Logan, 2009, 2011; Mamdani, 1996; Migdal, 1988).

We should also expect to observe differences in institutional legacies by the form and intensity of colonial rule. For example, many have asserted that British legal and administrative institutions have been more fortuitous for democracy and development than the institutions left by other states (e.g., Bernhard, Reenock, & Nordstrom, 2004; Hariri, 2012; Lankina & Getachew, 2012; La Porta, Lopez de Silanes, Shleifer, & Vishney, 1999; Lee & Schultz, 2012; Olsson, 2009). To the degree that the British employed more indirect forms of rule, these findings would seem to be at odds with research on the implications of indirect rule for the ethnic politics. However, scholars reporting on the favorable legacies of British colonialism tend to focus on a suite of outcomes that are not incompatible with the ethnicization of politics, including rates of political participation, governmental accountability, and strong rule of law.

In addition, the directness of rule across colonies—or across regions within colonies—should have implications for contemporary state strength (Lange, 2003). Under more indirect forms of rule, chiefs were empowered to fulfill many state functions, undermining

the need to develop more centralized state structures (Mamdani, 1996; Migdal, 1988). Lange (2004) provided empirical evidence consistent with this expectation. In particular, he developed a measure of the directness of colonial rule that moves beyond colonial identity, using colonial records on the proportion of judicial cases carried out by traditional authorities. He then shows that more indirect forms of colonial rule are negatively related to contemporary measures of state strength and effectiveness.

Inequality

Colonial policies and actions resulted in inequality both within and across colonies. Intergenerational transmissions of wealth, human capital, and cultural values mean that many of these colonial-era inequalities have persisted. The sources of this colonial-era inequality include overt ethnic favoritism, differential proximity to the colonial core, and the locations of Christian missions.

First, colonial administrations across the continent favored some ethnic communities over others, especially in terms of employment (Horowitz, 1985; Laitin, 1986; Vail & White, 1991). Some favored groups were chosen because of their geographic proximity to the colonial core or because of their access to mission education—two sources of inequality discussed below—but in many cases colonial favoritism stemmed from Europeans' perceptions of a group's cultural characteristics. For example, the Yao of Malawi were disproportionately recruited into the King's African Rifles because they were perceived to have a "martial spirit" (Marjomaa, 2003). Other groups, such as the Tutsi in Rwanda (Mamdani, 2001) or the Tumbuka in Malawi (Posner, 2004B; Vail & White, 1991), were favored in colonial administrative positions because they were judged to have more advanced political systems or were deemed racially superior. Such colonial-era policies of ethnic favoritism help explain contemporary ethnic inequality (e.g., Alwy & Schech, 2004), in ways that are potentially politically relevant.

Second, colonial rule in Africa generated geospatial inequality because of the nature of colonial investments in infrastructure and development. Huillery (2009) documented the nature of French colonial public investments across west African districts, finding that while investments were generally low, there was considerable variation across districts. Much of this variation was driven by proximity to the colonial capital or economic considerations, but the characteristics and idiosyncrasies of the particular colonial administrators at the helm of districts also played a significant role. However, even when accounting for the reasons that some districts received more colonial-era investments than others, Huillery finds strong persistence. The districts that received greater colonial investments in education, health, and infrastructure during the early 20th century demonstrate better outcomes in the 21st.

Third, colonial governance around land use also generated significant spatial inequalities. For example, colonial investments in export-oriented agriculture resulted in differential investment in infrastructure. Roessler et al. (2017) used fine-grained land-use data to identify areas of colonial cash-crop production and showed that such areas are signifi-

cantly more developed in the 21st century, even compared to areas equally suitable for cash-crop production. They attribute this long-term economic effect of colonial-era cash-crop production to colonial investments in transportation infrastructure and power generation. In addition, customary land tenure regimes and widespread land appropriation, especially in colonies with significant numbers of European settlers, gave rise to significant disparities in access to land (Berry, 1992; Frankema, 2010), which continue to shape the bases of political competition and conflict today (Boone, 2014; Peters, 2013).

Fourth, the distribution of colonial-era European missions also generated specific forms of inequality. While Christian missions were not typically part of the colonial state in a formal sense, informally they often worked hand in hand. The location of missions had huge effects on the local populations because of their provision of education and health care and their efforts at cultural change. In terms of human capital, for example, many historical studies document the strong effects of Christian missions on literacy and other educational outcomes (e.g., Fourie, Ross, & Viljoen, 2014; Gallego & Woodberry, 2010; Wantchekon, Klasnja, & Novta, 2015). And these effects appear to persist: populations near colonial-era missions demonstrate better human capital outcomes in the 21st century (Cage & Rueda, 2016; Wantchekon, Klasnja, & Novta, 2015), with implications for political participation and democratic governance (Woodberry, 2012).

