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Abstract

The role of civil society for the consolidation of democracy is contested. Some argue that Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) are important “schools of democracy” and may foster democratic consolidation. Others emphasize that anti-democratic CSOs may undermine democracy. This debate is particularly relevant in the context of newly independent states. At this critical juncture, both democratic and authoritarian regime trajectories seem possible. Societal preconditions – such as the state of civil society – are highly relevant for the way forward. To what extent does the strength and the nature of civil society organizations (CSOs) prior to independence have an impact on the consolidation of democracy? We argue that the existence of democratic CSOs prior to democratic transition strengthen post-independence democracy whereas non-democratic CSOs have a detrimental effect. For the first time, this argument is empirically tested, using data from the Varieties of Democracy Institute (V-Dem) on 92 cases of independence since 1905. The results of this study show that the presence of democratic CSOs prior to independence is important for the consolidation of democracy, the presence of non-democratic CSOs before independence is negatively correlated to democracy levels of the new state following independence.

Introduction

The role of civil society in consolidation of democracy has been discussed by scholars for many years (e.g. Bernhard, Fernandes, & Branco, 2017; Putnam, 1995; Tocqueville, 1969). The bulk of empirical studies on the role of civil society and democratization have been case studies focusing on states experiencing critical junctures such as for example revolutions (Stepan and Linz, 2013), or regime transitions (Bermeo, 1997). In particular, processes of independence are critical for changes in regime trajectory and provide a good opportunity for systematic, empirical studies. States sometimes venture down different paths following independence and form either a democratic or CSOs are willing to play by democratic rules, and do not use violence as means to reach their goals. Conversely, non-democratic CSOs, also called ‘uncivil society’ (Kopecký and Mudde, 2003) or ‘bad civil society’ (Chambers and Kopstein, 2001), use violence as means to reach their goals, do not care for democratic rules, and often hold undemocratic ideas (e.g. Chambers and Kopstein, 2001; Kopecký and Mudde, 2003).

As CSOs sometimes are not officially registered, their existence and the level of participation in them, are difficult to assess and quantify based on membership data only. The expert-coded data from the Varieties of Democracy Institute (V-Dem Coppedge et al., 2018), allows – for the first time - to quantify the participation in CSOs beyond formal membership levels.

Controlling for modernization factors, regions, and previous experience of democracy, the results of this empirical study indicate a unique and substantial positive relationship between the presence of democratic CSOs, and a negative relationship between non-democratic CSOs before independence and democracy levels after independence. This finding supports arguments by several civil society scholars that stress the importance of differentiating between democratic and non-democratic CSOs when studying the subject (e.g. Chambers and Kopstein, 2001; Kopecký and Mudde, 2003). It also contributes to the debate over whether civil society strength or nature is most important for democratization in general (e.g. Berman, 1997; Kopecký and Mudde, 2003; Tusalem, 2007).

This paper proceeds as follows. First, we develop theoretical arguments based on the literature on civil society and democratization and present our hypotheses. Then we describe the data and method used, and provide a descriptive analysis of the data. We then move on to our results, and provide a discussion on robustness and the results. Lastly, our conclusions along with an outline of for future research areas on the subject.

Theory: Civil Society, Independence, and Democratization

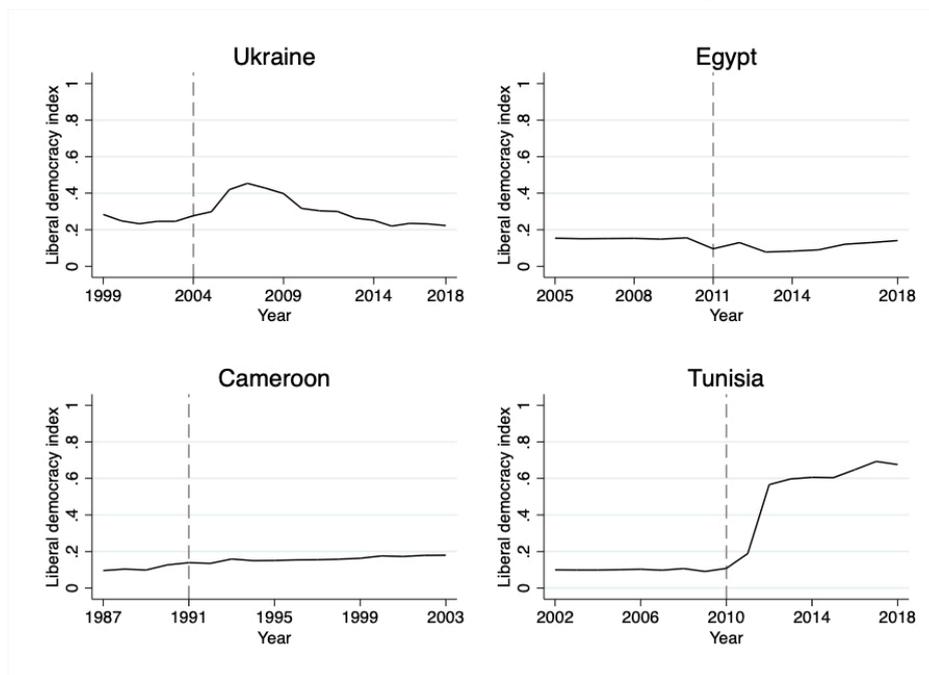
A strong civil society has by many researches been claimed to increase the chances of a successful democratization in general, by creating ‘constraints on the reproduction of privileged positions under authoritarianism’ (Bernhard, et al., 2017, p. 306), and working as a stabilizer and trigger of democracy via social trust (Diamond, 1999; Fukuyama, 1995; Putnam, 1995). Furthermore, they empower the people by monitoring officials and keeping citizens informed about their actions (Lindberg, Lührmann, & Mechkova, 2017, p. 8), and educate citizens in quality of policies and governance, and democratic rights, and train them in using democratic tools to influence their society (Gerring, Bond, Barndt, & Moreno, 2005, pp. 330-331; Smith, 2000; Tocqueville, 1969, p. 522).

Whether CSO participation levels or the nature of civil society matters most for democracy outcomes has been widely discussed (e.g. Berman, 1997; Kopecký and Mudde, 2003; Tusalem, 2007), and we claim that while a certain amount of people needs to be active for the CSO to have any effect, the nature of the CSO also matters for the chances the country to democratize. In the field of research arguing for the value of sheer participation, the classical work by Robert Putnam (1995), *Bowling Alone*, connects a lowered trust for the government and other citizens to the decrease in CSO participation levels during the same time. Putnam (1995, p. 70ff) noticed how organized activity had decreased in the United States, and since members of civic associations are more likely to participate in politics, he concludes that there might be a link of social trust between low CSO participation and political disarray. Since Putnam, other scholars have argued mainly for the strength of civil society rather than its nature (e.g. Tusalem, 2007), and it is now widely assumed that a strong civil society ‘contributes to the making and sustaining of democracy’ (Grugel and Bishop, 2014, p. 136).

On the contrary, others have argued that statements such as ‘an active civil society is good for democracy’ are ‘invalid’, and that it depends on which CSOs that constitute the civil society (Kopecký and Mudde, 2003, p. 11). Way (2014) also lifts civil society nature rather than strength, and claims that while CSOs direct and facilitate protests, civil society does not need to be strong to produce well-organized protests. Way (2014, pp. 38-39) specifically mentions the large-scale protests in Ukraine in 2004, Egypt in 2011, and especially Cameroon in 1991 as examples of when weaker civil societies managed to organize very large protests. However, none of these protests resulted in a successful democratization and a lasting democracy. Ukraine increased its level of

democracy for five years before reverting to its original levels, Egypt one year, and the protests in Cameroon did not result in any democratization at all (see fig. 1, below).

