

Bread/IGC Virtual PhD Course on Urban Economics

Cities, politics & conflict: The disruptive city

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Overview

Economic Benefits and Social Costs of Density

Popular Uprisings and Urbanization

Prospects for Democratization under Urbanization

Main question

Can urbanization lead to greater levels of democracy and better government for cities/countries around the developing world? (Glaeser, Steinberg, 2016)

Mechanisms ?

Special focus on African Political History (Garcia and Wantchekon, 2023)

1. Coordinate public action and enhance effectiveness of social movements
2. Increase demand for democracy relative to dictatorship.
3. Promote development of “civic capital” which enables citizens to improve their own institutions.

3 primary themes:

1. Economic Benefits and Social Costs of Density
2. Popular Uprisings and Urbanization
3. Prospects for Democratization under Urbanization

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Density and Economic Opportunity

Numerous theories in political science and economics about how workers in cities are more productive and how wages are higher.

- Worker's perspective: Higher wages compensate for higher costs of living.
- Firms' perspective: Higher wages must be offset by other urban advantages → *productivity*

Key takeaway

Agglomeration (dense) economies are important drivers of the economy

Dynamic Effects of Density on Income

- Density can increase learning and production of new ideas—formation of human capital → wage growth (De La Roca & Puga 2016, Glaeser & Mare 2001)
- Yet this is dependent on the time period which this happens in: negative relationship (1970-1980); positive relationship (1980-2000).
 1. 20 pp increase in urbanization results in more than a doubling of income, on average.
 2. 10 pp increase in urbanization is associated with, on average, 20 % greater income between 1960 to 2010.

Some Social Costs of Density

Some social costs can emerge from increasing agglomeration (Glaeser & Sacerdote 1999):

- Transmission of diseases.
- Pollution of air and water.
- Abundance of criminal perpetrators.

But these “negative externalities” can be curbed/ameliorated by effective government (Cutler & Miller 2005; Alsan & Goldin 2016; Ashraf, Glaeser and Ponzetto 2016).

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Does Urbanization Promote Popular Uprisings?

Historical cases of uprisings in urban areas seen in Ancient Greece, the United States, Western Europe and Eastern European Communist states.

Urban spaces feature distinctly in revolutions in the developing world, particularly in Africa:

- Wallace (2014): ““for the 235 regimes with urban concentration levels about the mean level in the data, the mean duration is 8.6 years and the annual regime death rate is 9.1 percent... for the 198 regimes characterized by low levels of urban concentration, the incidence rate is only 5.7 percent and the mean duration is 12.2 years.”

Does Urbanization Promote Popular Uprisings

Choi and Kim (2019) explain urbanization as part of the story of *resource mobilization* → protests become more likely when movement entrepreneurs can assemble resources necessary to stage a successful protest.

2 corollaries:

1. Mobilize large amounts of money and human labor to stage protests.
2. Greater human labor for mobilization → minimizing costs that individuals bear through participation in protests.

Urbanization thus becomes a means to bring people together **in close proximity** → facilitating spread of ideas and allowing grievances to accumulate (Wallace 2013).

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Urbanization and the Transition to Democracy

Cross-country evidence:

- Correlation between urbanization in 1960 and democracy between 1960 and 2000 across.
- Results: More urbanization in 1960 → higher Polity IV democracy scores between 1960 and 2000 controlling for democracy in 1960.
- Even higher correlation for countries with low levels of democracy in 1960.

Not definitive evidence but highlights the idea that "urbanization might be a contributing factor in any move towards democracy".

Urbanization and the Promotion Regime Change

- “Few interests arising in rural areas are capable of making themselves heard in politics,” but in cities “interest groups form more readily and give voice to the demands of urbanized sectors of the population” (Blanksten 1960).
- Cities reduce the risks to protesters: large crowds → hard for the police to target any individual protester → costs of rioting decline.(DiPasquale & Glaeser 1997).
- Impact of urban size on revolutionary success: in capital cities, urban protesters are close to the seat of power → protests have more ability to threaten or disrupt the existing government.

