Franchise Extension and Elite Persistence:
The Post-Slavery Caribbean Plantation Complex[*]

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Preliminary - Comments Welcome

Abstract

What determines the extension of the franchise to the poor? This paper studies the 19th century development of parliamentary institutions in the 17 British Caribbean slave colonies. After abolition, freed slaves began to obtain the franchise as smallholders. I document that the elite's response was a series of constitutional changes in which local parliaments voted to restrict their own powers or abolish themselves altogether in favor of direct colonial rule. This "defensive franchise contraction" happened later or not at all where the franchise expanded less and political turnover remained lower, suggesting it was aimed at excluding the new smallholder class from the political process. Against its stated aim, direct colonial rule led to increases in coercive expenditure and decreases in public good provision, suggesting it did not reduce planter elites' insider access to the colonial administration. A new data-set on the identity of all elected and nominated politicians in the colonies from 1838 to 1900 confirms that planter interests continued to dominate the reformed legislatures under direct colonial rule.

Keywords: Economic Development, Elite Persistence, Political Inequality, Institutions, Franchise Extension.

1 Introduction

The 19th century is generally viewed as the century in which the franchise was for the first time extended to broad segments of society. This broad trend towards expansion of the franchise was associated with decreases in inequality, with the expansion of state capacity and with the expansion of broad-based education.[1] A common view is that elites extended the franchise in the face of a threat of revolt by the disenfranchised poor (Acemoglu and Robinson (2000, 2001)). At times when revolt was particularly costly or the poor particularly strong, enfranchisement was a way for elites to credibly commit to future redistribution.[2] While the expansion of the franchise seems to have been more mitigated in societies that were more unequal or had higher land labor ratios, the overall trend was clearly towards more enfranchisement and towards more power for representative legislatures (Engerman and Sokoloff (2005)).[3] In this paper, I document and endogenize a unique series of 19th century constitutional changes in which parliaments in most British Caribbean colonies voted to either limit their own powers or abolish themselves altogether. This historical episode not only bucked the general trend of the 19th century but has to the best of my knowledge also not been systematically studied in either the economics or political science literature and can therefore provide important new insights into both the dynamics of enfranchisement and the political economy of colonial institutions.

Similar to independent countries, many colonies in the 19th century had strong representative legislatures. In the British Caribbean, which contained many of the oldest colonies, affairs were typically governed under a representative system in which locally elected assemblies held wide-ranging powers relative to the colonial administrators. These assemblies "seriously curtailed the powers of the governors in the colonies" (Morrell and Parker (1969)) and the Caribbean planter elites "jealously guarded their privileges against interference by the colonial adminstration" (Wrong (1923)).[4] After slavery was abolished in 1838, many former slaves became small-

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[1]The expansion of the franchise and broad-based education roughly co-evolved both because the newly enfranchise poor voted for education measures (Acemoglu and Robinson (2000)) and, as was the case in Latin America and the US South, because the franchise was tied to education and education was depressed in order to depress the franchise (Engerman and Sokoloff (2005), Naidu (2009)).

[2]Lizzeri and Persico (2004) provide an interesting alternative view, in which elites are non-monolithic and franchise extension increases the power of those members of the elites whose interests are aligned with non-elites.

[3]Bourguignon and Verdier (2000) formalize the idea that elites had more to lose from enfranchisement in more unequal societies. Nikolova (2009) provides evidence that labor scarce frontier societies like the US used the franchise to attract immigrants.

[4]In 1838, when slavery was abolished in the British Caribbean, 14 of the 17 British Caribbean colonies had these

holders. Because voting rights in the British Caribbean were tied land ownership, traditionally at relatively low thresholds, the franchise expanded as a consequence of the end of slavery.[5] This process was sped up by a secular decline in sugar prices, which meant that planters' profits were squeezed both by higher labor costs and lower output prices. Instead of either coercively suppressing the franchise or passively watching it expand, the response of the enfranchised planter elites in the colonies was to change their constitutions to limit their parliamentary powers. They did this either by transitioning to a semi-representative system in which half of the legislature was appointed by the Crown, or by abolishing themselves altogether and thereby to transition to full Crown Colony status in which the legislature was entirely appointed by the Crown. This was not an isolated decision by one colony: Of the 14 colonies governed under the old representative system in 1838, 11 transitioned to either semi-representative or Crown Colony status between 1850 and 1880 and there were a total of 19 constitutional changes *towards* Crown Colony rule overall.[6]

Prima face, this series of restrictions on the power of the electorate presents a puzzle because it limited the de-jure powers of the enfranchised elites yet was initiated or supported by them. I hypothesize that voluntary limitation of formal legislative powers was a defense by the established enfranchised against a newly emergent smallholder society, freed from slavery and buoyed by a secular decline in sugar prices which led to the breakup of many large estates. The planter elites' ability to suppress the expansion of smallholding was restricted by their limited post-slavery coercive capacity while a tightening of the franchise rules was potentially costly as it carried a high risk of revolt (Morrell and Parker (1969), Dookhan (1977)).[7] I argue that the existence of the colonial administration as a third player allowed elites to formally cede their power, thus relieving them of responsibility for policy choices, while maintaining privileged insider access to the political decision making process. This hypothesis of a "defensive franchise contraction" and insider access to the colonial administration is summarized succinctly in two quotes from the historical literature: Burroughs (1999) writes that "against a backdrop of economic decline in the sugar

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representative systems. Only the three youngest Caribbean colonies were *Crown Colonies* in which the governor as the executive held could appoint the legislature as well as the judiciary.

[5]The practice of freeholding, which tied voting rights to land ownership originated in medieval Britain and was common to many British colonies (Engerman and Sokoloff (2005)).

[6]Most colonies first transitioned to semi-representative and then to full Crown-colonial status which increases the number of changes.

[7]Rioting was common and particularly costly in the Caribbean where all wealth is derived from a short period of time around the harvest and from a crop that was very vulnerable to arson. No systematic data on riots exists (Craton (1988)).

plantations, the planters steadily lost their political dominance. As disputatious Assemblies were infiltrated by men of color independent of the plantation economy, the planters recognized their predicament." And Ashdown (1979) argues that "the British West Indian colonies gave up their elected assemblies voluntarily, for in most cases the white, privileged classes preferred direct imperial government to the government of the colored classes who were slowly obtaining greater representation in the legislative councils."

In a stylized manner, the causal channel I postulate runs like this: End of slavery & lower sugar prices $\longrightarrow$ bankrupt estates $\longrightarrow$ smallhold expansion $\longrightarrow$ franchise expansion $\longrightarrow$ political turnover $\longrightarrow$ constitutional change $\longrightarrow$ policy outcomes & insider access. I present quantitative evidence for both defensive franchise contraction and insider access to the colonial administration: In the raw data, both the expansion of the franchise and political turnover inside the legislatures increased significantly in the years before a colony transitioned towards Crown Colony rule. Results from dynamic panel regressions show that both franchise expansion and increases in political turnover increased the likelihood of transitioning towards Crown Colony rule. In an alternative strategy, I focus on the economic driving force behind these political changes: A secular decline in sugar prices which led to the bankruptcy of many estates. While the decline in sugar prices and the bankruptcy of estates was a gradual process, the Caribbean Incumbered Estate Act (IEA) in 1854, which allowed indebted proprietors to sell their estates without carrying over their debts/encumbrances, introduces a sharp policy break in this data.[8] I interact this 1854 trend break with cross-sectional measures of the vulnerability of different colonies to depressed sugar-prices, classifying colonies into sugar producers and non-sugar-producers.[9] Using this strategy, I find that only sugar producers became more likely to transition towards Crown Colony rule after 1854.[10] Furthermore, political turnover increased significantly after 1854 only in the sugar-producing colonies and franchise expansion was associated with higher political turnover only in the sugar-producing colonies. Together, this evidence is strongly suggestive of the hypothesized

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[8]Before the introduction of the IEA, many bankrupt planters held on the their estates hoping for better times to come.While I do not have time-series data on the sale of estates or the expansion of smallholding, the qualitative historical literature suggests that the large-scale sale of estates only started with the (Beachey (1978), Craton (1997), Green (1991)).

