

## Democracy as a Westminster Heritage

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### Abstract

Conventional wisdom from colonial history research has it that the states which the British left behind them were better equipped for democratic government than the states that had belonged to other colonial powers. Investigating the democracy fortunes of all fifty-four territories that were freed following World War II from British control, and applying Freedom House ratings to determine democracy status, this study examines the belief that democratic government has become a characteristic feature of former British possessions. Findings are that the former colonies may be ordered roughly into three groups. Whereas seventeen countries since 1972 have always, or almost always, been classified as democracies, a larger portion, consisting of twenty-three countries, has always, or almost always, been ranked as non-democracies. The remaining fourteen countries represent an in-between category. On the whole, therefore, the idea that democracy is a central part of the Westminster heritage overall cannot be supported. Explanations for the division of the former colonies into three groups have been researched in different directions, and the efforts substantiate earlier observations in the literature on the relevance to democratization of factors that relate to state size, modernization, and geography. Concerning the impact of the length of colonial rule, the findings confirm an earlier suggestion by Samuel Huntington that colonies which had a long British presence have been particularly well equipped to develop into stable democracies.

**Key words:** British Empire, colonial rule, democracy, diffusion, Westminster Government.

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Today, most that is left of the British Empire is nostalgia and history. Only a good dozen British Crown Dependencies and Dependent Territories remain, including, to mention just a few, Bermuda, the British Virgin Islands, the Falkland Islands, and Gibraltar. However, while the Empire has disappeared as an institution, the institutions of the Empire have persevered, and a much-

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quoted saying in this discourse is that “the sun had set on the British Empire but not on Westminster-style government.”<sup>1</sup> The implication of this saying is that decades and even centuries of British rule have left a mark on the now independent nations that rose from the Empire, and it is the aim of this study to contribute to a measurement of the extent to which a political Westminster heritage really exists and is operative.

The traditional way of conceptualizing the Westminster system is to name it a democratic parliamentary system of government, modeled after the politics of the United Kingdom. Within this general framework, different analytical approaches for heritage studies are possible. One approach is theoretical and denotes a majoritarian model of democracy. This approach is used by Arend Lijphart, for instance, who states in his influential study of patterns of majoritarian and consensus government that “the essence of the Westminster model is majority rule.” Lijphart, in fact, uses the term “Westminster model” interchangeably with “majoritarian model” to refer to a general model of democracy.<sup>2</sup> Another approach is empirical in nature and refers to the main characteristics of British parliamentary and governmental institutions. Although quite similar, the two methods are by no means identical. First, all British institutions are not majoritarian. The British second chamber arrangement, for instance, is anything but a majoritarian device. Second, British institutions are not a given once and for all. They change over the course of time, and the changes contribute to and cultivate the very meaning of the Westminster term. Recent institutional reforms have even been said to produce “the twilight” of the pure Westminster model.<sup>3</sup> In short, heritage research is bound to confront and deal with somewhat differing conceptions of what a heritage really is about.

Mappings in the literature of Westminster influences suggest that, in regard to several Westminster components, former British colonies behave as a group somewhat differently from other states. For instance, the effect of colonial heritage is evident when it comes to the reluctance of former British colonies to engage in measures of direct democracy, which are alien to the principle of parliamentary sovereignty;<sup>4</sup> in like manner, former British colonies, as independent states, to a large extent have introduced the British parliamentary

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<sup>1</sup> Graham Wilson, “The Westminster Model in Comparative Perspective,” in *Developing Democracy: Comparative Research in Honour of J. F. P. Blondel*, ed. Ian Budge and David McKay (London: Sage, 1994), 189.

<sup>2</sup> Arend Lijphart, *Democracies: Patterns of Majoritarian and Consensus Government in Twenty-One Countries* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 4-5.

<sup>3</sup> Pippa Norris, “The Twilight of Westminster? Electoral Reform and Its Consequences,” *Political Studies* 49, no. 4 (2001): 877-900.

<sup>4</sup> Dag Anckar, “Folksuveränitet och parlamentets suveränitet i tidigare brittiska kolonier” [Popular sovereignty and parliamentary sovereignty in former British colonies], paper presented at the Sixteenth Nordic Political Science Congress, Vasa, Finland, August 9-12, 2011.

model.<sup>5</sup> Also, as evident from available electoral system mappings, former colonies largely have adopted the single plurality system of the Westminster model.<sup>6</sup> The mapping in the present piece of research, however, moves on a more general and less Westminster-specific level, as it investigates the overall democratic component of Westminster heritage. Specifically, the study aims to chart and explain differences in the extent to which former British colonies have adopted democracy since independence, no specific or majoritarian model of democracy being postulated. Conventional wisdom has it that the states that the British left behind them were better equipped for democratic government than the states that had belonged to France or to other powers,<sup>7</sup> and while this study about British territories does not contest this comparative wisdom, it calls into question the belief that democratic government truly has become a characteristic feature of former British possessions. The study has four main sections. Following this introduction, a second section identifies the colonies which are the object of investigation and explains the method for deciding whether they have established themselves as democracies. Applying this method, the third section orders into three groups the colonies in terms of their adherence to democracy and describes the composition of these groups. Finally, the fourth section tries out some explanatory factors in regard to the variations among democracies and summarizes the main findings.

## Identifying Colonies and Democracies

Like all models, systems, and frames of reference, the concept of democracy is to some extent a function of time. Indeed, for times long passed, one may well question the existence of a modern model of democracy, as evident from the fact that there were fifty-five sovereign polities in the world at the beginning of the twentieth century, none of which enjoyed competitive multiparty politics.<sup>8</sup> A time period must therefore be established that somehow manages this problem. While any solution remains to some extent artificial, the end of World War II is here taken to form a watershed: colonies that have gained independence since 1945 are included, whereas colonies that were independent at earlier dates are excluded. Among territories with early dates of independence are, besides the

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<sup>5</sup> Dag Anckar, "Regime Choices in Microstates: The Cultural Constraint," *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 42, no. 2 (2004): 206-223.

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Krister Lundell, *Contextual Determinants of Electoral System Choice* (Åbo, Finland: Åbo Akademi University Press, 2005), 103-107.

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, Tony Smith, "A Comparative Study of French and British Decolonization," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 20, no. 2 (1978), 70-102; Samuel P. Huntington, "Will More Countries Be Democratic?" *Political Science Quarterly* 99, no. 2 (1984): 193-218; and Axel Hadenius, *Democracy and Development* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 132-133.

<sup>8</sup> Adrian Karatnycky, "A Century of Progress," *Journal of Democracy* 11, no. 1 (2000): 187-188.

United States, Egypt, Iraq, and the dominions of Australia, Canada, and South Africa, which became sovereign after the enactment in 1931 of the Statute of Westminster. In all, fifty-four territories have emerged as independent countries from British rule since the end of World War II; these territories form the population of this research.