Other theories: Creating Demand for Democracy

- Urbanization will promote the demand for democracy:
 - Framework in Djankov et al. (2003):
 - Dictatorships: Autocratic regimes that extract and create wastage of funds through “pet projects” → creating loss through the public sector.
 - Disorder: Private sector faces losses due to weak government.
 - Trade-off: Between Democracy and Dictatorship.
- Urbanization increases the demand for democracy when benefits from urban innovation is great; demand becomes less likely when costs of urban disamenities are more severe.
- Demand for democracy strongest among commercial cities and less so for industrial ones.
- Ethnic fragmentation among cities is associated with lower likelihood for democracy.
- Wantchekon and Garcia-Ponce (2016): urban movements tended to involve peaceful protests, while rural movements were often based around armed conflict.

- Urbanization creates more Civic Capital
 1. Years of schooling correlated with better functioning governments (La Porta et al. 1999; Glaeser and Saks 2005).
 2. Interactions and connectivity across different types of people.
 3. Learning: people may learn how to bridge social divides and create functional relationship → collaboration and tolerance (Abrahamson and Carter 1986; Fossett and Kiecolt 1989)

Critical Junctures: Independence Movements and Democracy in Africa

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What explains the cross-national variation in democratic development?

Possible explanations:

- Modernization Theories
- Critical Junctures Framework

Modernization Theories

- Connection between democracy and development (e.g., Lipset, 1959; Przeworski and Limongi, 1993; Boix, 2003; Glaeser et al., 2007; Benhabib et al., 2011).
- However, Acemoglu et al (2009) find that the association between income and democracy becomes insignificant when controlling for factors that affect both variables.

Critical Junctures Framework

- Societies embark on divergent development paths at certain critical historical junctures (e.g., Acemoglu et al., 2008 and 2009; Collier and Collier, 1991).
- But the critical junctures framework does not elucidate the set of choices faced or decisions made by political actors at these turning points and how they map onto future institutional outcomes.

Our Study

- Presents robust evidence that current levels of democracy in Africa are linked to the nature of its independence movements.

Rural insurgencies → autocratic political institutions.

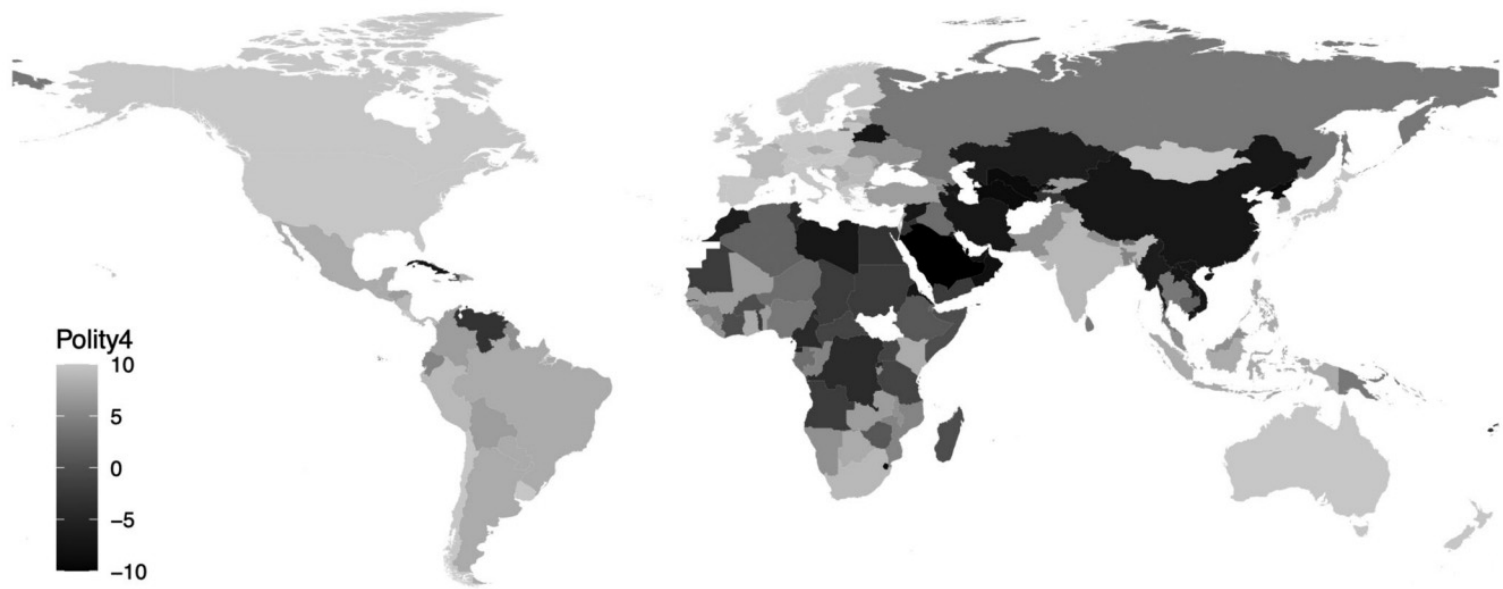
Urban protests → democratic political institutions.