Figure 1. Liberal democracy levels during years around large protests in Ukraine, Egypt, Cameroon, and Tunisia. Dashed line marks year of protest.



Note: Data source: Coppedge et al. (2019)

Berman (1997, p. 429) argues that activities such as organized bowling appear to have no effect on democratization if political institutions and a political civil society are not revitalized, and we find examples supporting her argument in the Arab Spring. No matter how impressive the protests, Egypt did not manage to sustainably democratize, but Tunisia did (see fig. 1, above). In Tunisia, secular liberals and Islamists were both opposing the authoritarian government, and despite disagreeing in many areas, they held organized meetings where they agreed upon rules for democracy as early as eight years before transition (Stepan and Linz, 2013, p. 23).

When transition started, they were prepared for democratic rule. Egypt, on the other hand, had a large creative civil society but their political and democratic civil society was greatly underdeveloped. This demonstrates how democratic CSOs, as ‘great free schools of democracy’ (Tocqueville, 1969, p. 522), may increase the chances of a successful democratization process. We have seen examples of this in Tunisia (Stepan and Linz, 2013, see above), where widely opposing sides managed to agree upon democratic rules before the revolution.

However, scholars have also raised concern that democratic and non-democratic CSOs most likely have opposite effects on democratization. For instance, Berman (1997) makes an example

of how the civil society in the Weimar Republic was used by the non-democratic National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP) for political gain. The high levels of socioeconomic cleavages resulted both in increased levels of CSO participation and a civil society largely consisting of dissatisfied citizens, which was used by the non-democratic NSDAP to gather support (Berman, 1997, p. 421).

Chambers and Kopstein (2001) also warn about how non-democratic CSOs can nurture hatred and fear in its members. On July 4th, 1999, a member of the World Church of the Creator (a white supremacist organization) in the United States, went on a shooting rampage, targeting African Americans, Asian Americans, and Jews. Chambers and Kopstein (2001, p. 837) mean that his hatred and fear of these ethnicities was nurtured by his membership in the association. Now, smaller CSOs such as the World Church of the Creator may not seem like a potent threat against a democracy the size of the United States. But Chambers and Kopstein (2001, p. 843) argue that there can be a spill-over effect from the extremist CSOs to the mainstream media and political discourse, normalizing its ideas. One example of this was brought to attention by the BBC (2017) reporting on how president Trump (amongst now countless other controversies) refuses to disavow support from David Duke and the KKK without any serious consequences.

The warnings of the dangers constituted by non-democratic CSOs do not discredit theories of a positive relationship between CSO participation and democratization, but rather raise awareness about the importance of civil society nature. As Grugel and Bishop (2014, p. 162) put it: 'a strong democracy-oriented civil society matters because it helps determine the *quality* of democracy'. However, one should bear in mind that the classification of what constitutes democratic and non-democratic civil society is not always simple. CSOs often perform multiple tasks, change nature or means over time, and their actions are often interpreted differently over time (Kopecký and Mudde, 2003).

Perhaps contrary to common intuition, countries gaining independence is not a thing of the past. There have been several waves of independence throughout the 20th century. In the late 1940s, many south Asian and Oceanian states gained independence. In the 1960-70s, most non-independent African states became independent, and in the 1990s, the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia dissolved, which resulted in independence for several states. The latest state to have gained independence is South Sudan (2011), and a new wave of independence is not unthinkable. Regions such as Northern Ireland (United Kingdom), Catalonia (Spain) and Kurdistan (Iraq, Syria, Turkey, Iran, and Armenia), may eventually gain independence, and would China lose some of its provinces, larger independent states such as Tibet, Xinjiang, and Hong Kong may form. When a

state gains independence, either from a foreign sovereign state, or by state dissolution or unification, it by default creates a new state.

This is a critical juncture that brings fundamental changes to the political landscape and new institutions and rules for governance take shape. Nevertheless, no large-N study has so-far addressed the potential of newly independent states to democratize. Rather, the field has focused on democratization of already independent states (e.g. Teorell, 2010), and on qualitative case-studies of states gaining independence (e.g. Shani, 2016).

However, case-studies suggest that the chances of forming a democratic new state at independence may be affected by their levels of civil society participation, and the nature of that civil society before independence (e.g. Bennich-Björkman, 2007; Stepan and Linz, 2013, p. 23; Surzhko-Harned, 2010). Democratic CSOs are by some believed to prepare society and actors for democracy by outlining the rules of the democracy they want to institute, as well as planning the process of democratization, facilitating a quick and thoughtful process (Bennich-Björkman, 2007, p. 340; Stepan and Linz, 2013, p. 23). Heading towards independence then, is a new state led by a civil society with a plan for their democratization process, and a ready set of rules and outline of the new way of governance. This also generates minimal time for takeover by non-democratic actors, and minimal space for setbacks and delays in forms of disagreements and irresolution¹. These governance-preparing and setback-preventing aspects of democratic CSOs insinuates a democracy-facilitating effect.

Some argue that civil society organizations cannot exist within authoritarian states before a process of democratization has begun and they are at least partially allowed. O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986, p. 48), for example, write that '[b]y trivializing citizenship and repressing political identities, authoritarian rule destroys self-organized and autonomously defined political spaces.' However, CSOs do not necessarily need to be legal or visible to exist and have impact. As Howell (2012, pp. 1-2) puts it: 'In many countries, [CSOs] operate in highly repressive political contexts with restrictive legal and regulatory environments, and face constant harassment in their day-to day work'. We see examples of this also in countries gaining independence, such as Estonia (Bennich-Björkman, 2007), and India (Jayal, 2007), where a grassroot civil society had existed, and formed the base for democratization well before independence.

In India, political CSO participation can be traced back as far as to the 1800s, and in 1885, the national umbrella organization, the Indian National Congress (INC) emerged and later came

¹ One example of this can be found in Egypt following the Arab Spring (Stepan and Linz, 2013, p. 23).

to represent a successful pro-democracy political opposition (Jayal, 2007, p. 144). In Estonia, the underground movement-, reading- and discussion groups served as platforms for preparation of democracy and produced parties, congress members, and even the first Prime Minister of independent Estonia in 1992 (Bennich-Björkman, 2007, pp. 325-334; Surzhko-Harned, 2010, pp. 635-637). Both countries successfully and rapidly democratized, much thanks to their pre-independence democratic CSOs.

Based on this discussion, we formulate two hypotheses regarding the role of civil society before independence for democracy levels after independence:

H1: There is a positive relationship between the presence of democratic CSOs before independence and post-independence democracy levels.

H2: There is a negative relationship between the presence of non-democratic CSOs

If our findings support H1, this would suggest that the presence of democratic CSOs before independence can be used to predict the levels of democracy after independence, and underline the importance of facilitating for those organizations leading up to independence.

Would H2 be supported, this would affirm the warnings of non-democratic civil society put forward by scholars, and demonstrate the importance of limiting the strength and role of these CSOs during times of state separation and independence.

Data and Method

Conceptualizations and Operationalizations

Many of the conceptualizations and data in this study origin form the Varieties of Democracy institute (V-Dem). V-Dem is run by an international network of political scientists and researchers, and is based at the Department of Political Science, University of Gothenburg, Sweden. The institute data covers 202 countries and 704 variables regarding democracy. It spans from 1900 to the present and is collected by contributions from over 3000 local country experts around the world (Coppedge et al. 2019, pp. 23-36; Coppedge et al. 2019).