Table 1 lists the territories and gives information about the length of the colonial period and the year of independence for each. Data are from expositions in Denis and Ian Derbyshire's *Political Systems of the World*, volume 2, and Muriel Chamberlain's *European Decolonisation in the Twentieth Century*.<sup>9</sup> In matters of detail, there are a couple of deviances in the list from the materials in these sources. The Derbyshire list, like the Chamberlain list, includes Tonga as a former British colony; however, this classification can be questioned. Prefacing his volume on the history of Tonga, Ian Campbell notes, "Among the many political entities which comprise the island states of the Pacific Ocean, Tonga is the only one which was not subject to direct colonial rule during the age of European hegemony."<sup>10</sup> True, in the year 1900, Tonga was forced to sign a treaty that placed the country under British protection in the field of foreign affairs,<sup>11</sup> but Tonga returned in 1970 to full independence, and the parenthetical British presence did not infringe upon the legal and constitutional infrastructure that had been created in Tonga between 1835 and 1875.<sup>12</sup> Also, Eritrea, under British control beginning in 1941 and federated with Ethiopia in 1952 by the United Nations, became independent in 1993, and is not included in the list.

A rather intricate problem of interpretation arises in regard to cases that are freed from powers which themselves have been former British colonies. There are three such cases, namely Papua New Guinea, Nauru, and Samoa (Western Samoa). Papua New Guinea became independent in 1975, mandated since 1901 by Australia, however, Germany and Britain earlier shared the responsibility for the territory. Nauru became a German colony in 1888 and a British Mandated Territory of the League of Nations in 1920. After World War II, Nauru became a Trust Territory of Australia, New Zealand, and Great Britain, which exercised joint authority. The actual administration, however, was vested in the Government of Australia.<sup>13</sup> In 1968, Nauru was granted

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<sup>9</sup> Denis Derbyshire and Ian Derbyshire, *Political Systems of the World*, vol. 2 (Oxford: Helicon Publishing, 1999), 811-813, and Muriel E. Chamberlain, *European Decolonisation in the Twentieth Century* (Essex: Addison Wesley Longman, 1998).

<sup>10</sup> Ian C. Campbell, *Island Kingdom: Tonga Ancient & Modern* (Christchurch, New Zealand: Canterbury University Press, 1992), xi.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 112-113.

<sup>12</sup> I. Futa Helu, "Democracy Bug Bites Tonga," in *Culture & Democracy in the South Pacific*, ed. Ron Crocombe et al. (Suva, Fiji: Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific, 1992), 139-152.

<sup>13</sup> Jorri Duursma, *Self-Determination, Statehood and International Relations of Micro-States* (Leyden, Netherlands: University of Leyden, 1994), 469.

Table 1. Former British Colonies that Became Independent States, from 1946 onward (1)

State	Date of establishment of control	Independence
Antigua-Barbuda	1632	1981
Bahamas	1629	1973
Bahrain	1861	1971
Barbados	1624	1966
Belize	Seventeenth century-1862	1981
Botswana	1885	1966
Brunei	1888	1984
Cyprus	1914	1960
Dominica	1763	1978
Fiji	1874	1970
Gambia	1816	1965
Ghana	1901	1957
Grenada	1762	1974
Guyana	1796-1814	1966
India	Late eighteenth century	1947
Israel	1920	1948
Jamaica	1655	1962
Jordan	1920	1946
Kenya	1888-1895	1963
Kiribati	1892	1979
Kuwait	1899	1961
Lesotho	1868	
Libya	1942	1951
Malawi	1887-1892	1964
Malaysia	1795-1888	1957
Maldives	1887	1965
Malta	1814	1964
Mauritius	1810	1968

Table 1. Former British Colonies that Became Independent States, from 1946 onward (2)

State	Date of establishment of control	Independence
Myanmar	1824-1886	1948
Nauru	1920	1968
New Zealand	1840	1947
Nigeria	1861-1899	1960
Oman	1891	1951
Qatar	1916	1971
Saint Kitts-Nevis	1623	1983
Saint Lucia	1803	1979
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	1783	1979
Seychelles	1814	1976
Sierra Leone	1808	1961
Singapore	1819	1957
Solomon Islands	1885	1978
Somalia	1884-1886	1960
South Yemen	1839	1967
Sri Lanka	1798	1948
Sudan	1899	1956
Swaziland	1881	1968
Tanzania	1914	1961
Trinidad and Tobago	1797-1820	1962
Tuvalu	1875	1978
Uganda	1888	1962
United Arab Emirates	1892	1971
Vanuatu	1887	1980
Zambia	1891-1923	1964
Zimbabwe	1897-1923	1980

independence. Finally, Samoa emerged as an independent state in 1962. After a period of German control, at the outbreak of World War II, the islands were seized by New Zealand, and after the war, acquired the status of a UN Trustee under the administration of New Zealand.<sup>14</sup> The solution to the mixed history of control that is applied is to include Nauru in the list, but to exclude Papua New Guinea and Samoa. The solution may be debated, the differences between the cases being differences of art rather than differences of kind, and Australia and New Zealand being, like Britain, presumptive Westminster-exporters. Still, the presence of Britain was at least formally more visible in the Nauru case, and from the point of view of research legibility, it would appear desirable to refrain from studying second-wave diffusion.

Countries are listed in the table with their present names, which in a few cases differ from earlier names. Ceylon became independent in 1948 and adopted a new constitution as well as the new name of Sri Lanka in 1972. The independence of Rhodesia was unilaterally announced in 1965, but Britain did not recognize the act, and demanded voting rights for the black African majority in the country. However, in 1969, Rhodesia declared herself a republic. Following guerrilla wars as well as economic and trade sanctions, a new constitution was established and free elections were held in 1979. The new state of Zimbabwe became fully independent in 1980.<sup>15</sup> Burma, which became independent in 1948, is listed under its present name, Myanmar. With one exception, the listed countries still exist as sovereign and recognized members of the international community. South Yemen, freed in 1967 from British control, no longer exists as an independent state. North and South Yemen were united in 1990 when the Republic of Yemen was founded following wars between the two regions of Yemen in 1971-1972 and again in the early 1980s. In a few cases, territories have been freed from shared control which involved Britain. Such cases are included in the list only if the British share reached or exceeded the 50 percent mark. Consequently, mandate territories such as Cameroon, which gained independence in 1960 from 80 percent French and 20 percent British control, and Togo, which became independent in the same year from 66 percent French and 34 percent British control, are not included in the list. In contrast, Libya, which gained independence in 1951, is included because previous control had been 70 percent British and 30 percent French.<sup>16</sup> Vanuatu, which was formerly a joint British-French condominium,<sup>17</sup> is likewise included.

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<sup>14</sup> Malama Meleisa, *The Making of Modern Samoa* (Suva, Fiji: Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific, 1987).

<sup>15</sup> John D. Hargreaves, *Decolonization in Africa*, 2nd ed. (London: Longman, 1999), 235-244.

<sup>16</sup> Derbyshire and Derbyshire, *Political Systems*, 811-813.

<sup>17</sup> Howard van Trease, "The Colonial Origins of Vanuatu Politics," in *Melanesian Politics. Stael Blong Vanuatu*, ed. Howard van Trease (Christchurch, New Zealand: Macmillan Brown Centre for Pacific Studies, University of Canterbury, 1995), 3-58.