[9]Using data on sugar production at the start of the sample, this distinction is very clean: Every colony's share of sugar in exports in 1838 was either above 80 percent or below 5 percent.

[10]The coefficients on these interactions can be interpreted as an intention-to-treat (ITT) effect of economic shocks on endogenous constitutional choices. In principle, an instrumental variable strategy could be based on this with political turnover or franchise expansion as the intervening variable. However, the data lacks the necessary sharpness.

mechanism of defensive franchise contraction.

To study insider access, I investigate the effect of switches towards Crown Colony rule on the composition of public expenditure.[11] The stated aim of colonial policy in the Caribbean was to improve the circumstances of the poor relative to what they had been under the representative system which had been "eminently disqualified for the great task of educating and improving a people newly born to freedom."[12] Without significant insider access, we should therefore expect public policy to have tilted towards the interests of the poor. However, panel regressions show that switches towards Crown Colony rule led to increased coercive expenditure for police and prisons and decreased public expenditure going towards education. This finding is in stark contrast to the stated objective of the colonial administration and suggests that, under the mantle of de-jure limitations on their power, planter elites retained significant insider access to the colonial administration after switching to Crown Colony status.

To corroborate this, I look inside the black box of de-facto political power, using detailed data on the identity of all elected and nominated politicians in the legislative chambers of all 17 colonies over the entire period 1838 to 1900. I show evidence of a high degree of persistence in the identify of the people in the legislative chambers before and after constitutional changes. This evidence is even stronger when looking at political families (dynasties) rather than individual politicians. This finding further suggests that the same planter interests continued de-facto to dominate the political process long after the constitutional changes.

This paper speaks to the literature on the dynamics of enfranchisement and provides an important counter-example to the general narrative of expanding franchises during the 19th century. I argue that the Caribbean elites' unusual choice of giving up their formal legislative powers, can be explained by the existence of a third actor, the colonial government, that was perceived as a benevolent dictator and that was much less threatened by revolt by the poor. Elites could shift de-jure responsibility for government onto the colonial administration while maintaining their de-facto influence through increased collective action.

In this, the paper speaks to an emergent literature that studies how elites can increase informal collective action to substitute for reductions in their formal privileges. This substitution of de-

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[11]In the absence of direct measures of insider access such as lobbying, policy outcomes can provide reduced form evidence for the proposed channel.

[12]Henry Taylor in a 1839 note to the British Cabinet, quoted in Wrong (1923)

facto power for de-jure political power leads to a pattern of "simultaneous change and persistence in institutions" as formalized in Acemoglu and Robinson (2006, 2008) who use the post-slavery Caribbean plantation colonies as an important motivating example.[13] Their account of the post-slavery Caribbean is consistent with the view of historians: Wallace (1977) writes that "in few places does the dead hand of the past lie as heavily on the present as in the Caribbean," Galloway (2005) states that "not much had changed in these islands from 1838 to 1900," and Craton (1988) notes how "in each major inquiry into the British West Indies at least one commissioner noted with amazement that nothing had been changed since the last report." Although the British Caribbean is an often-used example of elite persistence, the present study is the first to rigorously analyze how elites maintained power after abolition. In this, the paper is related in spirit to Naidu (2009), who investigates how elites in the US South used poll taxes and literacy tests to effectively disenfranchise the majority of newly freed slaves in the post-bellum US South, a second focal motivating example for studying elite persistence (Acemoglu and Robinson (2008)).

The paper also speaks to a historical literature on the effects of direct and indirect colonial rule. The consensus opinion is that direct colonial rule had a more positive effect on development, possibly because the British colonial administration chose better policies than local elites (Lange (2004)). Historical studies of the post slavery Caribbean have also stressed that government in the initial Crown Colonies was more benign and less elite oriented than in the other Caribbean colonies (Sewell (1861), Laurence (1971), Dookhan (1977)). Using only within-colony variation in constitutional rules and outcomes, I find that *switching towards* Crown Colony status actually made government more coercive. A possible interpretation is that the colonial administration was shielded from local elites in colonies that had always been a Crown Colony, while local elites had established a strong foothold in the colonial administration in colonies that had been ruled by indirect colonial rule for a long time. In qualifying the perceived wisdom on direct and indirect colonial rule, this paper is related to Iyer (2010) who looks at sub-national evidence from India and finds that an IV analysis that addresses the problem of endogenous adoption of direct colonial rule overturns the OLS result that direct colonial rule is more beneficial for long run development.

Lastly, this paper speaks to a large body of literature on the post-slavery economic history of

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[13]Count Tancredi expressed this succinctly in Giuseppe di Lampedusa's novel *The Leopard*: "If we want things to stay as they are, they will have to change."

the Caribbean. This literature has predominantly been qualitative although there are important exceptions such as work by Engerman (1982, 1984) and Eisner (1974). The results from this paper may also be a first step towards understanding the differential long run development trajectories that the Caribbean colonies took after independence. Why Jamaica has fallen significantly behind Trinidad and Barbados since independence? Authors like Henry and Miller (2008) have argued that these differences cannot be explained by institutions or historical experience because these are largely shared within the British Caribbean. However, this research suggests that there were in fact important institutional differences within and that these may yet prove important in explaining the differential post-independence growth trajectories in the British Caribbean.

In the following, section 2 provides historical background on the representative institutions of the British Caribbean, section 3 discusses data and presents results and section 4 concludes.

2 Background: Colonial Representative Institutions

2.1 Origins of Colonial Parliaments

The 17 British Caribbean colonies were founded in three broad waves: Antigua, the Bahamas, Bermuda, Barbados, Honduras Jamaica, Montserrat, Nevis, St. Kitts and the Virgin Islands were the original colonies founded in the mid-17th century. Dominica, Tobago, St. Vincent and Grenada were annexed from France at the end of the seven-year war in 1765 (Ragatz (1928), p.112). The late-comers were Trinidad, ceded by Spain in 1797, St. Lucia, ceded by France in 1803, and Guyana, ceded by the Dutch in 1803. Table 1 shows these dates plus additional information. At the time of abolition in 1838 in 1838, 14 of the colonies had the traditional representative system. Only the three recently acquired colonies St. Lucia, Trinidad and Guyana were Crown Colonies.[14] In the colonies with representative systems, the assemblies held wide-ranging powers relative to the colonial administrators who constituted the executive branch of government. Most importantly, local assemblies control public finance which gave them the ability to veto important decisions by the governors (Morrell and Parker (1969)). While the Crown was aware of the oligarchic representative structures of Caribbean politics, the ability and demonstrated willingness of local assemblies

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[14]Trinidad and St.Lucia were pure Crown Colonies while Guyana retained the semi-representative institutions it had had under the Dutch.

to bring the political process to a halt made colonial administrators unable and unwilling to force the colonies to switch to Crown colonial rule (Wrong (1923)).

2.2 Post-Abolition Franchise Expansion

At the time of abolition, the franchise in the Caribbean was heavily concentrated in the hands of few voters. The electorate nowhere numbered more than a few hundred and, as Wrong (1923) writes, "it was distinctly the exception for a member of the legislature to be returned by more than 10 votes." When slavery ended, many freed slaves left the sugar estates and became small-holders. Indeed, Higman (2001) suggests that there was a "spectacular growth in the extent of smallholding after 1838." London authorized the sale of Crown (unalienated) land in the West Indies at 1 sterling per acre soon after abolition. While many obstacles were erected to the sale of Crown lands, squatting on unused land was common and also gave legal title to land after a specified period Craton (1997, p. 390).[15] As smallholding increased so did the franchise because the franchise was tied to land and the land holding required for the franchise was traditionally set relatively low to ensure that rural interests dominated the assemblies (Wrong (1923)).[16] The historical narrative clearly suggests that land holdings required for the right to vote were usually well within the reach of smallholders.[17] This process was strengthened by a secular decline sugar prices after the abolition. The combined pressure of lower output prices and higher labor costs after abolition led to the bankruptcy of many sugar estates. This freed up additional land for smallholders. The land redistribution associated with the bankruptcy of estates therefore inadvertently further expanded the franchise. As freed slaves with newly obtained franchise rights were unlikely to vote for representatives of the old sugar interest, this led to the assemblies being "infiltrated by men of color independent of the plantation economy" (Burroughs (1999)).