Units of Analysis: Cases of Independence

By the definition of independence used in this study², there must be at least 10 years of non-independence before independence date for a country to be regarded having gained new independence. This means that, for example, European countries that were occupied by the Nazis are not seen as having lost and gained independence, as the occupations did not last over a decade. For conceptual clarity, this study also applies the decade rule to the time after independence. This means that a country must be independent for a minimum of 10 years after its independence date to be considered successfully having gained independence. Independence is therefore operationalized by using the V-Dem dataset variable ‘Independent states’, which categorizes country-years as either 0=Not independent, or 1=Independent (Coppedge et al. 2019, pp. 177-178). The first country-year that is coded as ‘1’, preceded by at least 10 ‘0’s, and followed by at least 10 ‘1’s, is then considered to be the year of independence for a given country.

Dependent Variable: Post-Independence Democracy Levels

The dependent variable of this study is the level of democracy 10 years after independence. Democracy is in this study conceptualized by the more specific term liberal democracy. Liberal democracy is based on the more fundamental concept of electoral democracy, which is a governance characterized by regular electoral competition for support from an electorate based on extensive suffrage. The elections affect the composition of the executive and are not marked by fraud or systematic irregularities. Between elections, citizens enjoy freedom of expression and freedom of association, and independent media presenting alternative views on political matters exist (Coppedge et al. 2019, p. 40). Liberal democracy is defined as electoral democracy, with the addition of liberal components such as equality before the law, individual liberties, rule of law, and independent judiciary and legislature that constrains the executive (Coppedge et al. 2019, p. 45).

This study conceptualizes ‘democracy’ as liberal democracy rather than the narrower electoral democracy, as it is closer to what is usually intuitively meant by ‘a democratic state’. Liberal democracy is operationalized in this study by the variable ‘Liberal democracy index’ in the V-Dem dataset (Coppedge et al. 2019, p. 40), which is on interval level running from 0 (=Liberal

² This study considers a state as independent if it “[...] (a) has a relatively autonomous administration over some territory, (b) is considered a distinct entity by local actors or the state it is dependent on. Politics excluded from the list are: states that have some form of limited autonomy [...]; are alleged to be independent but are contiguous to the dominant entity [...]; de facto independent polities but recognized by at most one other state [...]. Occupations or foreign rule are considered to be an actual loss of statehood when they extend beyond a decade” (Coppedge, Gerring, Knutsen, Lindberg, Teorell, Altman, Bernhard, Fish, Glynn, Hicken, Lührmann, Marquardt, McMann, Paxton, Pemstein, Seim, Sigman, Skaaning, Staton, Cornell, et al., 2019, p. 178).

democracy is not achieved at all) to 1 (=Liberal democracy is fully achieved). The value of this variable 10 years after independence in a given country is our dependent variable.

Independent Variable: Presence of Democratic and Non-Democratic Anti-system CSOs before Independence

This study recognizes that there are different types of CSOs with different attitudes towards democracy, which may have different effects on democratization. Therefore, it distinguishes these groups based on their nature, and relationship towards democratic rules. The two main independent variables of this study are therefore the presence of active, anti-system, democratic and non-democratic CSOs³. The V-Dem variables on anti-system CSOs used in this study that constitute the CSO block in analysis are:

Democratic Anti-system CSOs: The V-Dem variable ‘CSO anti-system movement character’ (v2csanmvch_4) is used to capture activity in those CSOs that are ‘perceived by most disinterested observers as willing to play by the rules of the democratic game, willing to respect constitutional provisions or electoral outcomes, and willing to relinquish power (under democratic auspices)’. This variable is converted from bimodal to interval scale by the V-Dem measurement model, running from 0 to 1 (Coppedge et al. 2019, pp. 182-183).

Non-Democratic Anti-system CSOs: The V-Dem variable ‘CSO anti-system movement character’ (v2csanmvch_5) is used to capture activity in those CSOs that are ‘perceived by most disinterested observers as unwilling to play by the rules of the democratic game, not willing to respect constitutional provisions or electoral outcomes, and/or not willing to relinquish power (under democratic auspices)’. This variable is also converted from bimodal to interval scale by the V-Dem measurement model, running from 0 to 1 (Coppedge et al. 2019, pp. 182-183)⁴.

Control Variables

³ This study uses the V-Dem definition of an anti-system CSO as being “...organized in opposition to the current political system. That is, it aims to change the polity in fundamental ways, e.g., from democratic to autocratic (or vice-versa), from capitalist to communist (or vice-versa), from secular to fundamentalist (or vice-versa) ... it must also have a "movement" character, which is to say a mass base and an existence separate from normal electoral competition.” (Coppedge et al. 2019, p. 182).

⁴ This study uses the V-Dem definition of an anti-system CSO as being “...organized in opposition to the current political system. That is, it aims to change the polity in fundamental ways, e.g., from democratic to autocratic (or vice-versa), from capitalist to communist (or vice-versa), from secular to fundamentalist (or vice-versa) ... it must also have a "movement" character, which is to say a mass base and an existence separate from normal electoral competition.” (Coppedge et al. 2019, p. 182).

In regression, we control for variables related to three influential democratization theories that may complement the explanatory power of the presence of democratic CSOs. Below, we present a brief summary of each theory along with its operationalization in this paper.

Modernization Theory

The most basic assumption of the modernization theory is that economic and social development, or socioeconomic development, has a positive relationship to democracy. Lipset (1959), for example, concluded that development helps create a democratic culture, and found that countries with high levels of socioeconomic development more frequently are democratic than those with a lower score. Since then, many other researchers have reached similar conclusions, supporting the modernization theory. Moreover, Przeworski, Alvarez, Cheibub, & Limongi (2000), found that development act as a stabilizer of democracy levels, rather than as a trigger for democratization. In an effort to capture the essence of the modernization theory, we control for the following variables:

- GDP per capita is a central part of the concept of socioeconomic development (e.g. Inglehart and Welzel, 2010, p. 551). The V-Dem variable used is ‘GDP per capita, logged, base 10’ (Coppedge et al. 2019, p. 326).
- Equal distribution of resources index. An equal distribution of resources creates a larger middle class and reduces the number of poor people, one of the most theoretically important aspects of socioeconomic development (Teorell, 2010, pp. 24-28, and the references therein). The V-Dem variable used is ‘Equal distribution of resources index’ (Coppedge et al. 2019, pp. 51-52).
- Equal political power. Having an equal distribution of resources is toothless if only the richest individuals have political influence. The V-Dem variable used to capture the distribution of power over socioeconomic groups is ‘Power distributed by socioeconomic position’ (Coppedge et al. 2019, p. 190).

Neighbourhood Theory

The fundamental idea behind the neighbourhood theory is that societies are more likely to support democratization if they are located in the vicinity of already democratic states or states that support democracy (e.g. Berg-Schlosser, 2008; Teorell, 2010, pp. 86-89). Vice versa, they are less likely to democratize if they are located in the vicinity of states that are non-democratic or oppose democracy. Therefore, it is reasonable to expect the politico-geographical region to influence the likelihood, strength, and success of democratization attempts. To account for politico-

geographical regions, we include dummies based on the V-Dem variable ‘Region (Politico-geographic)’, which divides the world’s countries into six regions (Coppedge et al. 2019, pp. 324-325)⁵. A more detailed division of countries could ideally have been made, but as it would reduce the number of cases in each category too low for any reasonable conclusions to be drawn from analysis, we followed the current technique.