- Provides evidence for causality in this relationship by using different empirical approaches.
- Concludes that the adoption of rural insurgency perpetuated the use of violence as a form of conflict resolution.

Why Africa?

- Africa is without question the continent with the greatest variation in political regimes.

Polity IV Scores around the World



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

Democracy in Africa has been very unevenly distributed over the past 20 years...

While a number of countries have experienced democratic reforms (e.g., South Africa, Ghana, Benin), others remained autocracies or became unstable democracies plagued by political violence (e.g., Cameroon, Congo, Zimbabwe).

Despite similarities in economic development, there is a drastic divergence in democratic trajectories between these two sets of countries.

Historical Background: Independence Movements as Critical Junctures

The decade following the end of World War II was a foundational moment for African political development.

Movements against colonial rule evolved into large-scale Pan-African organizations that reflected the ideological divide of the international socialist and labor movement:

Western European-style socialists, such as Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana, and Julius Nyerere in Tanzania .

Radical Maoists, such as Frantz Fanon in Algeria, Dedan Kimathi in Kenya, and Ruben Um Nyobé in Cameroon.

These two sets of leaders advocated radically different paths towards independence...

- For instance, in a May 1958 address to his party, Nyerere stressed the importance of a non-violent opposition:

We shall wage a relentlessly determined battle against [colonialism] until we are free. We shall use no violence. We shall stoop to no dishonest methods. We shall be as clean in our methods as we are in our aims. We shall publicly declare our methods as we publicly declare our aims.



In contrast, Fanon (1961) colorfully advocated the use of violence as a necessary strategy of emancipation...

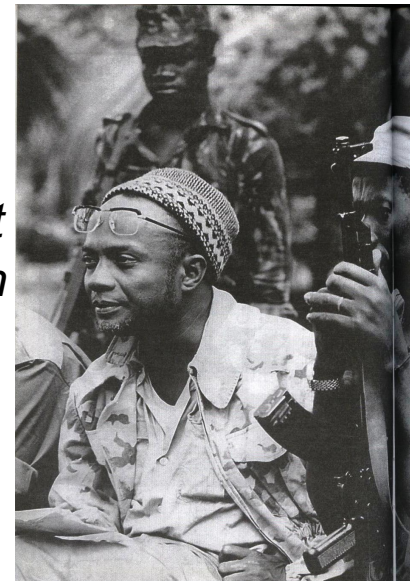
[At the national level] insurgents' violence unifies the people [...] At the level of individuals, [it] is a cleansing force. It frees the native from his inferiority complex and from his despair and inaction; it makes him fearless and restores his self-respect.



The choice between these contrasting strategies was driven in part by geographic conditions...

- Consider the case of Guinea Bissau and Cape Verde. The armed resistance occurred in the jungle of Guinea-Bissau. Amilcar Cabral, the founder of the PAIGC wrote:

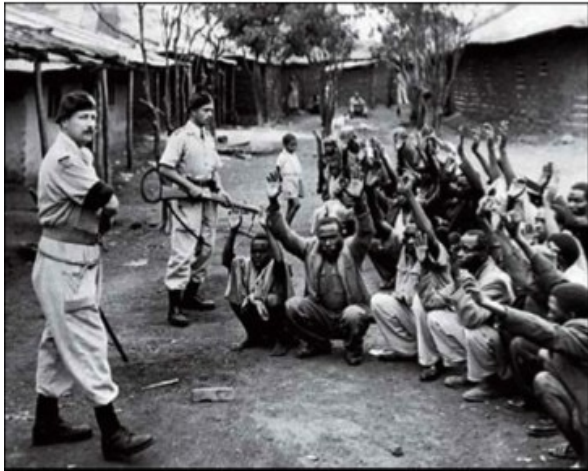
Everyone knows that in general the guerrilla force uses the mountains as a starting point for the armed struggle. [...] we had to take full advantage of the jungles and swamps in our country to create difficult conditions for the enemy in his confrontation with the victorious advance of our armed struggle (Cabral [1969, p. 18]).