However, while many estates probably went bankrupt in the 20 years after abolition, their owners were often reluctant to sell because their debt was often higher than the value of their estates. While time-series data on the sale of estates is not available, it seems clear that land sales at a large scale only gained momentum with the introduction of the Caribbean Incumbered Estate

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[15]Legal obstacles included, In the Bahamas for instance, that the assembly introduced high minimum purchase requirements for Crown land. Squatting gave legal title after 12 years for private land and after 60 years for Crown lands.

[16]In most colonies, voters could alternatively qualify through income.

[17]I am in the process of collecting data on actual franchise requirements.

Act (IEA) in 1854, legislation which allowed planters to sell their estates without carrying over their debts (encumbrances) (Beachey (1978), Craton (1997), Green (1991)). The importance of the IEA to land sales seems clear. Lowes (1994) for instance documents that in Antigua, in the 8 years after the IEA was passed, 37 percent of all plantation land changed hands.[18]

2.3 Crown Colony Rule

If we let accounts of the initial Crown Colonies St. Lucia and Trinidad inform our expectations, then switches to Crown Colony rule should have led to increases in public good provision and less coercion. Laurence (1971) for instance, writes that "in Trinidad, the Crown disallowed attempts [by planters] to forbid immigrants from leaving the estates" and argues generally that "conditions in Trinidad were much better as her planters never enjoyed the same influence over local government [as in other Caribbean colonies]." Sewell (1861) reports that in St. Lucia "a more liberal labor tenure prevailed [than in the other colonies]." Similarly, Dookhan (1977) suggests that the provision of education was superior in Crown Colonies.[19] What is more, the stated aim of the colonial administration were public policies geared towards developing an independent smallholders society and improvements in public good provision for education (Wrong (1923), p.78-79).

3   Data and Empirical Results

3.1   Data

The timing of the constitutional changes is listed in Wrong (1923) and confirmed in information provided in the *Colonial Office List*. A number of different data-series were hand-collected from the *Colonial Blue Books*. The Blue Book was a statistical report issued every year by every colony to the central colonial office in London. The Blue Books started being issued in the 1820s but initially contained very little information. By about the mid to late 1830s, the informational content of

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[18]I do not have data on these contracts. Many historians argue that a large portion of the sold estate lands were sold to absentee London capitalists rather than smallholders. This opinion seems to be largely based on the observation that there were fewer estates after the IEA than before a fact that is consistent with sales to both smallholders and foreign proprietors combining estates they bought (Beachey (1978)). It is therefore possible that the increase in the number of enfranchised and in political turnover that I observe in the data is caused not as much by an increase in small-holding but a decrease in policing and coercion at which the old planter elites had a comparative advantage relative to absentee speculators. However, the main points of the story are not changed by this.

[19]See Bobonis and Morrow (2010) for evidence that planter elites in Puerto Rico depress education to reduce peasants' outside options

the Blue Books improved a lot. Before the Blue Books became a publication in the 1880s, there was only 2 copies of each Blue Book. One copy was sent to London where it is today kept in the National Archives and one was retained in the issuing colony. Most of the data used here is hand-collected from the hard-copies in the British National Archives. From the Blue Books, I take data on the political franchise (the number of registered and actual voters at the parish level over time), the first and last names of all elected politicians and all nominated politicians by district over the entire period and data on the composition of public expenditure spending for each colony over time. Data on public expenditure also comes from the Blue Books.

3.2   Evidence for Mechanism of "Defensive" Franchise Contraction

In the following, I provide several pieces of evidence that are consistent with the hypothesis of defensive franchise contraction against the threat of losing the franchise to an emergent smallholder class. Figure 1 depicts a histogram of first constitutional changes towards semi-representative or Crown Colony government. Each event is the *first* time a colony switched towards Crown Colony government. The potential major supply shock of ending slavery happened in 1838 and the major reductions in the price of sugar happened between 1838 and 1845. Yet, no colony transitioned towards Crown Colony status before the 1854 *Incumbered Estate Act*, depicted with a vertical line. The picture suggests the potential importance of the IEA in the timing of constitutional changes. To reflect the fact that most colonies first switched to semi-representative and then to Crown Colony government, Figure 2 depicts a histogram of *all* instead of *first* constitutional changes towards Crown Colony government. Clearly visible is a wave of switches to semi-representative government (in red) that precedes the wave of switches to Crown Colony rule (in green).[20] Table 1 provides for each colony the exact dates at which it operated under each form of constitutional rule.

Using data on the number of registered voters from the *Blue Books*, Figure 3 documents that the franchise expanded considerably in the early 1869s, the years prior to the bulk of constitutional reforms. The data on voters is normalized relative to the average number of voters in each colony so that the pictures are not confounded by cross-sectional differences. In *event time*, normalizing

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[20]The number of total constitutional changes is larger than the number of colonies in the sample. Some colonies did switch directly to Crown Colony government though and some remained semi-representative without ever switching to Crown Colony status.

the year of first constitutional reform to 0, the picture becomes a lot clearer, shown in Figure 4. The franchise clearly expanded substantially in the years leading up to constitutional reforms. The right side of Figure 4 also suggests that the franchise declined with constitutional reform. A possible explanation is that there was a lower incentive to vote once the power of legislatures was capped by constitutional reform.[21]

A third piece of evidence on defensive franchise contraction can be gleaned from the stability in the composition of the elected legislatures themselves. Using data on the individual members of each legislature in the year prior and they year after each election, I calculate the share of seats after each election that went to incumbents.[22] This incumbency measure is an inverse measure of turnover and captures persistence in the identity of political decision makers.[23] Figure 5 maps this measure over time, where each observation is again one election.[24] "Incumbency" remained practically unchanged from 1838 until 1860 but then dips in the early 1860s, just before the bulk of the constitutional changes. As with the franchise data, the picture is again cleaner in event time, depicted in Figure 6: Incumbency decreased monotonically in the years prior to regime switches and recovers afterwards. As with Figures 3 and 4, the data in Figures 5 and 6 is normalized by each colony's average so that persistent cross-sectional differences in Incumbency are parsed out.

In combination, Figures 1 to 6, displaying the time-paths of sugar-prices, franchise expansion, political turnover and regime switches, provide strong support for the hypothesis of defensive franchise contraction. However, these are only raw data plots. In addition, although each data-point in Figures 3-6 is normalized to a colony's mean, the right hand sides of both Figures 4 and 6 are still confounded by selection effect because colonies that switched to full Crown Colony status rather than semi-representative rule had no further elections and therefore no data to the right of year 0. In the following I estimate the postulated causal links formally in a linear probability dynamic panel regression framework. I estimate the following equation

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[21]A possible alternative explanation is that there was a simultaneous contraction in the franchise rules which reduced the number of eligible voters. I am in the process of collecting data on franchise rules to learn more about this.

[22]This is 1 minus the share of political newcomers

[23]It would be ideal to directly measure the entry of newcomers. Puga and Trefler (2011) for instance, in a study of medieval Venice, calculate in each time-period the number of "new families" that had not appeared before a certain date. To do this, I would need a stock of families that had been around for a long time. But because my data starts only 1838, I do not have a stock and entry of newcomers would be mechanically high in the beginning of the sample when turnover is actually lowest.