Previous Experiences of Democratic Rule

Previous experiences of democratic rule may also affect the prospects for democratization. All types of political regimes are attempting to socialize their citizens into supporting their political system (Pop-Eleches and Tucker, 2017, p. 3). Citizens that have experienced life under democracy also have learned what constitutes ‘good policy’ and governance (Gerring, et al., 2005, pp. 330-331). This means that if a population has positive previous experiences of democracy before its transition, the country is more likely to successfully democratize, due to the larger support and knowledge of democracy among its citizens.

To avoid issues from collinearity by data stemming from the variable ‘Liberal democracy’, a carefully selected assortment of variables is included to capture the essence of the theory of democratic experience. For practical reasons, this study therefore only uses the most essential variables of electoral democracy and liberal democracy, as defined above. The variables included are:

- Suffrage: The V-Dem variable ‘Share of population with suffrage’, is used to include perhaps the most basic element of democracy (Coppedge et al. 2019, p. 43).
- Free and fair elections: Another fundamental democracy element is to hold elections that are free from fraud or systematic irregularities. The V-Dem variable ‘Clean elections index’ is used to account for this (Coppedge et al. 2019, p. 44).
- Civil liberties: The V-Dem variable ‘Civil liberties index’, combines three indices of the government’s respect for civil liberties: private civil liberties (e.g. freedom of religion), political civil liberties (e.g. freedom of association), and physical integrity (e.g. freedom from torture by the government) (Coppedge et al. 2019, p. 263).

⁵ Which countries that are included in each regional dummy variable can be seen in table 2 in the appendix.

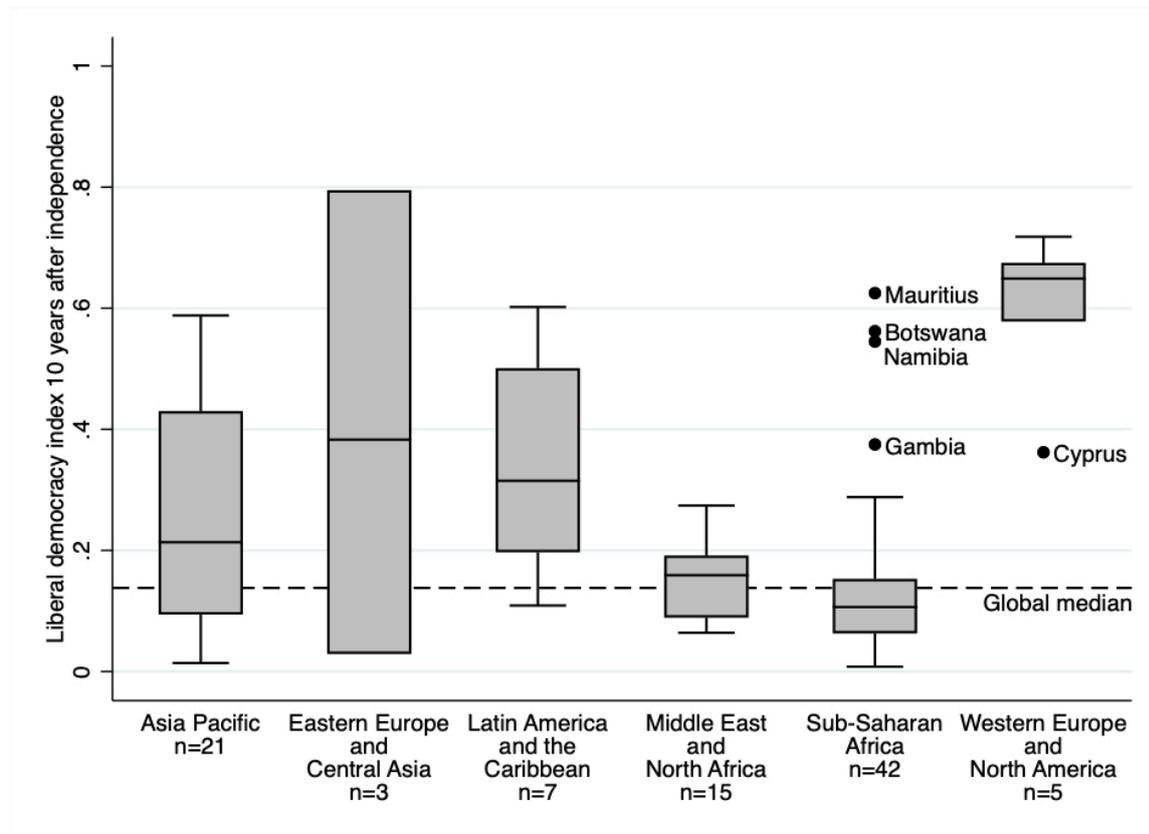
Descriptive Analysis

The distribution of cases over the six regions and their respective democracy levels 10 years after independence are illustrated in figure 2, below. On global median, countries have reached a Liberal Democracy Index score of 0.138 (on a 0-1 scale) 10 years after independence. Western Europe and North America stands out from the rest, clearly being more democratic post-independence than other regions with a median score of 0.649. Otherwise, few new states manage to create a substantial democracy, failing to reach a median over 0.4 on the liberal democracy index 10 years after independence, and Sub-Saharan Africa is the only region with a median below the global score (0.107 on a 0-1 scale). As many Sub-Saharan states were colonies of west European states before their independence, this is sometimes explained by colonialism, whereby some scholars claim that the colonization by European states have a negative impact on future democratization attempts (e.g. Bernhard, Reenock, & Nordstrom, 2004). However, our data suggests that all statuses prior to independence (colony, occupied, part of other state, or semi-independent) have similar relationships to democracy levels after independence (see figure 5 in appendix), concurring instead with empirical conclusions by, for example, Teorell (2010, p. 142), that “Colonial origin ... were not robustly related to democratization during the third wave”⁶.

⁶ For a complete list of which countries in this study and their respective status prior to independence, see table 2 in appendix.

Figure 2. Boxplot of post-independence liberal democracy levels by region. N=92.

Note: Data source: Coppedge et al. (2019)