Our Theoretical Argument in a Nutshell

- African pro-independence actors chose, fundamentally, between two potential coordination mechanisms:
 1. **Engage in violent actions**
 2. **Participate in mass protests**
- We argue that decisions made at this critical juncture generated path dependency, significantly shaping future institutions and norms of behavior.
- Mass protests enabled participants to develop norms of peaceful political expression and compromise.
- In contrast, armed rebellions generated a culture of political exclusion that perpetuated the use of violence.

Examples of Rural Insurgency



Examples of Urban Insurgency



Egypt

1919 Egyptian Urban Uprising



2011 Egyptian Revolution



Libya

1912 Libyan Resistance



1969 Libyan Military Coup



2011 Libyan Civil War



Data

Original coding of independence movements (**rural insurgency** vs. **urban protest**).

Democracy measures (Polity IV and Freedom House).

Rough terrain (% mountains) and **other geographic conditions** (fertile soil, desert, climate, distance to coast, land size, natural resources).

Colonial data (urbanization, colonial rule indicators, slave exports, % European descent).

Contemporaneous controls (per capita income, population size, ethnic and religious fractionalization).

Coding of Independence Movements

A country is coded as having a legacy of **rural insurgency** on the basis of the following criteria:

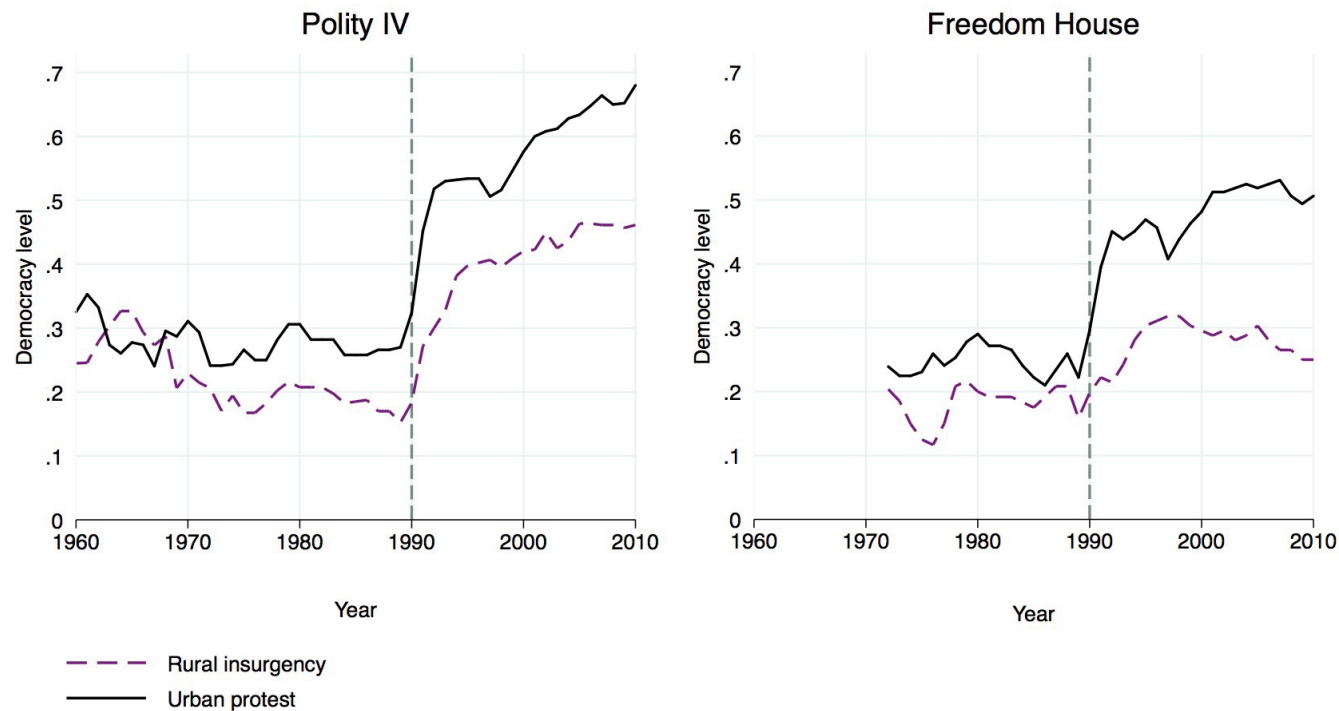
1. At least one anti-colonial revolt took place between 1900 and the year of independence;
2. The rebel group originated in a rural area or in the country's periphery;
3. The goal was independence or regime change;
4. Guerrilla-like tactics were employed during the conflict;
5. The estimated death toll was at least 1,000.