[24]The number of observations in Figures 5 and 6 is substantially larger than in Figures 3 and 4 for two reasons: First, political franchise data started to be reported only in 1854 whereas I was able to calculate turnover as early as 1838. Second, updated numbers on the franchise were not always reported for every election.

$$\mathbf{CC}_{it} = \alpha \mathbf{CC}_{it-1} + \beta \mathbf{T}_{it-1} + \gamma \mathbf{X}_{it} + \phi_i + \epsilon_{it} \tag{1}$$

where $\mathbf{CC}_{it}$ is an indicator for colony i being in either the semi-representative or Crown Colony regime in year t. This is regressed on its lag $\mathbf{CC}_{it-1}$. Because transitions are never reverted in the data, α should be close to 1. $\mathbf{X}_{it}$ denotes additional time-variant controls, ϕ_i is a colony fixed effect that soaks up any time-invariant cross-sectional heterogeneity in the data.

The main regressor of interest is $\mathbf{T}_{it-1}$, a measure of economic or political turmoil in the previous period. Lagging $\mathbf{T}_i$ is reasonable because constitutional changes took a considerable amount of planning and the colonial records indicate that their resolutions were usually passed at least a year before implementation of a constitutional change. For $\mathbf{T}_{it-1}$, I use three measures that are suggested by the historical narrative. The first two are the measures of franchise extension and political turnover considered in Figures 3 to 6. As a third measure, I take advantage of the fact that sugar colonies were likely to be most affected by the postulated channel running from low sugar-prices to abandoned plantations. Among the 14, there are 3 colonies that - while still having slave populations of 95 per cent or more before 1838, were not sugar plantation colonies: Bermuda, Bahamas and Honduras. I classify these as non-sugar colonies. The reported numbers on the initial share of sugar in exports in Table 1 show that this division into sugar and non-sugar colonies is not arbitrary. All sugar colonies had a share of sugar in exports of 75 percent or more, all non-sugar colonies a share of 10 percent or lower. The colony fixed effect ϕ_i in (1) washes out these cross-sectional categorical differences so that I cannot use them directly. However, I can interact the indicators with time-trends. For this, the qualitative evidence and the evidence on timing in Figures 1-2 suggest that the 1854 IEA played a very important role in the timing of the proposed mechanism. I therefore interact the two indicators with a post-1854 indicator to generate a time- and colony-varying set of regressors which capture the idea that the IEA was key to freeing the bankrupt estates up for sale but that non-sugar colonies should have been largely unaffected by this.[25] The coefficients on these interactions can be thought of as an intentions-to-treat (ITT) effect because they measure how exposed a colony was to the underlying economic mechanism described.[26]

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[25]This is essentially a difference-in-difference strategy where the level effects are soaked up by the colony fixed effects.

[26]I experimented with using these indicators as an instrument for either franchise expansion or political turnover

In Figures 3 to 6 each observation is an election. However, transitions could occur in *any* given year including those between elections so that in regressions the number of observations equals the number of colony-years. Regressors that only change at election-time therefore stay the same between elections. For instance, if there was an election in 1860 and one in 1865, then both the incumbency and political franchise data are constant between 1860 to 1864. This process of filling in data is illustrated in Table 2.

Table 3 shows the results of estimating equation (1). In columns 1-6, I regress $\mathbf{CC}_{it}$ on lagged incumbency, in columns 7-8 on lagged franchise expansion and in column 9-10 on the set of indicator interactions of post-1854 with sugar or non-sugar colonies.

Column 1 shows that, consistent with the proposed mechanism, a colony is more likely to transition towards Crown Colony rule if incumbency goes down; that is, if there was more entry by political newcomers. This effect gets stronger when including time trends and a post-IEA indicator in in columns 2-4. Column 4 also suggests that the IEA is more important in explaining the constitutional changes than a general time-trend. In columns 5 and 6, I estimate a saturated model which includes the post-IEA indicator separately as well as interacted with $\mathbf{T}_{it-1}$. The results suggest that political turnover (changes in incumbency) matters only after 1854, consistent with decreased incumbency before 1854 not being driven by political newcomers. Columns 7 and 8 replicate columns 1 and 2, using the log of voters instead of incumbency as the regressor of interest. The results are sign consistent with the mechanism: Increases in the franchise make transitions towards Crown Colony rule more likely. The results are much weaker however. This is likely because political franchise data is only available after 1854 so that the panel is shorter and more of $\mathbf{CC}_{it}$ is explained by the fixed effect ϕ_i. The fact that franchise data starts in 1854 also means I cannot replicate columns 3-6 with franchise data. Finally, in columns 9-10, I include the sugar and non-sugar indicators interacted with a post-IEA-indicator. The results are consistent with the narrative: non-sugar colonies were no more likely to transition to Crown Colony status after 1854. By contrast, sugar colonies were significantly more likely to transition after 1854 than before. Overall, the results in Table 3 seem strongly suggestive of the mechanism of defensive franchise contraction. Table 4 replicates the regressions without using colony fixed effects.[27] The

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but there is not enough sharpness in the time-series so that IV-results, while sign-consistent, were not significant at conventional levels.

[27]It is not clear that colony fixed effects should to be included in these regressions because they introduce a time-

results are broadly unchanged but the results for the franchise in columns 7 and 8 are strengthened considerably.

In Table 3, I regressed constitutional change separately on three sets of regressors that represent links in the causal chain running from depressed sugar prices over bankrupt estates to franchise expansion and political turnover. In Table 5, I look more closely at the relationship between the three regressors incumbency, franchise expansion and the indicator-interactions to see whether they are consistent with this postulated channel. In columns 1-3, I investigate the relation between incumbency and franchise expansion, in columns 4-6 between incumbency and the sugar-interactions. Because franchise data starts only in 1854, I cannot relate franchise expansion to the sugar-interactions which rely on a pre- and post-1854 comparison. In these regression, I restrict myself to the years before a constitutional change occurred because constitutional changes ended the dynamic described above.[28] Column 1 shows that franchise expansion was indeed associated with higher political turnover. The coefficient -0.113 on log(voters) implies that a doubling of the franchise (a 100 percent increase) lowers the share of elected who were incumbents by 11 percentage points. Columns 2-3 show that this effect is concentrated in the sugar-colonies. In non-sugar colonies, changes in the number of voters did not affect political turnover. I next investigate political turnover over time. In column 4, there does not seem to have been a post-1854 reduction in incumbency. However, when I add a sugar-interaction in column 5-6, I find that sugar colonies experienced a significant post-1854 reduction in incumbency relative to non-sugar colonies. In combination, the results in Table 5 provide additional support for the hypothesized channels.

3.3 The Effects of Franchise Contraction

Next, I turn to estimating the effect of switches towards Crown Colony rule. The outcome data that I have is the composition of public expenditure for different purposes. I estimate

$$\text{pg}_{it} = \beta \mathbf{CC}_{it} + \gamma X_{it} + \theta_t + \phi_i + \epsilon_{it} \tag{2}$$

invariant propensity to be governed by Crown Colony rule. By contrast, lagged dependent are definitely necessary because of the high persistence in constitutional choices.

[28]This is a simplification for expositional clarity: If a colony transitioned to semi-representative government, there were still elections and incumbency and turnover could still change after the first constitutional change. Only when there was a transition to Crown Colony rule did incumbency and franchise remain fixed until the end of the panel.

where pg_{it} is the log of either total public expenditure or public expenditure specifically for education or police and prisons, $\mathbf{CC}_{it}$ is an indicator for either semi-representative or Crown Colony rule, X_{it} are other time-variant controls, colony fixed effects ϕ_i soak up any cross-sectional time-invariant variation in public expenditure and year fixed effects θ_t soak up any trends in public administration or expenditure that were common to all British Caribbean colonies. When pg_{it} is a specific part of public expenditure, X_{it} contains other public expenditure to control for the budget.