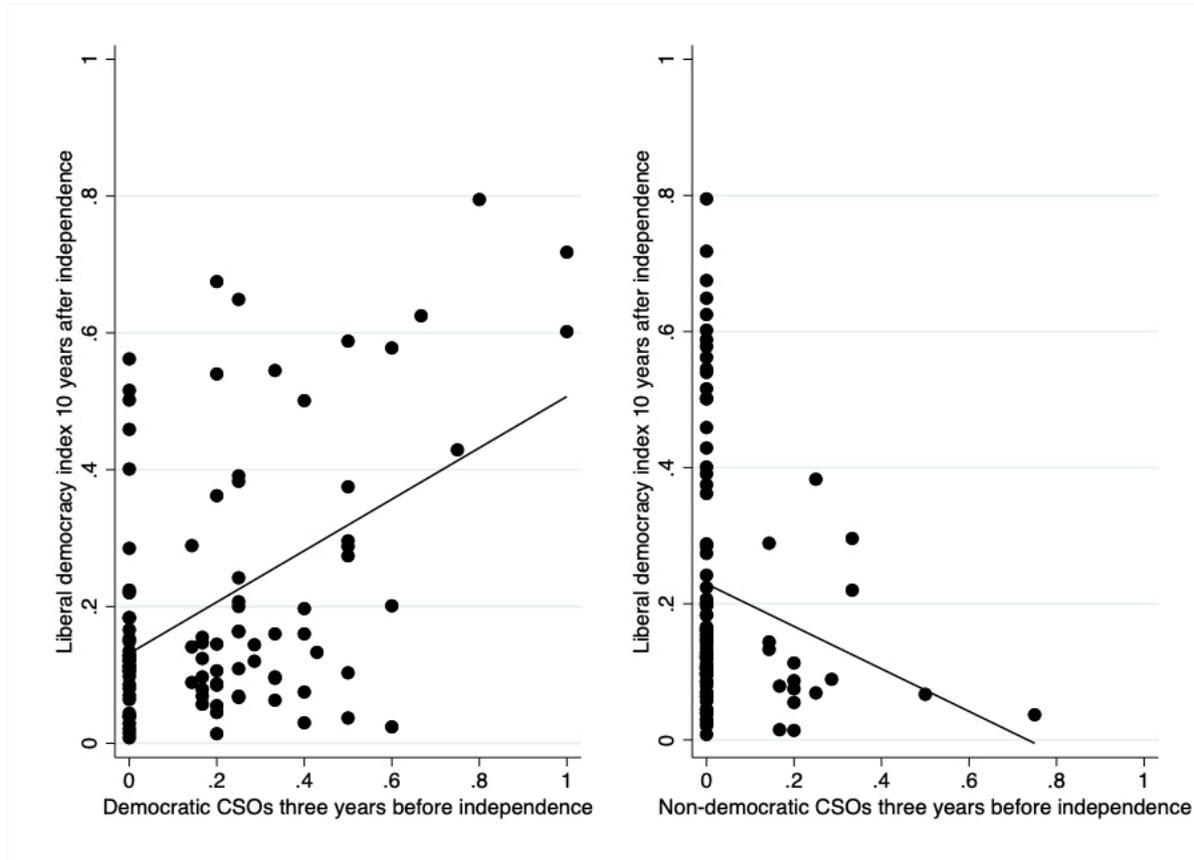


The scatterplots in figure 3 illustrate the relationship between pre-independence democratic and non-democratic CSOs and post-independence democracy levels. It shows that although the cases with a high occurrence of democratic CSOs before independence (≥ 0.5) are relatively few in number ($n=15$), they generally reach higher levels of democracy (≥ 0.5) after independence, while the cases with *low levels* of democratic CSOs (< 0.5) mostly have *lower levels* of democracy (< 0.5) after independence, although the cases with low levels of democratic CSOs have a wider spread. We also see that while there are relatively few cases with non-democratic CSOs (> 0 , $n=17$) all fall short of reaching even mid-high (≥ 0.4) levels of post-independence democracy levels⁷.

⁷ For standardized residuals histograms, see figure 4 in the appendix.

Figure 3. Scatterplots of relationships between the presence of democratic and non-democratic CSOs three years before independence and liberal democracy levels 10 years after independence, with fit line. N=92.

Note: Data source: Coppedge et al. (2019)



Method

The aim of this study is to evaluate the general role of civil society nature at time of independence, focusing on finding a general relationship, rather than exact explanations for certain cases. Therefore, a large-N analysis is conducted, using OLS regressions, including variables related to complementary theories as controls. However, including all available cases of newly independent countries in the data, the total N only reaches 92, and in models including GDP levels, the N is only 60, due to missing GDP data.⁸ Thus, we

⁸ Unfortunately, the GDP variable from the Maddison Project Database (Bolt, Inklaar, de Jong, & van Zanden, 2018) which is included in the V-Dem dataset only spans back to 1950 for certain countries. This means that several countries whose GDP data is missing before 1950 and that gained independence before 1953 are excluded from analyses that include GDP as a control. Some countries also lack GDP data for other reasons. We have used all available GDP data included in the V-Dem dataset, and even imputed the data when it was missing only for a few years. This concerns Indonesia (used GDP value for one year prior), the Philippines (GDP value from three years prior), and Taiwan (GDP value from three years prior). A complete account of which countries were excluded from analysis for this reason can be found in table 2 in the appendix.

have a relatively small number of observations, which in social sciences is quite common (Coppedge, 2012, p. 262). Accordingly, null-findings should be interpreted with caution as statistical significance might have been achieved with a larger number of cases.

The dependent variable, level of liberal democracy after independence, is included at 10 years after independence (t+10), and all independent variables are included at *three years* before independence (t-3), since one year before independence (t-1) could be considered during an ongoing independence process, as independence is not something gained over night. Also, if using values from a longer time before independence, the link to post-independence democracy levels is weaker, and there is a higher risk that existing relationships go unnoticed⁹.

Results

Although 115 countries gained independence within the studied time-frame, only 92 cases are included in analysis. This is because some of the countries lack data on variables before independence as they were then not considered to exist. This concern, for example, countries that previously were Yugoslavian or Soviet regions. The results from regression analysis with independent variables at three years before independence are presented in table 1 below.

⁹ For a comparison of the results to regressions using the main independent variable *five* and *ten* years before independence, see table 3 and 4 in the appendix.

Table 1. Regression table. Independent variables at three years before independence. Dependent variable, liberal democracy, at 10 years after independence.

| | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Democratic CSOs | .390*** (.076) | .162+ (.086) | .175* (.068) |
| Non-Democratic CSOs | -.369* (.146) | -.346* (.137) | -.333** (.113) |
| GDP/Capita (Logged) | | .041 (.031) | |
| Equal Distribution of Resources | | -.151 (.119) | -.125 (.088) |
| Equal Distribution of Power | | .010 (.024) | .032 (.020) |
| Civil Liberties | | .364** (.109) | .349*** (.087) |
| Free and Fair elections | | .041 (.075) | .024 (.063) |
| Suffrage (Share of Population) | | -.022 (.046) | .008 (.037) |
| Reference: Sub-Saharan Africa | | | |
| Asia/the Pacific | | .125* (.051) | .106** (.035) |
| Eastern Europe/Central Asia | | .221+ (.130) | .167* (.082) |
| Latin America/Caribbean | | .042 (.096) | -.043 (.063) |
| Middle East/North Africa | | -.024 (.093) | -.014 (.047) |
| Western Europe/North America | | .219* (.082) | .228** (.071) |
| Constant | .146*** (.025) | -.243 (.227) | .016 (.029) |
| N | 92 | 60 | 92 |
| R2 | .259 | .716 | .652 |
| RMSE | .168 | .122 | .123 |

Standard errors in parentheses
+ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$
Data source: Coppedge et al. (2019)

Democratic and Non-Democratic CSOs

The first model in the main regression table (table 1, above) demonstrates that the presence of democratic CSOs prior to independence is positively related to levels of democracy after independence ($\beta=0.390$) at a statically significant level. Correspondingly, the presence of non-democratic CSOs prior to independence is negatively related to post-independence democracy-levels ($\beta=-0.396$) at a statistically significant level.

Having established the expected directions of the main relationships, we move on to include our control variables in model 2 and 3. In model 2, the total number of observations is reduced from 92 to 60, due to inclusion of the GDP variable, which contains 32 missing values. Model 3

includes all controls except for GDP, to provide results from a higher number of observations. The model fit is relatively high for both model 2 and 3.

Including the control variables in model 2 results in a considerably lower total number of observations ($N=60$), reduces the coefficient by more than half ($\beta=.162$), and reduces the significance level of democratic CSOs (from $p<0.001$ in model 1, to $p<0.1$ in model 2). Nevertheless, the model still indicates a statistically significant positive effect of democratic CSOs prior to independence on democracy levels post-independence. Model 2 also shows a sustained negative effect of non-democratic CSOs prior to independence ($\beta=-.346$), despite the inclusion of control variables and reduced total number of observations.