The task of establishing democracy thresholds is anything but easy. As is well known, democracy is a much debated and contested concept, and any attempt to encircle and “operationalize” this area of political study therefore confronts several and severe definitional and conceptual problems. As democracy-related definitions and frameworks abound, the pessimistic view is that there is little hope that there can ever be a general agreement on the definition of democracy.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, the introductory remark to a recent landmark study of democracy states, “There are almost as many theoretical definitions of democracy as there are scholars who study democratic politics.”<sup>19</sup> Also, different sets of democratic entities emerge from different conceptualizations. For instance, one observation in the literature is that there were 132 electoral democracies in the world in 2004. However, when a criterion of ample requirements for civil liberties and political rights was added to the election criterion, the number of democracies decreased to eighty-nine, and when a further criterion of political productivity in terms of GNP/capita was added, the number decreased further to fifty-two.<sup>20</sup> Obviously, findings from democracy mappings are dependent on which analytical tools and apparatuses are used.

The classifications of the democratic status of the fifty-four territories are based on the Freedom House ratings of the countries in the world up to 2010. Based on surveys provided by regional experts, consultants, and human rights specialists, as well as fact-finding missions and public sources, the Freedom House organization has monitored the progress and decline of political rights and civil liberties in all the nations of the world and in related territories since 1972. In essence, the units are rated on seven-category scales for political rights and civil liberties, and, on the basis of these ratings, placed into one of three categories: “Free,” “Partly Free,” or “Not Free.” On each scale, the value 1 represents the most free, and value 7, the least free. The placing of units in categories is dependent on the combined ratings. Although it is true that the Freedom House data do not discriminate in full between degrees of freedom and non-freedom,<sup>21</sup> the data are still used widely by social and political scientists and generally are credited with validity as well as reliability.<sup>22</sup> Indeed, by integrating observations of political rights and civil liberties, the

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<sup>18</sup> Richard Kimber, “On Democracy,” *Scandinavian Political Studies* 12, no. 3 (1989): 199-200.

<sup>19</sup> Seymour Martin Lipset and Jason M. Lakin, *The Democratic Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004), 19.

<sup>20</sup> Dag Anckar, “Demokratis kategorier och demonologi” [Democracy: Categories and demonology] *Politiikka* [Politics] 49, no. 1 (2007): 6-8.

<sup>21</sup> Joe Foweraker and Roman Krznaric, “Measuring Liberal Democratic Performance: An Empirical and Conceptual Critique,” *Political Studies* 48, no. 4 (2000): 767.

<sup>22</sup> See, for example, Arend Lijphart, *Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999); Lundell, *Contextual Determinants*; and Lauri Karvonen, *Diktatur. Om ofrihetens politiska system* [Dictatorship: On unfree political systems] (Stockholm: SNS Förlag, 2008).

Freedom House conception of freedom becomes a good approximation of what “democracy” should mean. This study concurs with the much-quoted view of Larry Diamond that the “Free” rating in the Freedom House survey is the best available empirical indicator of “liberal democracy.”<sup>23</sup> The guiding criterion in this study is therefore the Freedom House rating of the country in question at a specific point in time. Countries rated by Freedom House as “Free” are classified here to be democratic, whereas countries rated as “Partly Free” or “Not Free” are classified as representing non-democratic regimes.

On the basis of the Freedom House classifications, each colony is assigned a percentage value, which is called in this study “democracy rating.” This percentage is a measure of how frequently the colony in question has been rated as democratic. To give an example, a colony which became independent in, say, 1975, and has been ranked thereafter by Freedom House each year in the time span 1976-2010, has thirty-five classifications. If all the rankings have been in the democracy category, the democracy rating of this colony is 100. If the colony has not been ranked once in the democracy category during the thirty-five years of classification, the democracy rating is 0. And if the colony is ranked in the democracy category, say, fourteen of thirty-five times, the resulting percentage calculation gives this colony a democracy rating of 40. The measure is crude, of course, but it serves the functions of ordering the colonies along a democracy continuum, and assigning each colony a value that may be used in efforts at systematizing and explaining.

### **Adherence, Non-Adherence, and In Between**

The main classificatory findings of this research are presented in table 2. For each of the fifty-four former colonies, the table gives the years during which their respective democracy performances have been observed, and their ensuing democracy ratings. For a good two-thirds of the cases (thirty-seven of fifty-four), the observation period is from 1972 to 2010. The remaining cases achieved independence later than 1972 and, consequently, have been observed during slightly shorter periods. As is obvious from a quick glance at table 2, the idea that democracy is a central part of the Westminster heritage does not receive much support, as most of the former colonies are outside the democracy camp. In a crude classification, which also is entered into the table, the countries may be ordered into three groups. They are briefly reviewed in the following; stray examples are inserted.

A third of the colonies indeed verify the hypothesis that Westminster implies democracy. In this group, there are seventeen countries that have always, or almost always, been classified by Freedom House in the category of “Free” nations. The core of this group is formed by nine small Caribbean

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<sup>23</sup> Larry Diamond, “Is the Third Wave Over?” *Journal of Democracy* 7, no. 3 (1996): 24.

Table 2. Democracy Status of Fifty-four Former British Colonies (1)

Country	Period of observation	Rating
Group 1: Democracies		
<i>Bahamas</i>	1973-2010	100
<i>Barbados</i>	1972-2010	100
<i>Belize</i>	1981-2010	100
<i>Botswana</i>	1972-2010	97
<i>Dominica</i>	1978-2010	100
<i>Israel</i>	1972-2010	100
<i>Jamaica</i>	1972-2010	100
<i>Kiribati</i>	1979-2010	100
<i>Malta</i>	1972-2010	86
<i>Mauritius</i>	1972-2010	100
<i>Nauru</i>	1972-2010	100
<i>New Zealand</i>	1972-2010	100
<i>Saint Kitts-Nevis</i>	1983-2010	100
<i>Saint Lucia</i>	1979-2010	100
<i>Saint Vincent and the Grenadines</i>	1979-2010	100
<i>Trinidad and Tobago</i>	1972-2010	97
<i>Tuvalu</i>	1978-2010	100
Group 2: Half-democracies		
<i>Antigua-Barbuda</i>	1981-2010	53
<i>Cyprus</i>	1972-2010	81
<i>Fiji</i>	1972-2010	41
<i>Gambia</i>	1972-2010	38
<i>Ghana</i>	1972-2010	30
<i>Grenada</i>	1978-2010	77
<i>Guyana</i>	1972-2010	46
<i>India</i>	1972-2010	76
<i>Lesotho</i>	1972-2010	19
<i>Malawi</i>	1972-2010	14

Table 2. Democracy Status of Fifty-four Former British Colonies (2)