Table 6 reports results of estimating equation (2). It is organized as follows: In Panel A, I consider separate trend-breaks in expenditure for semi-representative and for Crown Colony government. In Panel B, I combine these to test for one trend break associated with regime switches *towards* Crown Colony government. In columns 1 - 4 of both panels, I run regressions on total public expenditure. In columns 5 - 8, I run regressions on public good expenditure on education specifically. In columns 9 - 12, I run regressions on coercive expenditure. That is, expenditure on prisons and police. Columns 1,5,9 include no time trends, columns 2-3,6-7,10-11 introduce a linear and then a quadratic time trend and columns 4,8,12 control for all time trends non-parametrically with year fixed effects. The estimates change with the the different time trend specifications. For total public good expenditure, column 1 seems to confirm the idea that Crown Colony status leads to increases in public expenditure. However, columns 2 and 3 show that this is likely entirely explained by a positive correlation with time trends of increasing public expenditure. When these are controlled for, the effect first disappears and is then even reversed. In column 4, the most flexible specification, the effect disappear. Overall, there is no convincing evidence that total public expenditure increased with regime switches towards Crown Colony rule. The results on educational spending and coercive spending are much more clear-cut: Educational spending decreased and coercive spending increased with switches towards Crown Colony rule. This is completely contrary to the perceived wisdom that Crown Colony government shielded the people against elite policies. In combination with the previous results, this suggests that elites retained and possibly even strengthened their influence over the political decision making process.

3.4   Evidence for Elite Persistence

Finally, to get a sense for the *persistence* of political power *across* regime switches, I use the same name data to calculate two measures of political persistence. The first measure is a share of politi-

cians after regime switches that had held elected office in the traditional assemblies before the regime switches. The second measure is a share of politicians after regime switches whose families had held elected office in the traditional assemblies before the regime switches. This is done under the assumption that economic interests within families were relatively stable across generations. I consider nominated and elected politicians separately. In colonies that had switched to the semi-representative system, the legislature was composed partly of elected members and partly of members that had been nominated by the colonial governor. In pure Crown Colony systems, all legislators were nominated by the colonial governor.

For now, I have averaged these shares across all colonies to highlight the general pattern. Figure 7 traces the persistence of individual politicians after the constitutional changes, Figure 8 traces the persistence of "political dynasties" after the constitutional changes. Figure 7 reveals that initially almost 80 percent of the legislators elected in the new chambers had held office at some point in the past before the regime switches. However this share fall of rapidly over time and 15 years after the initial constitutional changes, less than 20 percent of elected legislators had held office before the switches. By contrast, the share of nominated politicians in the new chambers that had held elective office under the old system is lower but remains much more stable over time, even increasing between 12-15 years after the switches.[29] Also, while the share of legislators who had individually held office under the old system drops of to less than 20 percent 15 years after the regime switch, Figure 8 shows that share of legislators whose *families* held office under the old system is much more stable, dropping only to about 60 percent 15 years after the initial switch.

4 Discussion and Conclusion

This paper begins by documenting a unique series of 19th century constitutional changes that successfully restricted parliamentary powers in the face of a buoyant emergent smallholder class of new voters. This historical episode provides an important counterexample to the broad trends of franchise expansion and increases in parliamentary powers during the 19th century. It also provides a unique opportunity to study the political economy of the colonial institutions, which are

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[29]I take this as suggestive evidence that elected members that were losing their seats were being retained in the legislatures though nominations. At this point, our collected data on individual politicians ends in 1894. I have to collect a longer time series to verify this conjecture.

often thought to be an important determinant of long run post-independence economic development. I endogenize these constitutional changes and show that they were a response by planter elites to the entry of a new political class whose objectives ran counter to the plantation economy. I further provide evidence on public expenditure which suggests that old planter elites became more successful in influencing policy after they gave up de-jure powers, a pattern strongly suggestive of increased collective action and insider access to governance. To study insider access directly, I provide evidence on elite persistence using data on the identity of all elected and nominated politicians in the elective chambers before and after the constitutional changes. In combination, these finding illuminate the economic and political motivations behind a unique and important series of 19th constitutional changes. They illustrate the workings of the colonial political economy and provide and important provide an explanation for how a small minority in the British Caribbean could continue to maintain control over economic and political resources after more than 95 percent of the population had been freed from slavery.

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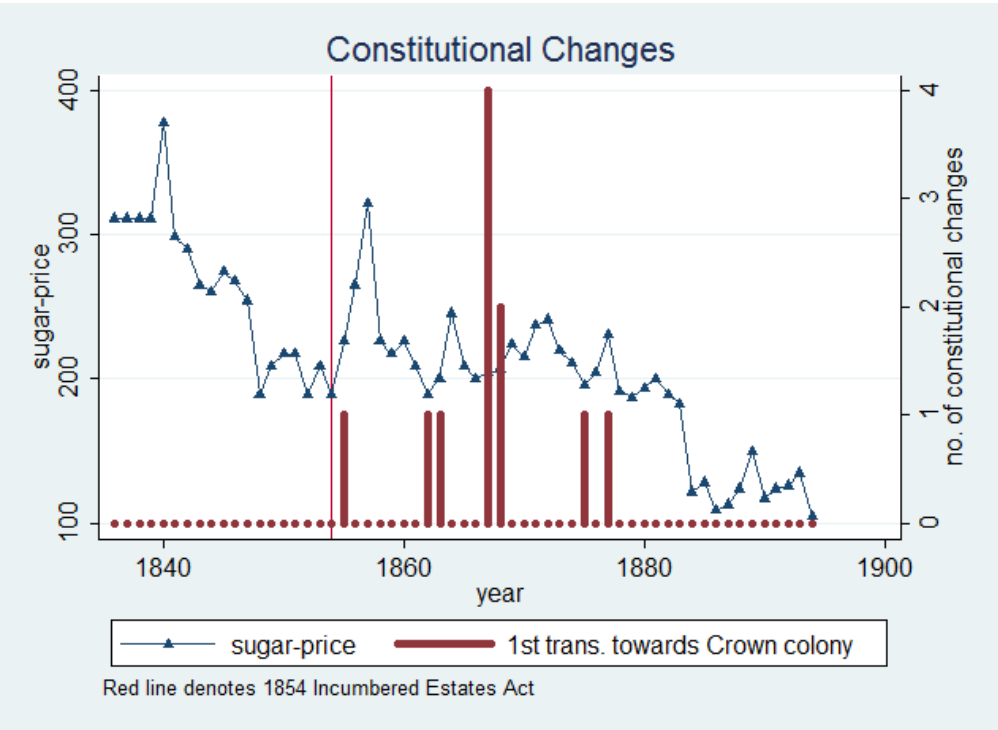
Figure 1: First Constitutional Changes