In order to increase the number of observations back to 92, we remove the GDP variable in model 3. Both the coefficient and significance level increases for democratic CSOs ($\beta=.175$, $p<0.05$). The coefficient for non-democratic CSOs is somewhat reduced, but the significance increases ($\beta=-.333$, $p<0.01$).

Robustness and Discussion

Table 3 and 4 in appendix display the regression results when using independent variables at five and 10 years before independence. From these tables, we can see that both the effect of democratic and non-democratic CSOs reduce when moving further away from independence date. Yet, when using the independent variables at ten years before independence and keeping the higher N ($N=88$), the presence of democratic CSOs still has a positive and significant effect (table 4, model 9: $\beta=.124$, $p<0.1$). Correspondingly, the negative effects of nondemocratic CSOs before independence is still visible at five years prior to independence (table 3, model 5), although its significance disappears when including the GDP variable in model 6, which reduces the fit of the model somewhat.

A persisting problem throughout this study is the relatively low number of observations. A common problem with low numbers of observations is the reduction of statistical significance, which we see in the difference between models 2 and 3 in our main analysis (table 1). When excluding the GDP variable in model 3, both the democratic- and the non-democratic CSO receive an increased significance level. Whether this is due to the larger number of included observations ($N=60$ in model 2, $N=92$ in model 3), to a feature of the GDP variable or of some common specific characteristics shared by countries that are excluded when removing the GDP variable, is unknown. If an analysis with a larger number of observations had been conducted, even higher significance levels may have been observed.

Also, as can be seen in figure 2, above, countries in the region ‘Western Europe and North America’ democratize to a greater extent than any other region, following independence. If there is something besides a presence of democratic CSOs that makes this region stand out in this fashion, they could be biasing the results somewhat. It is also possible that the large proportion of Sub-Saharan African countries (50% of included observations) skews the results. With this in mind, we ran a series of regressions specifically investigating the effects of the region dummies (table 5, appendix). They show that being located in the ‘Asia/Pacific’ region (model 11), or the ‘Western Europe/North America’ region (model 15) is positively related to democracy levels following independence. Conversely, being located in the ‘Sub-Saharan Africa’ region is negatively related to post-independence democracy levels (model 16). Nevertheless, the results indicate enduring and significant results for both democratic and non-democratic CSOs throughout all models testing for regional effects.

Thus, our analysis provides robust support for both of our hypotheses. There seems to be a positive relationship between the presence of democratic CSOs before independence and post-independence democracy levels. At the same time there is a negative relationship between the presence of non-democratic CSOs before independence and post-independence democracy levels.

The analysis results indicate that the nature of anti-system CSOs prior to independence contribute to an explanation of the variation in democracy outcomes in states gaining independence. In line with what Chambers and Kopstein (2001), Kopecký and Mudde (2003), and Berman (1997) claim, whether there are democratic or non-democratic CSOs active when a country is moving towards independence is crucial for its level of democracy post-independence.

Conclusion

Independence is a critical juncture in the history of a state and deserves more attention from empirical research. In the context of independence, the nature of civil society is clearly an important factor in determining whether the new state develops in a democratic or authoritarian direction. As the first large-N empirical analysis on civil society and independence, this paper has shown that the presence of democratic CSOs prior to independence is positively related to democracy levels after independence, and non-democratic CSOs is negatively related to post-independence democracy levels. The nature of active CSOs is pivotal for the new state following independence, as it is affecting post-independence democracy levels even when accounting for other influential factors such as politico-geographical neighbourhood, previous levels of democracy-related variables, and modernization factors.

The results from this study concur with the arguments of for example Chambers and Kopstein (2001), Kopecký and Mudde (2003), and Berman (1997), who claim that civil society nature is vital for democracy outcomes. Participation alone is not of most weight when forming a new state, but rather whether CSOs active in the country have a legacy of playing by democratic rules or not. Bowling together may be important for consolidating and strengthening already independent democracies, but in processes of forming new states, we instead need to pay more attention to the potential detrimental impact of non-democratic CSOs. When non-democratic CSOs are present before independence, a new state has low chances of building a liberal democracy. However, a presence of democratic CSOs increases its chances of democratization. When it comes to democracy levels after independence, it does seem that a good seed really does make a good crop.

Future studies need to investigate how the international community can help facilitate the emergence and survival of these pro-democratic CSOs during processes and events leading up to a new potentially independent state. If we can facilitate democratization at independence, we may thus ensure that democracy and democratic rules and procedures become the status quo of the new state.

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Appendix

Table 2. List of all countries included in analysis, with year of independence, region, and status prior to independence.

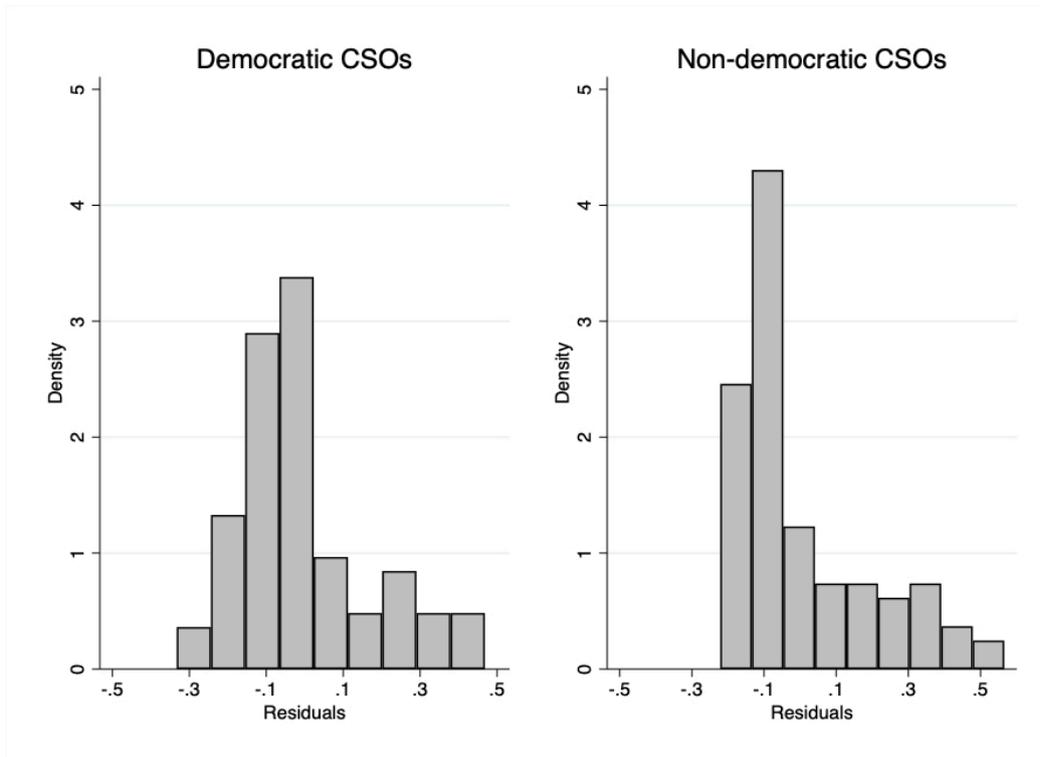
| Country | Year of Independence | Region | Status Prior to Independence |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Afghanistan* | 1919 | Middle East/North Africa | Semi-Independent |
| Algeria* | 1962 | Middle East/North Africa | Colony |
| Angola* | 1975 | Sub-Saharan Africa | Colony |
| Barbados | 1966 | Latin America/the Caribbean | Colony |
| Benin | 1960 | Sub-Saharan Africa | Colony |
| Bhutan* | 1949 | Asia/the Pacific | Semi-Independent |
| Botswana | 1966 | Sub-Saharan Africa | Semi-Independent |
| Burkina Faso | 1960 | Sub-Saharan Africa | Colony |
| Burma/Myanmar* | 1948 | Asia/the Pacific | Colony |
| Burundi | 1962 | Sub-Saharan Africa | Semi-Independent |
| Cambodia | 1953 | Asia/the Pacific | Semi-Independent |
| Cape Verde | 1975 | Sub-Saharan Africa | Colony |
| Central African Republic | 1960 | Sub-Saharan Africa | Colony |
| Chad | 1960 | Sub-Saharan Africa | Colony |
| Comoros | 1975 | Sub-Saharan Africa | Colony |
| Cyprus | 1960 | Western Europe/North America | Colony |
| Democratic Republic of Congo | 1960 | Sub-Saharan Africa | Colony |
| Democratic Republic of Vietnam | 1954 | Asia/the Pacific | Colony |
| Djibouti | 1977 | Sub-Saharan Africa | Colony |
| Egypt* | 1922 | Middle East/North Africa | Semi-Independent |
| Equatorial Guinea | 1968 | Sub-Saharan Africa | Semi-Independent |
| Eritrea* | 1993 | Sub-Saharan Africa | Part of Other State |
| Fiji* | 1970 | Asia/the Pacific | Colony |
| Finland | 1917 | Western Europe/North America | Semi-Independent |
| Gabon | 1960 | Sub-Saharan Africa | Colony |
| Gambia | 1965 | Sub-Saharan Africa | Colony |
| Ghana | 1957 | Sub-Saharan Africa | Colony |
| Guinea | 1958 | Sub-Saharan Africa | Colony |
| Guinea-Bissau | 1974 | Sub-Saharan Africa | Colony |