Type of Independence Movement



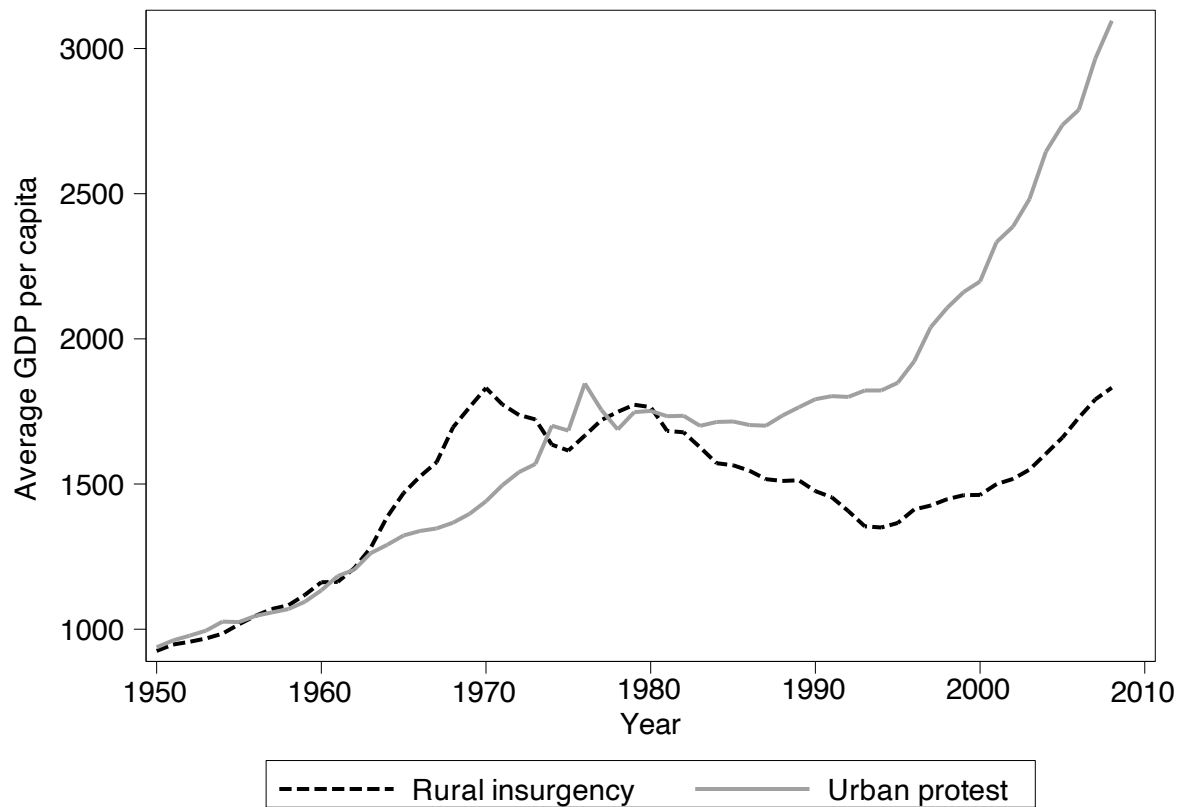
Notes: This map shows countries where independence movements relied heavily on either rural insurgency or urban protests.