Country	Period of observation	Rating
<i>Nigeria</i>	1972-2010	11
<i>Solomon Islands</i>	1978-2010	70
<i>Sri Lanka</i>	1972-2010	22
<i>Vanuatu</i>	1980-2010	76
Group 3: Non-democracies		
<i>Bahrain</i>	1973-2010	0
<i>Brunei</i>	1984-2010	0
<i>Jordan</i>	1972-2010	0
<i>Kenya</i>	1972-2010	0
<i>Kuwait</i>	1972-2010	0
<i>Libya</i>	1972-2010	0
<i>Malaysia</i>	1972-2010	5
<i>Maldives</i>	1972-2010	5
<i>Myanmar</i>	1972-2010	0
<i>Oman</i>	1972-2010	0
<i>Qatar</i>	1972-2010	0
<i>Seychelles</i>	1976-2010	3
<i>Sierra Leone</i>	1972-2010	0
<i>Singapore</i>	1972-2010	0
<i>Somalia</i>	1972-2010	0
<i>South Yemen</i>	1972-1990	0
<i>Sudan</i>	1972-2010	0
<i>Swaziland</i>	1972-2010	0
<i>Tanzania</i>	1972-2010	0
<i>Uganda</i>	1972-2010	0
<i>United Arab Emirates</i>	1972-2010	0
<i>Zambia</i>	1972-2010	5
<i>Zimbabwe</i>	1980-2010	0

nations, which started out as democratic independent nations and have remained democratic throughout the years within the frame of their independence constitutions. The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Jamaica, Saint Kitts-Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago all embarked upon independence with constitutional arrangements that followed rather closely the British legacy. For instance, it is said about Barbados that, while independence introduced a constitutional break from colonial status, this break did not represent a fundamental change in art, culture, religion, education, political economy, or, indeed, politics: “Even politically, after independence the state did not immediately take on a radically different form of relationship with the citizen, and the conduct of national affairs did not assume a sudden change.”<sup>24</sup> In regard to Trinidad and Tobago, the opinion was voiced in the early 1980s that, due to faulty resource management, the base of the democratic system might wither away;<sup>25</sup> however, the democratic status of the country since independence has not been in question, and Trinidad, as evident from the almost stainless Freedom House ratings, certainly has survived as a democratic nation.

Three Pacific small island cases, Kiribati, Nauru, and Tuvalu, represent in like manner a democratic continuity which is based on the independence constitutions of the countries. However, the misfortune of Nauru, which because of economic decline lately has acquired most of the characteristics of a failed state,<sup>26</sup> marks a dark cloud in the recent development of the region. Two African cases also are in the continuously democratic camp: Botswana, characterized some years ago as “one of the economic and political success stories in a continent that is usually excoriated for an unsatisfactory postcolonial democratic record,”<sup>27</sup> and Mauritius, assuming at independence a British-modeled system and maintaining throughout the years the multiparty democratic form that evolved during the terminal years of colonialism.<sup>28</sup> To this group may also be added Malta. Shortcomings in civil rights during the reign in the 1980s of the Malta Labour Party brought about less than perfect Freedom House ratings of Malta from 1982 through 1987; nevertheless,

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<sup>24</sup> Trevor A. Carmichael, “Introduction,” in *Barbados: Thirty Years of Independence*, ed. Trevor A. Carmichael (Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle Publishers, 1996), xvii-xxxv.

<sup>25</sup> Carl D. Parris, “Resource Ownership and the Prospects for Democracy: The Case of Trinidad and Tobago,” in *The Newer Caribbean: Decolonization, Democracy and Development*, ed. Paget Henry and Carl Stone (Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1982), 313-326.

<sup>26</sup> John Connell, “Nauru: The First Failed Pacific State?” *The Round Table* 95, no. 383 (2006): 47-63.

<sup>27</sup> Richard Dale, “Republic of Botswana,” in *World Encyclopedia of Political Systems and Parties*, vol. 1, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., ed. Deborah A. Kaple (New York: Facts on File, 1999), 128.

<sup>28</sup> See, for example, A. R. Mannick, *Mauritius: The Politics of Change* (Mayfield, England: Dodo Books, 1989), and Larry W. Bowman, *Mauritius: Democracy and Development in the Indian Ocean* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991).

this short interlude cannot upset the judgment that Malta has performed convincingly as a democratic nation.

At another extreme, however, more than 40 percent of the listed countries are in a category which defies the thought that Westminster inspired democracy in its wake. This group consists of twenty-three countries which have never, or almost never, been classified as democracies. There are two large subsets of colonies in this category. The first consists of a handful of dominantly small Arab countries, such as Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, and Qatar; other members of this Arab group include Brunei and Jordan. Brunei, which gained independence in 1984, is a sultanate with no elections or democratic procedures, the legislative body being responsible only for consultations to the sultan. Although at independence an absolutist regime,<sup>29</sup> Jordan, which gained independence in 1946, later displayed some democratic characteristics, as political parties were legalized in 1989. Free and fair parliamentary elections have been conducted since that year. However, the parliament was suspended between 2001 and 2003 and legislation was suspended in 2010. Similar developments have unfolded in the small Muslim island nation of the Maldives, which became independent in 1965. Although there were some democratic qualities to the Independence Constitution of the Maldives, these qualities were largely superficial and the post-independence President Ibrahim Nasir has been characterized in the literature as an autocrat.<sup>30</sup> Recent developments carry brighter prospects. Violent protests in 2003 and 2004 resulted in the legalization in 2005 of political parties, and a new constitution was approved in 2008. Multiparty presidential elections were held in 2008, which ended the long rule since 1978 of President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom; parliamentary elections followed in 2009.

Eleven African countries also are in the non-democracy camp. Many of them are illustrative of a characteristic feature of decolonization in Africa, where democratic take-offs were soon followed by collapses into authoritarian regimes and politics.<sup>31</sup> For instance, following independence in 1956, Sudan was plagued by a war of secession, dragging on for years. A military coup in 1958 brought multiparty government to an end, and a second brief period of parliamentary politics in the mid-1960s lasted only until the next coup in 1969. Armed conflicts having been going on in the country for decades, and

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<sup>29</sup> Curtis R. Ryan, "Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan," in *World Encyclopedia of Political Systems and Parties*, vol. 2, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., ed. Deborah A. Kaple (New York: Facts on File, 1999), 600-601.

<sup>30</sup> V. Suryanarayan, "The Maldives and India's Security," in *The Indian Ocean and Its Islands*, ed. Satish Chandra, B. Arunachalam, and V. Suryanarayan (New Delhi: Sage Publications India, 1993), 110.

<sup>31</sup> Crawford Young, "The Heritage of Colonialism," in *Africa in World Politics*, ed. John W. Harbeson and Donald Rotchild (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991), and Dieter Nohlen, Michael Krennerich, and Bernhard Thibaut, "Elections and Electoral Systems in Africa," in *Elections in Africa. A Data Handbook*, ed. Dieter Nohlen, Michael Krennerich, and Bernhard Thibaut (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 3.

Sudan is presently balancing a line between authoritarian military dictatorship and state failure.<sup>32</sup> Swaziland is another example of African failure. True, the 1963 constitution introduced by the British government before independence in 1968 provided for a parliamentary government; in 1973, however, the King suspended the constitution and assumed absolute power.<sup>33</sup> Although the royal hegemony is much resisted today, prodemocracy movements are still suppressed and political parties are banned. The introduction in 2005 of a new constitution has not altered the fact that the monarch holds supreme powers.