| Country | Year of Independence | Region | Status Prior to Independence |
|-------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Guyana* | 1966 | Latin America/the Caribbean | Colony |
| Haiti* | 1934 | Latin America/the Caribbean | Occupied |
| Iceland* | 1944 | Western Europe/North America | Semi-Independent |
| India | 1947 | Asia/the Pacific | Colony |
| Indonesia | 1945 | Asia/the Pacific | Colony |
| Iraq* | 1932 | Middle East/North Africa | Semi-Independent |
| Ivory Coast | 1960 | Sub/Saharan Africa | Colony |
| Jamaica | 1962 | Latin America/the Caribbean | Colony |
| Jordan* | 1946 | Eastern Europe/Central Asia | Semi-Independent |
| Kenya | 1963 | Sub-Saharan Africa | Colony |
| Kuwait* | 1961 | Middle East/North Africa | Semi-Independent |
| Laos | 1954 | Asia/the Pacific | Semi-Independent |
| Lebanon* | 1944 | Middle East/North Africa | Semi-Independent |
| Lesotho | 1966 | Sub-Saharan Africa | Colony |
| Madagascar | 1960 | Sub-Saharan Africa | Colony |
| Malawi | 1964 | Sub-Saharan Africa | Semi-Independent |
| Malaysia | 1957 | Asia/the Pacific | Semi-Independent |
| Maldives* | 1965 | Asia/the Pacific | Semi-Independent |
| Mali | 1960 | Middle East/North Africa | Colony |
| Mauritania | 1960 | Middle East/North Africa | Colony |
| Mauritius | 1968 | Sub-Saharan Africa | Colony |
| Mongolia* | 1921 | Asia/the Pacific | Part of Other State |
| Montenegro | 2006 | Eastern Europe/Central Asia | Part of Other State |
| Morocco | 1956 | Middle East/North Africa | Semi-Independent |
| Mozambique | 1975 | Sub-Saharan Africa | Colony |
| Namibia | 1990 | Sub-Saharan Africa | Part of Other State |
| New Zealand | 1907 | Western Europe/North America | Colony |
| Niger | 1960 | Middle East/North Africa | Colony |
| Nigeria | 1960 | Sub-Saharan Africa | Colony |
| North Korea* | 1948 | Asia/the Pacific | Part of Other State |
| Norway | 1905 | Western Europe/North America | Semi-Independent |
| Papua New Guinea* | 1976 | Asia/the Pacific | Colony |
| Philippines | 1946 | Asia/the Pacific | Semi-Independent |

| Country | Year of Independence | Region | Status Prior to Independence |
|-----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| Qatar* | 1971 | Middle East/North Africa | Semi-Independent |
| Republic of Vietnam* | 1954 | Asia/the Pacific | Colony |
| Republic of the Congo | 1960 | Sub-Saharan Africa | Colony |
| Rwanda | 1962 | Sub-Saharan Africa | Colony |
| Senegal | 1960 | Sub-Saharan Africa | Colony |
| Seychelles | 1976 | Sub-Saharan Africa | Colony |
| Sierra Leone | 1961 | Sub-Saharan Africa | Colony |
| Slovenia | 1992 | Eastern Europe/Central Asia | Part of Other State |
| Solomon Islands* | 1979 | Asia/the Pacific | Colony |
| Somalia* | 1960 | Sub-Saharan Africa | Semi-Independent |
| South Africa | 1910 | Sub-Saharan Africa | Colony |
| South Korea* | 1948 | Asia/the Pacific | Part of Other State |
| South Yemen* | 1967 | Middle East/North Africa | Semi-Independent |
| Sri Lanka | 1948 | Asia/the Pacific | Colony |
| Sudan* | 1956 | Middle East/North Africa | Part of Other State |
| Suriname* | 1975 | Latin America/the Caribbean | Colony |
| Swaziland | 1968 | Sub-Saharan Africa | Semi-Independent |
| Syria* | 1946 | Middle East/North Africa | Colony |
| São Tomé and Príncipe | 1975 | Sub-Saharan Africa | Colony |
| Taiwan* | 1949 | Asia/the Pacific | Part of Other State |
| Tanzania | 1961 | Sub-Saharan Africa | Colony |
| Timor-Leste* | 2002 | Asia/the Pacific | Colony |
| Togo | 1960 | Sub-Saharan Africa | Colony |
| Trinidad and Tobago | 1962 | Latin America/the Caribbean | Colony |
| Tunisia | 1956 | Middle East/North Africa | Colony |
| Uganda | 1962 | Sub-Saharan Africa | Semi-Independent |
| Vanuatu* | 1980 | Asia/the Pacific | Colony |
| Zambia | 1964 | Sub-Saharan Africa | Colony |
| Zanzibar* | 1963 | Sub-Saharan Africa | Semi-Independent |
| Zimbabwe | 1965 | Sub-Saharan Africa | Colony |