Relationship between Democracy and Type of Independence Movement over Time (1960s–2010)

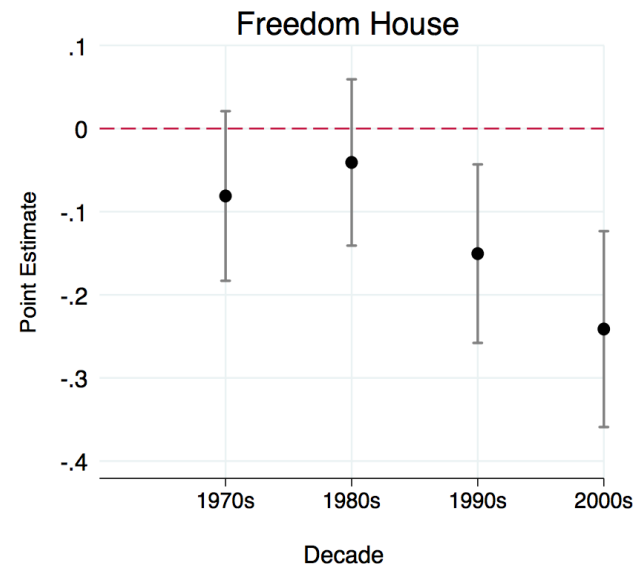
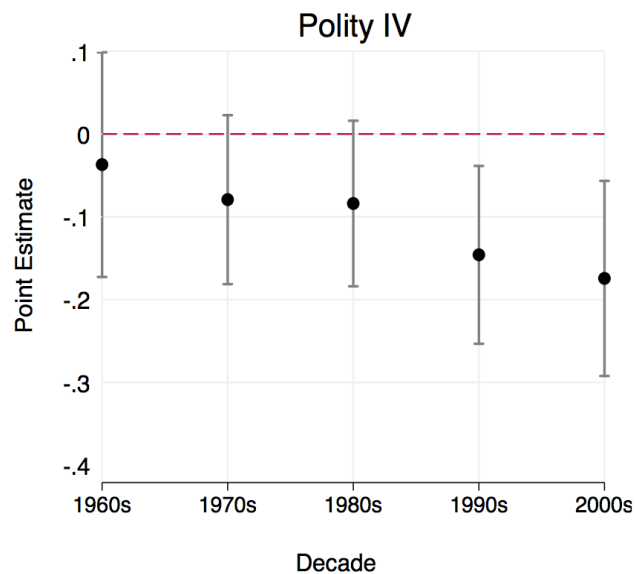


The gap in democracy levels between these two sets of countries is very clear after the end of the Cold War

Relationship between Type of Independence Movement and GDP per capita, 1950–2010



Statistical Association between Democracy and Rural Insurgency by Decade (OLS Estimates)



Rural insurgency is negatively and significantly correlated with democracy during the 1990s and 2000s, but not before.

Econometric Analysis

We employ a number of empirical strategies, each of which is meant to address different potential concerns regarding the identification of causal effects.

1. We estimate a series of cross-sectional OLS regressions controlling for a number of potential confounders.
2. To address potential endogeneity concerns, we employ an instrumental variables approach using rough terrain as an instrument for rural insurgency.
3. We employ a DID approach with year and country fixed effects to test whether democracy levels changed differentially after the end of the Cold War in rural insurgency vs urban protest countries.

Empirical Approach #1

First, we show that the statistical association between rural insurgency and post-1990 levels of democracy is robust to a number of potential confounders.

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

Empirical Approach #2

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

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

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

Empirical Approach #3

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

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

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

Potential Mechanisms

We consider two alternative pathways:

Institutions: early post-independence constitutional arrangements may have been decisive in shaping future democratic development (e.g., rural insurgencies may have generated exclusive institutions immediately after independence).

Norms of behavior: armed struggles may have perpetuated political violence, making post-colonial (civil) wars more likely to occur in countries that fought violently for their independence. Rural insurgencies legitimated the use of violence as a form of political expression.

The logic behind the second mechanism was clearly outlined in Nyerere in 1967...

It is clear that the independence campaign has had great influence on [current] attitudes [in] independent Tanzania. TANU's emphasis on the morality of its case, and its stress on peaceful methods, has created among the people certain expectations about the actions of their independent nation and its leadership. TANU called for equality; our people now expect it [...] We called for equality of opportunity; our people are now critical that this does not exist. It is these moral expectations which create both the problems and the opportunities in the very different circumstances of the post-independence period in Tanzania.

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

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

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

Concluding Remarks

Our results contribute to the critical junctures theory by mapping choices made at a crucial and foundational moment in African political history onto future development paths.

We show that colonial history matters for African political development not only because of the policies enacted by the colonial administration, but also because of the way African pro-independence leaders chose to oppose them.

Rural insurgencies tend to generate autocratic governments in the long run, while urban movements tend to lead to more democratic institutions.