Empirical Challenges and Future Work

Despite a large body of scholarship across multiple academic disciplines, it is still difficult to answer the question of how African politics would have developed had the continent not be colonized by Europeans. Like most social scientific and historical questions, this one is plagued by the fact that we only observe one version of events—the one in which the continent was colonized. A common solution to this fundamental problem is to identify a plausible counterfactual in order to estimate the effect of a given factor on outcomes. But in the case of colonial legacies in Africa, the problem of determining an appropriate counterfactual is exacerbated by the fact that the entire continent, with the exception of Ethiopia and Liberia, was colonized, so to what do we compare colonized states?

Because of the difficulty in answering the primary question of how African politics would be different if European colonialism had never happened, most scholars have instead focused on the effects of different *forms* of colonialism. How did the identity of the colonizer shape the legacies of colonialism? Did the nature of colonial rule—direct versus indirect, settler versus non-settler—affect long-term outcomes? Does the intensity or duration of the colonial encounter explain differences of the 21st century? All of these questions, however, are open to the same criticism: namely that the identity, form, and intensity of colonial rule are endogenous to geographic, cultural, and political characteristics of the societies encountered by colonists. In response to this fundamental challenge, there are three closely related avenues for future research.

Colonial Rule and Its Political Legacies in Africa

First, scholars should evaluate the effects of colonialism on contemporary politics at more localized levels. Most research has compared former colonies, or even entire colonial empires, but this approach is likely to conflate the colonial experience with other factors that make such units different. By instead focusing on variation in the form, intensity, or duration of colonial rule *within* contemporary states or even more localized areas, scholars are more likely to get an accurate picture of true legacies of colonialism. This is because at more micro levels, the comparison units used as counterfactuals are more likely to be comparable, allowing the researcher to hold constant many local geographic, social, and political characteristics (De Juan & Pierskalla, 2017). This results in more comparable units of comparison and helps to deal with endogenous selection into colonial exposure. For example, in their study of the long-term implications of colonial-era mission education, Wantchekon, Klasnja, and Novta (2015) argued that comparing communities with mission schools to geographically proximate villages without them allows the authors to treat school location as "near-random." In addition to the considerable variation in the nature and extent of colonial rule across geographic areas within colonies, scholars should also exploit other sources of variation, especially across arms of the colonial state, policy arenas, or sectors of the economy. As Schneider (2006) cogently notes, "'The' colonial state . . . of course, was not one house but many, all with their own improvised rooms, additions and renovations" (p. 95). The field would be greatly enriched by efforts to capture such variation within colonial states and trace its implications across time.

Second, and closely related to the call for disaggregation, is the need for more nuanced and specific measures of colonial rule than the blunt colonist identity dummies so commonly used. There are numerous examples of scholars already moving in this direction (e.g., De Juan, Krautwald, & Pierskalla, 2017; Huillery, 2009; Lange, 2004, 2009; Montgomery, 2017; Ricart-Huguet, 2017), and the future of this line of research should continue in this manner. To do so will almost certainly mean more intense engagement with, and the digitization of, colonial records located in archives, as almost all examples of more fine-grained and specific measures of colonial rule were the product of such efforts. However, scholars must appreciate the process of data production that created archival records, and properly qualify their findings based on such data (Gardner, 2018).

Third, the study of colonial legacies in Africa would benefit from more focus on the African side of the European–African colonial interaction. Much of the theoretical and empirical work thus far has focused on European colonists' motivations and actions. While this is clearly central to understanding the lasting effects of colonialism, a more focused evaluation of the variation in African polities, and their responses to colonialism, will aid in our understanding of the drivers of different colonial strategies and actions but also how long-term legacies are the result of interactions between colonial actions and indigenous contexts and responses. Examples of recent work in this vein elucidate how African political institutions shaped the nature of colonial intervention (e.g., Foa, 2017; Gerring et al., 2011; Hariri, 2012), but more work is still needed on how African polities and societies adapted to colonial rule in ways that affect governance outcomes in the 21st century.

Finally, scholarship linking colonial-era policies and institutions to contemporary political outcomes must be clear about the processes through which such effects persist. Scholars must do more than simply demonstrate an empirical association between colonial policies or practices over a century ago and present-day realities: they must interrogate the mechanisms that would allow for a causal association over such a long period. In his critique of Mamdani (1996), Cooper (1997) argues that

> the concept of a [colonial] legacy is a questionable one, for it suggests that one can abstract something from a particular moment in history and give it causal power at a later date. The result is to leapfrog over a lot of history, missing the ways in which the isolated factor is affected over time by the never-ending flow of historical experience.

It is therefore important that efforts to understand the long-run political implications of European colonialism in Africa include careful considerations of actors and interactions in the intervening years.

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
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Notes:

(1.) Some borders of colonial holdings were slightly different than the borders of contemporary states, and are not reflected in this map. For example, the border between British Nigeria and German Cameroon was farther east than the contemporary border, and the border between British Gold Coast (Ghana) and German Togoland (Togo) was farther west than the current border. However, the map provides approximate extents of European colonial holdings.

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