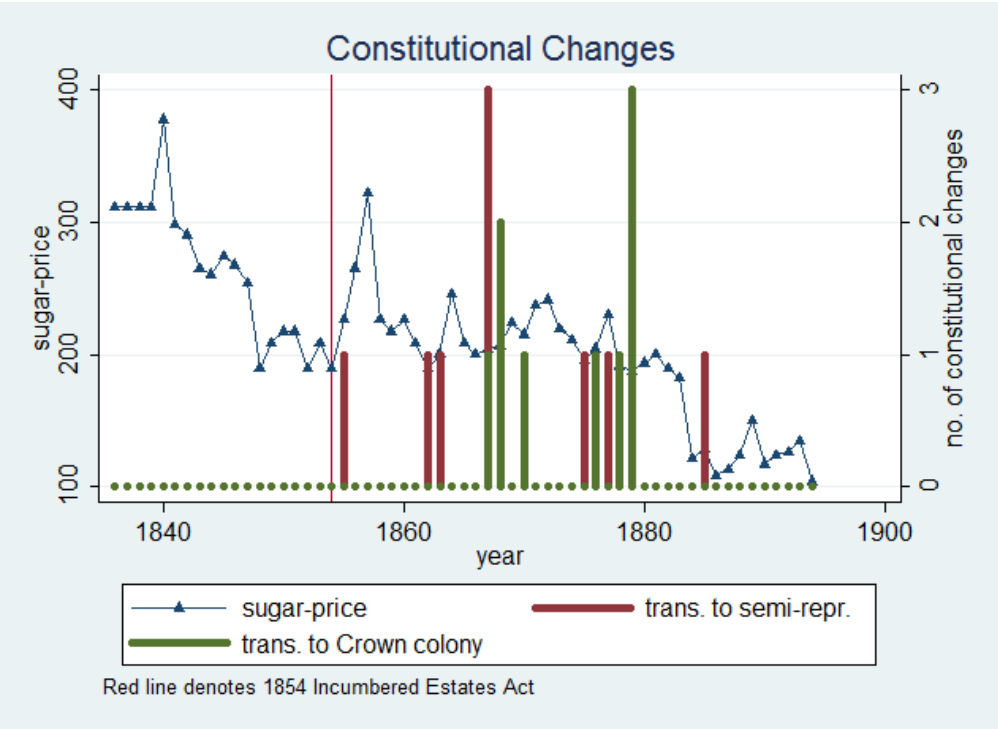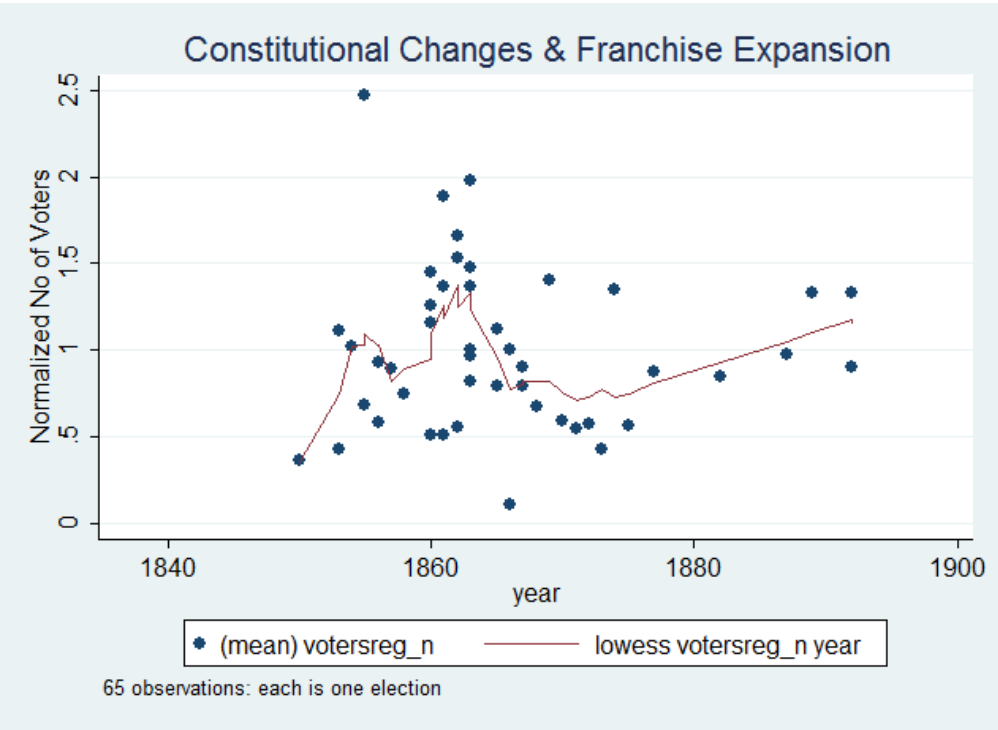

Figure 2: All Constitutional Changes

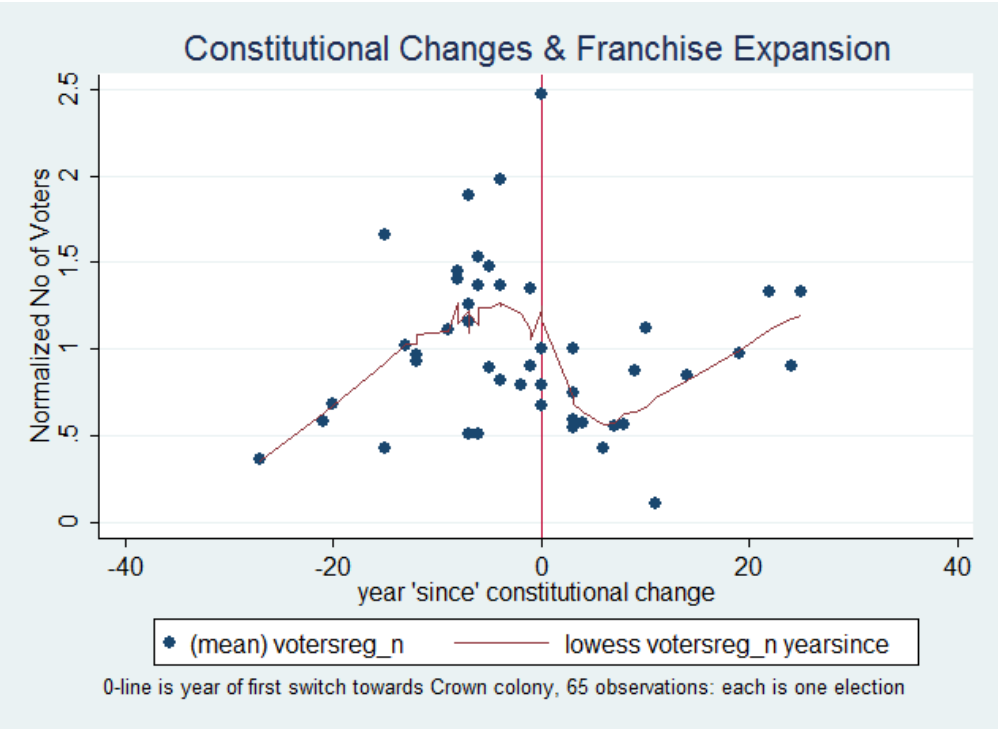Figure 3: Franchise Expansion in Real Time

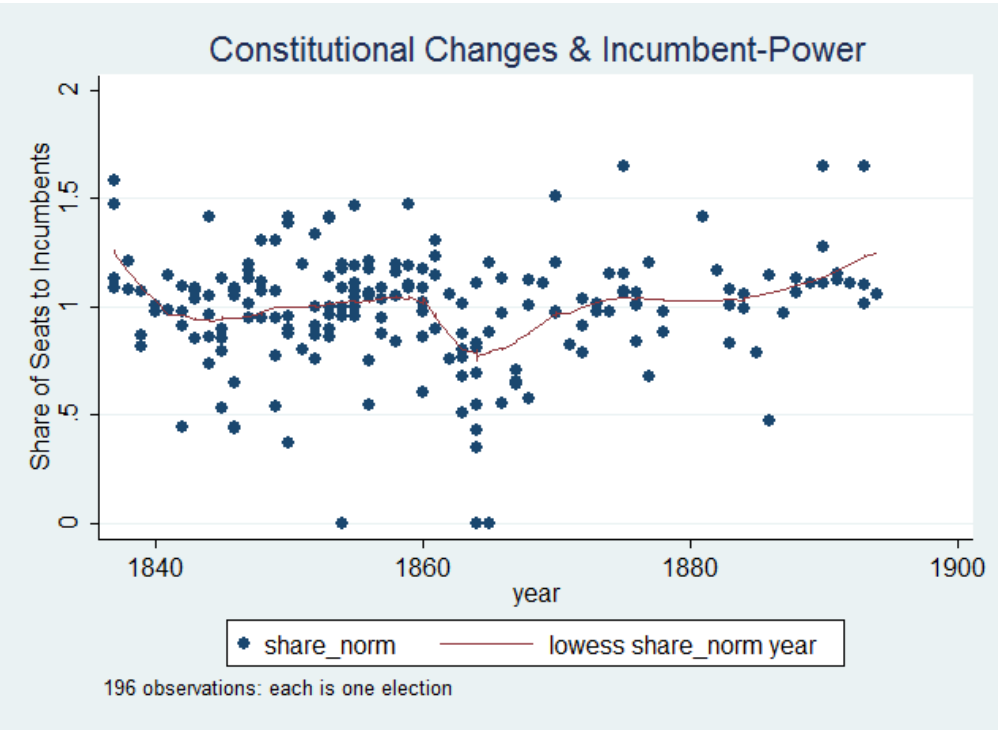Figure 4: Franchise Expansion in "Event-Time"