Uganda and Nigeria are two further examples. Uganda's first years of independence showed how an African government was able to transform the nature of the constitutional problems that had worried the colonial authorities,<sup>34</sup> however, a new constitution in 1967 altered the regime, and coups soon followed, leading to repression, bloodshed, and wars in their wake.<sup>35</sup> In 2005, a constitutional referendum cancelled a ban since 1986 on multiparty politics; however, the presidential election in 2006 implied harassment of the political opposition. Throughout the years, Uganda has been classified as a non-democracy. Nigeria became independent in 1960 under a British-style parliamentary system, but regional and ethnic tensions soon escalated, followed by trial and imprisonment of opposition politicians, unfair elections, killings of several politicians in 1966, suspension of the constitution, coups as well as countercoups, and even a civil war.<sup>36</sup> Following a brief return to democracy in the early 1980s, the civil government was viewed as corrupt and was overthrown in the military coup of 1984, which transitioned into another coup in 1985. Free and fair elections in 1993 were soon followed by yet another military coup. The management of Nigeria since 1999 by elected civilians has been said even to have contributed to the transformation of Nigeria into a stateless country.<sup>37</sup>

Among other countries in the nondemocratic group are three Asian cases. At independence in 1947, Burma/Myanmar adopted a cabinet form of government based on the British model. However, a military takeover in 1958, and again in 1962, suspended the 1947 constitution and established a

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<sup>32</sup> Thomas Schmidinger, "Der Sudan zwischen autoritärer Militärdiktatur und Staatszerfall" [Sudan between authoritarian military dictatorship and state disintegration] *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Politikwissenschaft* [Austrian Journal of Political Science] 35, no. 2 (2006): 189-205.

<sup>33</sup> See, for example, Alan R. Booth, *Swaziland: Tradition and Change in a Southern African Kingdom* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1983).

<sup>34</sup> J. M. Lee, "Uganda's First Year of Independence," *Political Quarterly* 35, no.1 (1964): 34-45.

<sup>35</sup> Siegmund Schmidt, "Uganda," in *Elections in Africa: A Data Handbook*, ed. Dieter Nohlen, Michael Krennerich, and Bernhard Thibaut (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 925-926.

<sup>36</sup> See, for example, Chamberlain, *European Decolonisation*, 95.

<sup>37</sup> Daniel C. Bach, "Nigeria: Paradoxes de l'abondance et démocratisation en trompe-d'oeil" [Nigeria: Paradoxes of plenty and democratization in sham] *Afrique contemporaine* [Contemporary Africa], no. 219 (2006): 119-135.

one-party state.<sup>38</sup> Since that time, the military has dominated the government. Singapore established a liberal democratic form of government in 1965. Later developments have signaled tight control by the leading party over public and political life, which has had injurious effects. Singapore, in practice, has acquired the status of a one-party state; indeed, in the 2006 general election, the People's Action Party won eighty-two of eighty-four parliamentary seats.<sup>39</sup> Singapore has never achieved the status of a democracy in the Freedom House ratings. In the literature, Malaysia and Singapore have been classified as hybrid regimes, combining some democratic traits with some authoritarian features and proving to be resilient in the face of global trends in democracy.<sup>40</sup>

Between the two extremes is a group of fourteen former colonies which have a less than immaculate democracy record, but which, on the other hand, for brief periods at least, have experienced democratic political life. This group is rather heterogeneous in terms of region, geography, democratic perseverance, and democratic development. Some countries have recovered admirably from early setbacks. One example is Grenada, where, following independence, a period of government malpractice triggered the occasional seizure of power by a Marxist movement in 1979. The seizure was followed by internal unrest and a joint U.S.-Caribbean military intervention in 1983.<sup>41</sup> After the invasion, the prerevolutionary independence constitution was resumed, and later developments in Grenada have shown a return to the path of democracy. Since 1985, Freedom House ratings have supported the view that constitutional government now is on firm ground in Grenada.<sup>42</sup> Other examples are Vanuatu and Cyprus. Emerging from condominium status, during her first years of independence, Vanuatu experienced conflicts over the state's foreign policy orientation<sup>43</sup> as well as a constitutional crisis;<sup>44</sup> however, later developments have stabilized political life and enabled the country to achieve, as recently

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<sup>38</sup> S. Krishnamurthy, "The Decline of Parliamentary Democracy in Burma and Indonesia: A Preliminary Note," *International Studies* 7, no. 3 (1966): 457-467.

<sup>39</sup> Beng Huat Chua, "Singapore in 2006: An Irritating and Irritated ASEAN Neighbor," *Asian Survey* 47, no. 1 (2007): 206-212.

<sup>40</sup> Diane K. Mauzy, "The Challenge to Democracy: Singapore's and Malaysia's Resilient Hybrid Regimes," *Taiwan Journal of Democracy* 2, no. 2 (2006): 47-68.

<sup>41</sup> See, for example, Colin Clarke, "Grenada: Society and Politics in a Small State," in *Society and Politics in the Caribbean*, ed. Colin Clarke (London: Macmillan, 1991), 131-144.

<sup>42</sup> Thomas D. Anderson, "Grenada," in *World Encyclopedia of Political Systems and Parties*, vol. 2, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., ed. Deborah A. Kaple (New York: Facts on File, 1999), 430.

<sup>43</sup> Selwyn Arutangai, "Post-Independence Developments and Policies," in *Melanesian Politics: Stael Blong Vanuatu*, ed. Howard van Trease (Christchurch, New Zealand: Macmillan Brown Centre for Pacific Studies, University of Canterbury, 1995), 59-71.

<sup>44</sup> Howard van Trease, "Years of Turmoil: 1987-91," in *Melanesian Politics: Stael Blong Vanuatu*, ed. Howard van Trease (Christchurch, New Zealand: Macmillan Brown Centre for Pacific Studies, University of Canterbury, 1995), 86-95.

observed, “an admirable sense of national identity and coherence.”<sup>45</sup> Following intercommunal violence and a Turkish invasion in 1974 of the northern part of the island, Cyprus received unsatisfactory initial Freedom House ratings; since the early 1980s, however, the ratings have been good and even excellent. Although complex and rigid and reflecting the bicomunal character of the Cyprus nation, the Cyprus independence constitution of 1960 is still valid and very much in line with basic democratic requirements.<sup>46</sup>

Two African cases may be given as examples of states which have implemented far more tardy and hesitant changes to the better. Malawi gained independence in 1964 and two years later was declared to be a one-party state; in 1971, Hastings Kamuzu Banda was named President for Life. However, in 1993, the people voted overwhelmingly in favor of multiparty democracy in a referendum. Following free and fair elections in 1994, in 1995, a new constitution confirmed the transition from authoritarian to popular rule. The transition has not been completed, and Freedom House ratings suggest that Malawi is a semi-democracy, although now rather close to the democracy category. Lesotho transitioned to independence in 1966 as a constitutional monarchy; a few years later the then prime minister suspended the constitution, jailed his opponents, and established rule by decree.<sup>47</sup> However, later developments have indicated an embarkation on democratic ideals. Political parties exist, electoral reform has been effected,<sup>48</sup> and general elections were held in 2002. Since that year, Lesotho has been regarded as a democratic country.

Other countries exemplify retreats from democratic take-offs. The membership of Fiji in the Pacific Islands Forum was suspended in 2009, due to the inability of the country to provide for free and fair elections, human rights, and democracy. Ethnic rivalry triggered a military coup in 1987, but the reputation of the country was to some extent restored by the introduction of a democratic constitution in 1997. However, violent coups took place again in 2000 and 2006, which deposed the democratically elected government and installed a military-appointed administration,<sup>49</sup> and in 2009, the Fiji constitution was suspended. Another Pacific failure is the Solomon Islands, which embarked

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<sup>45</sup> Graham Hassall, “Elite Conflict in Vanuatu,” in *Security and Development in the Pacific Islands*, ed. M. Anne Brown (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2007), 226.