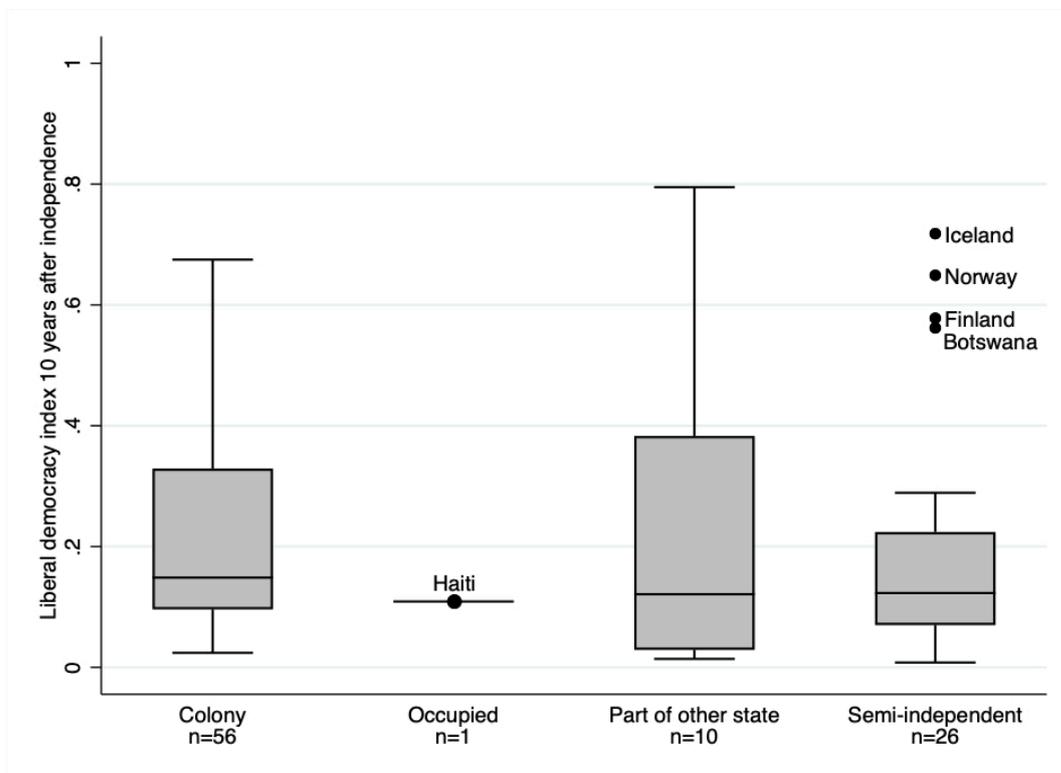
*Excluded from models using the GDP/Capita variable, due to missing values in source dataset.
Data source: Coppedge et al. (2019); BBC (2018).

Figure 4. Histograms of standardized residuals of the focal relationships. N=92



Note: Data source: Coppedge et al. (2019)

Figure 5. Boxplot of post-independence liberal democracy levels by status prior to independence. N=92



Note: Data source: Coppedge et al. (2019)

Table 3. Regression table. Independent variables at five years before independence. Dependent variable, liberal democracy, at 10 years after independence.

| | Model 4 | Model 5 | Model 6 |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Democratic CSOs | .343*** (.076) | .118 (.085) | .111+ (.067) |
| Non-Democratic CSOs | -.316* (.155) | -.262+ (.141) | -.192 (.120) |
| GDP/Capita (Logged) | | .0044 (.032) | |
| Equal Distribution of Resources | | -.135 (.131) | -.091 (.091) |
| Equal Distribution of Power | | .015 (.027) | .027 (.020) |
| Suffrage (Share of Population) | | .046 (.065) | .037 (.045) |
| Free and Fair Elections | | .055 (.080) | .077 (.064) |
| Civil Liberties | | .304* (.131) | .267** (.088) |
| Reference: Sub-Saharan Africa | | | |
| Asia/the Pacific | | .174* (.067) | .088* (.035) |
| Eastern Europe/Central Asia | | .140 (.150) | .057 (.091) |
| Latin America/Caribbean | | .086 (.095) | -.020 (.062) |
| Middle East/North Africa | | .012 (.090) | -.008 (.044) |
| Western Europe/North America | | .232** (.082) | .226** (.071) |
| Constant | .149*** (.025) | .017 (.234) | .028 (.028) |
| N | 90 | 55 | 90 |
| R2 | .210 | .720 | .631 |
| RMSE | .166 | .118 | .120 |

Standard errors in parentheses

+ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Data source: Coppedge et al. (2019)

Table 4. Regression table. Independent variables at 10 years before independence. Dependent variable, liberal democracy, at 10 years after independence.

| | Model 7 | Model 8 | Model 9 |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| Democratic CSOs | .344*** (.073) | .080 (.090) | .124+ (.071) |
| Non-Democratic CSOs | -.234 (.145) | -.196 (.126) | -.147 (.108) |
| GDP/Capita (Logged) | | .022 (.034) | |
| Equal Distribution of Resources | | -.253+ (.128) | -.106 (.091) |
| Equal Distribution of Power | | .033 (.027) | .051* (.021) |
| Suffrage (Share of Population) | | .0084 (.068) | .028 (.046) |
| Free and fair Elections | | .075 (.079) | .097 (.061) |
| Civil Liberties | | .413*** (.115) | .274** (.082) |
| Reference: Sub-Saharan Africa | | | |
| Asia/the Pacific | | .091+ (.048) | .099** (.035) |
| Eastern Europe/Central Asia | | .246+ (.143) | .137 (.087) |
| Latin America/Caribbean | | .044 (.098) | -.040 (.065) |
| Middle East/North Africa | | -.118 (.126) | -.017 (.041) |
| Western Europe/North America | | .146 (.093) | .141+ (.081) |
| Constant | .150*** (.024) | -.104 (.244) | .016 (.027) |
| N | 89 | 55 | 88 |
| R2 | .218 | .698 | .634 |
| RMSE | .165 | .116 | .117 |

Standard errors in parentheses

+ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Note: The N differs between model 7 and model 9 due to missing data. As Norway was independent in 1905, and this table includes independent variables at 10 years before independence, data from 1895 would be needed. Norway is included in model 7 because there is data on civil society in Norway before 1900, but excluded from model 9 due to missing data on the Equal Distribution of Resources variable for Norway before year 1900.

Data source: Coppedge et al. (2019)

Table 5. Regions regression table. Independent variables at three years before independence. Dependent variable, liberal democracy, at 10 years after independence

| | Model 10 | Model 11 | Model 12 | Model 13 | Model 14 | Model 15 | Model 16 |
|----------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Democratic CSOs | .283*** (.075) | .408*** (.074) | .379*** (.076) | .405*** (.083) | .380*** (.077) | .316*** (.072) | .349*** (.072) |
| Non-Democratic CSOs | -.401** (.130) | -.459** (.146) | -.380* (.145) | -.379* (.148) | -.379* (.147) | -.303* (.134) | -.394** (.136) |
| Asia/the Pacific | .143*** (.039) | .108* (.043) | | | | | |
| Eastern Europe/ Central Asia | .231** (.086) | | .158 (.099) | | | | |
| Latin America/ Caribbean | .074 (.069) | | | -.035 (.079) | | | |
| Middle East/ North Africa | .017 (.047) | | | | -.043 (.053) | | |
| Western Europe/ North America | .363*** (.071) | | | | | .312*** (.074) | |
| Sub-Saharan Africa | | | | | | | -.126*** (.033) |
| Constant | .106*** (.025) | .123*** (.026) | .144*** (.025) | .145*** (.025) | .154*** (.027) | .142*** (.023) | .219*** (.030) |
| N | 92 | 92 | 92 | 92 | 92 | 92 | 92 |
| R2 | .497 | .309 | .280 | .261 | .265 | .385 | .363 |
| RMSE | .143 | .164 | .167 | .169 | .169 | .154 | .157 |

Standard errors in parentheses

+ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Data source: Coppedge et al. (2019)