20

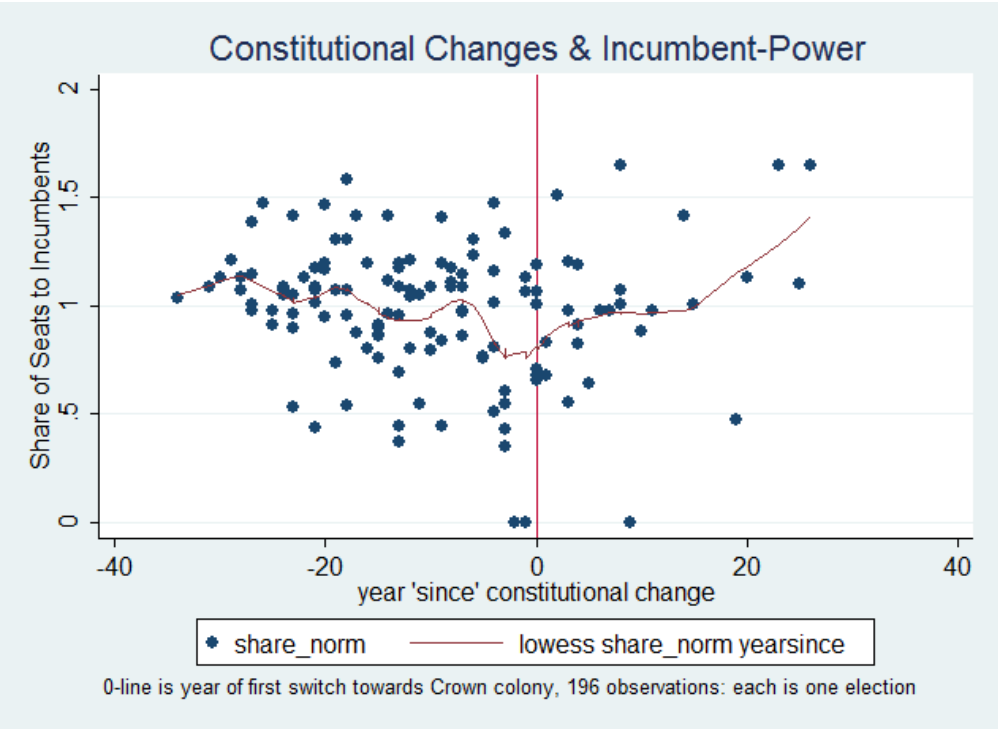Figure 5: Incumbency-Persistence in Real Time

Figure 6: Incumbency-Persistence in "Event-Time"

21
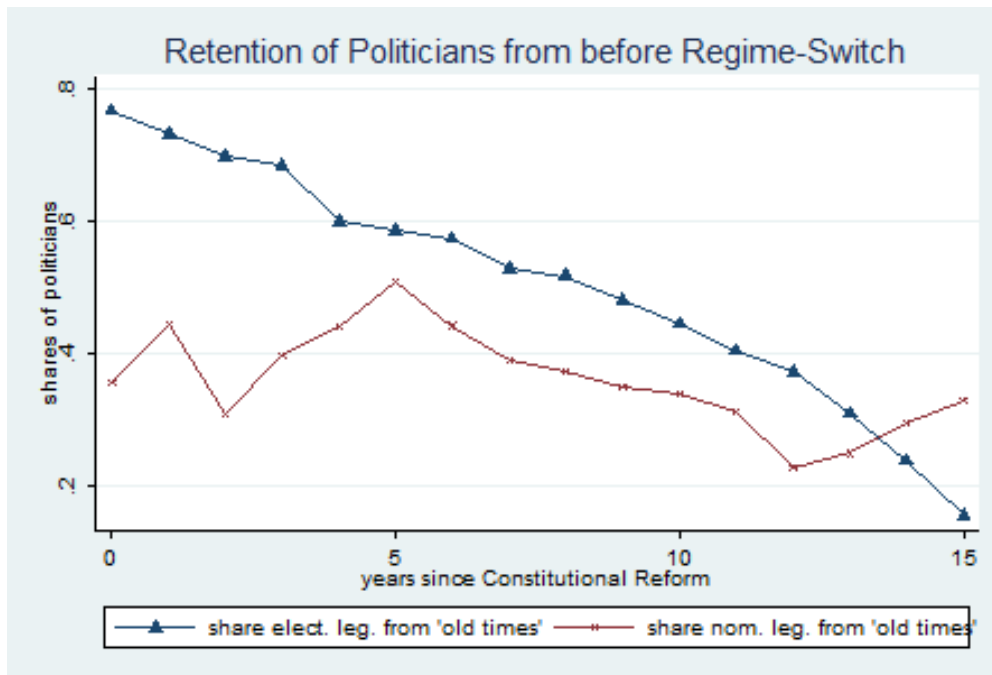
Figure 7: Persistence of Individual Legislators
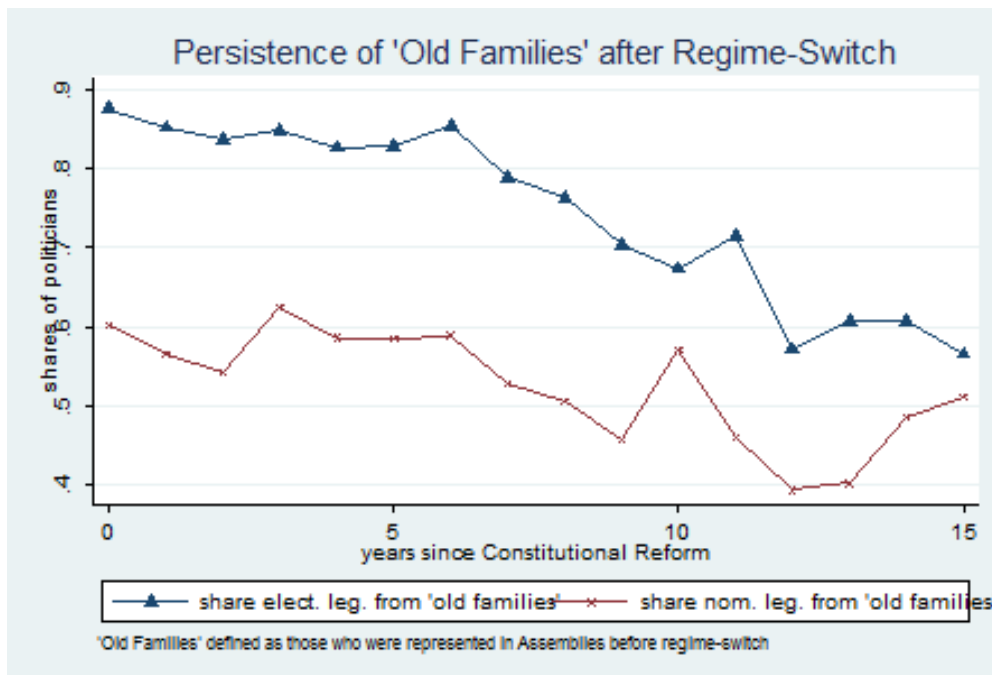
Figure 8: Persistence of "Political Dynasties"