<sup>46</sup> Norma Salem, “The Constitution of 1960 and Its Failure,” in *Cyprus: A Regional Conflict and Its Resolution*, ed. Norma Salem (London: Macmillan Press, 1992), 119-122, and Joseph S. Joseph, *Cyprus: Ethnic Conflict and International Politics* (London: Macmillan Press, 1997), 21-25.

<sup>47</sup> B. David Meyers, “Lesotho,” in *World Encyclopedia of Political Systems and Parties*, vol. 2, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, ed. Deborah A. Kaple (New York: Facts on File, 1999), 663.

<sup>48</sup> Wonbin Cho and Michael Bratton, “Electoral Institutions, Partisan Status, and Political Support in Lesotho,” *Electoral Studies* 25, no. 4 (2006): 731-750.

<sup>49</sup> See, for example, Brij V. Lal, “‘Anxiety, Uncertainty, and Fear in Our Land’: Fiji’s Road to Military Coup, 2006,” *The Round Table*, no. 389 (2007): 135-153.

upon independence in 1978 with a Westminster-type democratic government. An evaluation some ten years later was that “democracy in its modern form may be a recent migrant to the Solomons, but it would appear to be settling in well.”<sup>50</sup> However, this forecast has proved to be too optimistic. In 1998, tensions between the two largest ethnic groups erupted into open warfare, and the country experienced a coup in 2000. Racially charged riots still plague political life in the country, which presently is regarded by many as a failed state.<sup>51</sup> Sri Lanka may also be counted in this group of failed democracies. Some years following independence, the verdict was that the country was to be considered by Britain a model for future constitutional experiments, as it successfully had applied British forms of government, albeit the forms were alien to the culture.<sup>52</sup> The introduction of the 1972 and 1978 constitutions, however, established a presidential system and a proportional method of representation. Election violence was high throughout the 1980s, and from 1983 to the present day the country has been plagued by an on-and-off civil war.<sup>53</sup> Since the early 1980s, the democratic status of Sri Lanka has been questioned seriously, and the country is now regarded as a flawed democracy.

## Explanatory Patterns

The search for factors that enhance democracy and democratization may go in very different directions. To quote a systematized listing from landmark research in the field, namely a study by Axel Hadenius on Third World democracy, research might focus on socio-economic conditions, such as modernization or dependency, demographic and cultural conditions, such as societal cleavages or state size, or institutional conditions, such as colonial background or the size of the public sector.<sup>54</sup> The task of understanding the democracy variations that were introduced in the preceding section is approached by an examination of five factors, four of which relate to qualities of the colonies, whereas the fifth concerns the nature of the colonial rule. Above all, this fifth factor takes into account the argument of Samuel Huntington that the duration of democratic

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<sup>50</sup> Sam Alasia, “Politics,” in *Ples Blong Iumi: Solomon Islands the Past Four Thousand Years*, ed. Hugh Laracy (Suva, Fiji: Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific, 1989), 150.

<sup>51</sup> Peter Larmour, *Foreign Flowers: Institutional Transfer and Good Governance in the Pacific Islands* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2005), 22-23.

<sup>52</sup> S. Namasivayam, “Aspects of Ceylonese Parliamentary Government,” *Pacific Affairs* 26, no. 1 (1953): 76-83.

<sup>53</sup> See, for example, Chandra R. de Silva, “Sri Lanka in 2005: Continuing Political Turmoil,” *Asian Survey* 46, no. 1 (2006): 114-119, and id., “Sri Lanka in 2006: Unresolved Political and Ethnic Conflicts amid Economic Growth,” *Asian Survey* 47, no. 1 (2007): 99-104.

<sup>54</sup> Hadenius, *Democracy and Development*, vii-viii.

institutions after independence may be a function of the duration of British rule before independence,<sup>55</sup> meaning that long-term British possessions can be expected to have a better democratic record than short-term British possessions. Evidently, in this hypothesis, longevity functions as a summary variable which describes the overall process, giving less attention to the unique constellations of determinants in the democratization of separate colonies.

The four factors that relate to the qualities of a colony are state size, ethnicity, modernization, and region. The choice of these factors springs from a series of assumptions from relevant literature: small states are more conducive to democracy than larger states;<sup>56</sup> homogeneous states are better able to achieve and uphold national unity and loyalty that fosters democracy than heterogeneous states, which tend to be marked by cleavages and ensuing conflicts;<sup>57</sup> rich states are in a better position to sustain education, urbanization, and other mechanisms that promote democratic culture and democratic conduct than poor states;<sup>58</sup> and, geographical and cultural affinity advances diffusion and thereby the spread of democratic ideas and ideals, as was the case when Greece, Portugal, and Spain benefited in terms of democratization from their position close to the heartland of European democracy.<sup>59</sup>

Empirical outcomes in terms of frequencies are reported in table 3. Information concerning state size and geographical location was gathered online from the *World Factbook*, published by Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).<sup>60</sup> States are classified either as microstates, with populations of less than one million, or as larger states. Also, the former colonies are classified in terms of six regions, namely the Caribbean, the Pacific, Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. Only two former colonies are in Europe; in other regions, the number varies between seven and eighteen. The modernization data also come from the *CIA Factbook*, which identify the sizes of the GDP/capita of countries and their corresponding rankings in a worldwide comparison of

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<sup>55</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, "Will More Countries Be Democratic?" *Political Science Quarterly* 99, no. 2 (1984): 206.

<sup>56</sup> See, for example, Dana Ott, *Small Is Democratic: An Examination of State Size and Democratic Development* (New York: Garland, 2000), and Henry Srebrnik, "Small Island Nations and Democratic Values," *World Development* 32, no. 2 (2004): 329-341.

<sup>57</sup> See, for example, Arend Lijphart, *Democracy in Plural Societies: A Comparative Exploration* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977).

<sup>58</sup> Seymour Martin Lipset, "Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy," *American Political Science Review* 53, no. 1 (1959): 69-105, and Larry Diamond, "Economic Development and Democracy Reconsidered," in *Reexamining Democracy: Essays in Honor of Seymour Martin Lipset*, ed. Gary Marks and Larry Diamond (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1992).

<sup>59</sup> Ron Hague and Martin Harrop, *Comparative Government and Politics*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 47.

<sup>60</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, *The World Factbook*, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/index.html> (accessed December 2010).

countries and territories. Countries which report a GDP/capita measure of U.S. \$10,000 or more are classified as rich units; countries with corresponding values of U.S. \$5,000 or less are classified as poor. In the world comparison, countries which are among the top seventy-five entities (of 225) are placed in a first category; countries ranking between seventy-six and 149 are placed in a second; and countries with a rank of 150 or greater are placed in a third category. Ethnicity data are from a study by Carsten Anckar, Mårten Eriksson, and Jutta Leskinen that provides summary indexes of ethnic, linguistic, and

Table 3. Democracy Variation among Former British Colonies:  
A Review of the Impact of Five Determining Factors

	Democracies	Half-democracies	Non-democracies
Factor 1: State size			
<i>Microstates</i>	46%	29%	25%
<i>Larger states</i>	20%	23%	57%
Factor 2: Ethnicity			
<i>Heterogeneous states</i>	25%	29%	46%
<i>Homogeneous states</i>	40%	24%	36%
Factor 3: Modernization			
<i>GDP/capita &gt; U.S. \$10,000</i>	48%	12%	40%
<i>GDP/capita &lt; U.S. \$5,000</i>	8%	46%	46%
<i>World comparison best 75</i>	7	2	9
<i>World comparison 76-149</i>	9	2	3
<i>World comparison 150 -</i>	1	10	10
Factor 4: Region			
<i>Caribbean</i>	9	3	-
<i>Pacific</i>	4	3	-
<i>Europe</i>	1	1	-
<i>Africa</i>	2	5	11
<i>Asia</i>	-	2	5
<i>Middle East</i>	1	-	7
Factor 5: Colonial rule			
<i>Long rule</i>	54%	21%	25%
<i>Short rule</i>	14%	30%	56%

<sup>61</sup> Carsten Anckar, Mårten Eriksson, and Jutta Leskinen, "Measuring Ethnic, Linguistic and Religious Fragmentation in the World" (Åbo, Finland: Åbo Akademi University, Department of Political Science, Occasional Papers Series, 2002), no. 18.

religious fragmentation of the countries of the world.<sup>61</sup> States are here classified as being either heterogeneous, reporting summary indexes that surpass a value of .90, or homogeneous, reporting smaller values. Finally, the length of the colonial period is based on the information given earlier in table 1 on dates of establishment of British control. The cutting point is one hundred years: states that, at the time of gaining independence, had been under control for one hundred years or more are defined as long-time colonies, whereas states that had been colonies for a lesser time are defined as short-time colonies.

The overall impression from the findings is that democratization is a complex phenomenon, which is shaped and cultivated by a variety of circumstances. Indeed, almost all factors that have been chosen for examination prove to bear an impact. Size matters: clearly, microstates tend toward democracy more than larger states. Economy matters: almost half of the rich countries have developed into democracies, whereas the same is true of very few poor countries. Region matters: some regions are crowded by democracies, whereas in others, non-democracy sets the tone. Furthermore, colonial rule matters in so far as most long-ruled colonies have become democracies, and most short-ruled colonies have become non-democracies. The ethnicity factor, however, does not seem fully operative: while there is an expected tendency for heterogeneous states to develop into non-democracies, no corresponding tendency of homogeneous states to develop into democracies is discernible.

In the following, some aspects of the above rather crude generalizations are singled out for closer scrutiny and discussion. Four separate points are made:

1. A better fit between the determining factors and the final outcomes still would have had to have been established, were it not for a demarcated group of states. These states play an important role, as they turn the tables: in defiance of being small, they are non-democracies; in defiance of being rich, they are non-democracies; in defiance of being homogeneous, they are non-democracies. They have been consistently and unequivocally insensitive to factors that usually count as promoters and determinants of democracy; particularly, they entangle and muddle the modernization-democracy link, greatly increasing the number of welfare non-democracies. This group comprises a number of small Arab and Muslim states in the Persian Gulf and elsewhere: Bahrain, Brunei, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, South Yemen, and the United Arab Emirates. They convey an impression of Westminster impotence regarding democracy promotion; they have proved “troublingly resistant to democratization.”<sup>62</sup> It is important to note, however,

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<sup>62</sup> Adrian Karatnycky, “The 30th Anniversary Freedom House Survey,” *Journal of Democracy* 14, no. 1 (2003): 101.

that due to their special status, these states should not be taken into full consideration with regard to the impact of Westminster Rule. They, in fact, never were strictly part of the British Empire, but had close treaty arrangements with Britain which controlled their foreign policy. They received independence from Britain under existing rulers, meaning that after independence they continued to exist as absolute monarchies.<sup>63</sup> “Despite superficial gestures towards liberal norms,”<sup>64</sup> they still are run along autocratic lines. For instance, when municipal elections were arranged in 1999 in Qatar, they were the first of their kind, and observers of political life in that country then suggested that further reforms would stop at the water’s edge of challenging monarchical authority.<sup>65</sup> Oman has been authoritatively ruled as a sultanate since independence in 1951; however, elections for a consultative assembly were instituted in the early 1990s, and universal suffrage was instituted in 2003. Yet, the prospect of Oman’s being a democracy is somewhere in the distant future. The country does not have an independence constitution and still lacks a proper written constitutional framework. In sum, a good part of the materials at hand are about cases which do not necessarily convey a just and unbiased model of the influence of Westminster Rule.

2. The significance of the state-size factor invites two further comments. One concerns a discrepancy between the present findings and some earlier findings which have reported a larger portion of democratic microstates. For instance, according to one count, of all twenty-four small former British territories, a vast majority of seventeen had emerged in 1999 as democracies.<sup>66</sup> This discrepancy may be explained by reference to the fact that microstate democratization has been time-dependent,<sup>67</sup> meaning that studies which employ different time frames may produce divergent results. The observations in this study are based on a fairly long time-span and, given the time-dependency of microstate democratization, are therefore less susceptible to democratic breakthrough than observations made of later and shorter periods.

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<sup>63</sup> Chamberlain, *European Decolonisation*, 7, and 133.

<sup>64</sup> Stephen J. King, “The Middle East: Liberal Economics & Illiberal Politics,” in *Freedom in the World, 1997-1998* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1998), 68.

<sup>65</sup> Louay Y. Bahry, “Elections in Qatar: A Window of Democracy Opens in the Gulf,” *Middle East Policy* 6, no. 4 (1999): 118-127.

<sup>66</sup> Anckar, “Regime Choices,” 218.

<sup>67</sup> Dag Anckar, “Microstate Democracy Revisited: Developments in Time and Space,” *Open Political Science Journal* 1, no. 1 (2008): 77-78.

For instance, if the situation in the single year 2010 had served as a basis for classification in this study, Antigua-Barbuda, Cyprus, Grenada, Guyana, and Vanuatu, all classified as non-democracies, would have qualified as democracies. The end result, then, would have been that two-thirds (67 percent) of the microstates in this study would have appeared as democracies.

The second comment dwells upon the relevance of size thresholds. The idea of such thresholds within the small state universe was introduced decades ago by Robert Dahl and Edward Tufte in their now classic treatise on *Size and Democracy*. Investigating on theoretical as well as empirical grounds the political importance of differences in country size, the authors found it likely that the characteristics of smaller systems were associated in a significant way, not with any small system, but with very small systems only. “Whatever this threshold may be,” they wrote, “it is, most likely, lower than the population of even a very small country like Iceland.”<sup>68</sup> The same reasoning appears in other texts within the size and democracy discourse. For instance, investigating the relationship between size and insularity, on the one hand, and democracy, on the other, Hadenius has demonstrated the existence of a link between small size and democracy, which, however, is strong only at a very low level of size. The connection between small size and democracy, therefore, according to Hadenius, has a roof.<sup>69</sup> Recent studies likewise suggest that a threshold effect may be operating, the implication of which is that the smallest countries have a much higher degree of democracy than larger countries. The critical cutting point appears to be 500,000 individuals: when the population size surpasses this threshold, there no longer is any association between size and democracy.<sup>70</sup> In other words, there is a difference between being small and being diminutive. The present findings certainly substantiate this pattern. Of altogether twenty-four colonies which presently are in the microstate category, no less than nineteen are small microstates (less than 500,000 people), the remaining five all being large microstates (more than 500,000 people). The democracy orientations of these groupings are very different—whereas a majority (eleven of nineteen) of the small microstates qualifies as democracies, all five larger microstates are non-democracies.

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<sup>68</sup> Robert A. Dahl and Edward Tufte, *Size and Democracy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1973), 94.

<sup>69</sup> Hadenius, *Democracy and Development*, 125.

<sup>70</sup> Carsten Anckar, “Size, Islandness, and Democracy: A Global Comparison,” *International Political Science Review* 29, no. 4 (2008): 440-441.

3. The impact of colonial rule is in the expected direction. Of the twenty-six colonies that experienced a long British presence, more than half have developed into stable democracies, the second half being scattered in about equal proportions over the half-democracy and non-democracy categories. However, of the twenty-eight colonies that experienced a short British presence, more than half have become victims to the adversities of non-democracy, whereas only few cases, namely Botswana, Israel, Kiribati, and Nauru, have made their way into the democracy camp. Recent research on the effects of colonialism has demonstrated that the longer an island spent as a colony, the higher its present-day living standards and the lower its infant mortality rate;<sup>71</sup> a pertinent commentary is that this finding “may require a revision of most post-colonial theory.”<sup>72</sup> This article, then, offers additional support to the commentary: it appears to be the case that the longer a present country spent as a British colony, the better the prospects for this country to adapt and internalize a democratic code and culture. In this sense at least, the British Empire stands out as a true “liberal empire”<sup>73</sup> and as an example of benign colonialism, which has brought benefits to indigenous populations and improved their political conditions. Caution is called for, however, in the interpretation of the numerical patterns. The factors that are considered here evidently interact and overlap in a complex manner and cannot therefore be commented upon in isolation. For instance, all the Arab and Muslim countries that were discussed previously were short-time colonies and contribute to the insignificance of this category. Their democracy resistance, however, probably emanates first and foremost from other sources than their brief time as colonies.
  
4. The above comment spills over into the fourth and last point, which is about some obvious limitations to the explanatory power of colonial rule. The fact that the former colonies which have turned into non-democracies are in lumps in terms of commonwealth geography implies that the colonial-rule factor has confronted strong geographic patterns of cultural barriers against democracy penetration: although it is true that no other nation’s system of government “has been copied so extensively in such a wide variety

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<sup>71</sup> James Feyrer and Bruce Sacerdote, “Colonialism and Modern Income—Islands as Natural Experiments,” *NBER Working Paper*, no. 12546, October 2006.

<sup>72</sup> Godfrey Baldacchino, “The Power of Jurisdiction in Promoting Social Policies in Smaller States,” United Nations Research Institute for Social Development and Commonwealth Secretary, Thematic Paper, 2007, 7.

<sup>73</sup> Niall Ferguson, *Empire: How Britain Made the Modern World* (London: Allen Lane, 2003).

of societies and continents,”<sup>74</sup> it is also true that the democratic foundation of the Westminster system has been rejected as unfit and ill-placed in many places. There is probably also in the picture a great variation in the extent to which metropolitan efforts have been carried out to mold and shape the preparedness of a colony for democracy: in a few instances, no real efforts have been made; in other instances, the efforts have been half-hearted at best; in still other instances, the efforts have been serious enough but have failed. Kenya is an example in the last of these categories. Here, an independence constitution was adopted in 1963; due to a splitting of the nationalist movement during pre-independence politics as well as pressures from the white settler community, Kenya agreed to persuasion from Britain for a parliamentary form of government, with a federal constitution and a bicameral legislature. However, almost immediately after formal independence, in 1964, the constitution was amended to return to a unitary form of government and to create an executive presidency. Also, the multiparty system did not survive for long, as in 1964, Kenya developed into a *de facto* single-party state.<sup>75</sup> A strong central state often being regarded an essential component of Westminster politics,<sup>76</sup> Kenya ironically provides an example of a case where the colonizer attempted to impose—and the colony for its part rejected—a watered-down Westminster version.

The Middle East and Arab retreats are examples of cases in the first category, and it needs to be said, of course, that the cultural dispositions to internalize democratic doctrines and methods have been weak here. True, findings suggest that a fairly broad support for democracy exists in the Arab world and that Islam does not necessarily in itself foster antidemocratic attitudes, but observers a couple of years ago still found it to be an open question to what extent popular support for democracy would become transformed into pressure for political reform and democratic openings in the Arab world.<sup>77</sup> At the time of writing (February 2011), however, as a revolutionary wave of demonstrations and protests has been sweeping the Middle East and North Africa since December 2010, recent events testify to an emerging preparedness for pressure activity. In several cases, the consequences have been quite drastic.

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<sup>74</sup> Wilson, “The Westminster Model,” 189.

<sup>75</sup> Dirk Hartmann, “Kenya,” in *Elections in Africa: A Data Handbook*, ed. Dieter Nohlen, Michael Krennerich, and Bernhard Thibaut (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 475-476.

<sup>76</sup> See, for example, Lijphart, *Democracies*, 1-21.

<sup>77</sup> Amaney Jamal and Mark Tessler, “Attitudes in the Arab World,” *Journal of Democracy* 19, no. 1 (2008): 108-109.

In Tunisia, President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali was forced to step down in January 2011 and then he left the country; in Egypt, in the course of the 2011 Egyptian revolution, President Hosni Mubarak resigned in February and authority was transferred to the Armed Forces; in Libya, the position of the ruler Muammar Gaddafi presently is highly insecure, and the country appears to be on the verge of civil war; several other places, such as Algeria, Bahrain, Iran, Iraq, and Oman, have experienced major protests and even violent clashes between protestors and security services. Moving within culturally and geographically adjacent quarters, the protests and demonstrations are rather clear-cut cases of diffusion, turning also in the different places against similar issues, such as government corruption, dictatorship, and human rights violations, as well as poor economic and social conditions, manifested in poverty, unemployment, and food price inflation.

As events are still unfolding, notions on causes and consequences are presently premature and must rely heavily on guess-work. Most probably, however, future research on diffusion mechanisms and determinants will study closely the role of social media as vehicles for organizing civil resistance. Concerning the future, several scenarios come to mind. In some places, authoritarian rule will perhaps be replaced with other authoritarian rule varieties; in other places, these varieties are perhaps about religious rigidity and persecution; in still other places, democratization and multiparty government perhaps will emerge slowly. To the extent that this last contingency is realized, many former British colonies, Bahrain, Libya, Oman, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Yemen, and also Egypt and Iraq, are among the presumptive new democracies, and the Westminster balance-sheet is then given a late polish. However, one should of course bear in mind that the possible developments in the Arab world toward democracy, desirable as they are, really do not reflect a Westminster heritage. Expressing the impact of globalization, internationalization, technical development, and population growth, they have emerged in places that were once under British rule, but were never subjected to or adapted to British political culture and ideology.