Table 1: Comparison Table

Colony	Initial Population	Initial Sugar % of Exports	Area (sqkm)	Initial Density	Year Founded	Year Semi-Repr.	Year Crown Col.
Antigua	35188	93	281	125	1632	1868	1898
Bermuda	8862	0	53	167	1612		
Bahamas	20203	10	13461	2	1650		
Barbados	105812	94	431	246	1629		
Dominica	16207	81	754	21	1763	1867	1898
Grenada	17751	96	344	52	1763	1877	1879
Br Guyana	66561	80	10750	6	1803	1803	
Honduras	8235	0	22966	0	1638		1871
Jamaica	381951	74	11100	34	1655	1885	1867
Montserrat	6647	96	102	65	1634	1863	1868
Nevis	7434	95	93	80	1623	1867	1879
St Lucia	17005	79	620	27	1803		1803
St Kitts	21578	99	191	113	1628	1867	1879
St Vincent	26659	96	389	69	1763	1868	1876
Tobago	11456	100	300	38	1763	1875	1878
Trinidad	34650	88	4787	7	1797		1797
Virgin Islands	7471	95	153	49	1672	1855	1868

2 transitions are out of the present sample: Antigua and Dominica 1898. The 3 initial Crown colonies Br Guyana, St Lucia and Trinidad play almost no role in any of the empirics in this paper. Source of Transition Timing: Wrong (1923) and *Colonial Office List*. Source of Other Data: *Colonial Blue Books*

Table 2: Illustrating Panel-Construction

Colony	Year	Election	Incumbent-Share	ln(voters)	L.Incumbency	L.ln(voters)
Antigua	.	.	.	.	.	.
Antigua	.	.	.	.	.	.
Antigua	1854				0.75	1.58
Antigua	1855	Yes	0.7	1.6	0.75	1.58
Antigua	1856				0.7	1.6
Antigua	1857				0.7	1.6
Antigua	1858				0.7	1.6
Antigua	1859				0.7	1.6
Antigua	1860	Yes	0.65	1.7	0.7	1.6
Antigua	1861				0.65	1.7
Antigua	1862				0.65	1.7
Antigua	1863				0.65	1.7

Table 3: Explaining Timing of Constitutional Changes

Dependent	CC									
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
L.CC	0.959*** (0.006)	0.909*** (0.015)	0.926*** (0.012)	0.912*** (0.015)	0.922*** (0.015)	0.905*** (0.017)	0.928***	0.896*** (0.013)	0.931*** (0.011)	0.914*** (0.015)
L.Incumbent-Share	-0.100** (0.041)	-0.112** (0.041)	-0.116*** (0.037)	-0.117*** (0.038)	-0.017 (0.025)	-0.012 (0.029)	0.928***			
ln(voters)							0.015 (0.014)	0.008 (0.016)		
D(sugar)*post									0.059*** (0.008)	0.040*** (0.012)
D(no sugar)*post									0.027 (0.024)	0.002 (0.031)
year		0.002*** (0.001)		0.001 (0.001)		0.002** (0.001)		0.002** (0.001)		0.001* (0.001)
post			0.060*** (0.013)	0.045*** (0.015)	0.140*** (0.037)	0.128*** (0.039)				
L.Incumbent-Share*post					-0.138** (0.056)	-0.148** (0.060)				
Colony-FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	748	748	748	748	748	748	555	555	802	802
R-squared	0.94	0.94	0.94	0.94	0.94	0.94	0.93	0.93	0.95	0.95

All s.e. are clusterd at colony-level, * significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1%. CC is an indicator for whether a colony had transitioned towards Crown Colony rule. Incumbent-Share is the share of seats held by incumbents from the previous election. It is an inverse measure of political turnover. The indicator post switches on with IEA in 1854. D(sugar) and D(no sugar) are indicators for whether a colony is a sugar-colony or not. In columns 1-6, the panel is shortened by more one cross-section because I can only calculate Incumbent-Share with the first observed election in each colony. Data for ln(voters) starts in 1854, resulting in a further shortened panel.

Table 4: Explaining Timing of Constituional Changes (no FE)

Dependent	CC									
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
L.CC	0.970***	0.945***	0.948***	0.947***	0.944***	0.941***	0.967***	0.967***	0.953***	0.949***
	(0.007)	(0.018)	(0.014)	(0.017)	(0.010)	(0.012)	(0.014)	(0.010)	(0.013)	(0.019)
L.Incumbent-Share	-0.077**	-0.091**	-0.093***	-0.093***	-0.011	-0.012				
	(0.028)	(0.032)	(0.030)	(0.030)	(0.044)	(0.044)				
ln(voters)							0.017*	0.017*		
							(0.010)	(0.010)		
D(sugar)*post									0.046***	0.041***
									(0.013)	(0.012)
D(no sugar)*post									0.018	0.01
									(0.019)	(0.026)
year		0.002***		0.001		0.001		0.001		0.001
		(0.001)		(0.001)		(0.001)		(0.001)		(0.001)
post			0.049***	0.048***	0.123***	0.121***				
			(0.013)	(0.012)	(0.032)	(0.032)				
L.Incumbent-Share*post					-0.128**	-0.130**				
					(0.051)	(0.051)				
Colony-FE	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Observations	748	748	748	748	748	748	555	555	802	802
R-squared	0.94	0.94	0.94	0.94	0.94	0.94	0.94	0.94	0.94	0.94

All s.e. are clusterd at colony-level, * significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1%. CC is an indicator for whether a colony had transitioned towards Crown Colony rule. Incumbent-Share is the share of seats held by incumbents from the previous election. It is an inverse measure of political turnover. The indicator post switches on with IEA in 1854. D(sugar) and D(no sugar) are indicators for whether a colony is a sugar-colony or not. In columns 1-6, the panel is shortened by more one cross-section because I can only calculate Incumbent-Share with the first observed election in each colony. Data for ln(voters) starts in 1854, resulting in a further shortened panel.

Table 5: "Quasi First Stage": Relating Incumbency, the Franchise and the IEA

Dependent	Incumbent-Share					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
ln(voters)	-0.113*					
	(0.057)					
D(sugar)*ln(voters)		-0.130**	-0.139**			
		(0.053)	(0.057)			
D(no-sug)*ln(voters)		0.171	0.11			
		(0.133)	(0.196)			
year			0.001	-0.001		-0.001
			(0.002)	(0.002)		(0.002)
post				0.045	0.097***	0.110**
				(0.041)	(0.025)	(0.040)
D(sugar)*post					-0.087*	-0.089*
					(0.041)	(0.042)
Colony-FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	234	234	234	463	463	463
R-squared	0.54	0.55	0.55	0.46	0.47	0.47

All s.e. are clusterd at colony-level, * significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1%. The Panel is restricted to contain only the years before a colony transitioned towards Crown Colony status. Dependent Incumbent-Share is between 0 and 1. So a coefficient -0.113* on log(voters) implies that a doubling of the franchise (100 percent increase) lowers the share of incumbents who get elected by 11 percentage points.

Table 6: Public Good Provision Around Constitutional Changes

Panel A: Single Indicator for Changed Constitution

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
	Dep: log(Total Exp)				Dep: log(Education-Exp.)				Dep: log(Coercive Exp.)			
D(Changed Constitution)	0.471***	0.087	-0.139**	-0.04	0.068	-0.388***	-0.258***	-0.232**	0.323***	0.467***	0.482***	0.457***
	(0.053)	(0.058)	(0.054)	(0.058)	(0.081)	(0.084)	(0.086)	(0.094)	(0.069)	(0.081)	(0.086)	(0.097)
log(Population)	1.918***	1.051***	1.190***	1.139***								
	(0.162)	(0.162)	(0.141)	(0.138)								
Year		0.026***	4.661***			0.037***	-3.306***			-0.012***	-0.397	
		(0.002)	(0.386)			(0.004)	(0.709)			(0.004)	(0.705)	
Year squared			-0.001***				0.001***				0	
			(0.000)				(0.000)				(0.000)	
log(Total Other Exp.)					0.908***	0.420***	0.532***	0.547***	0.346***	0.495***	0.512***	0.555***
					(0.072)	(0.080)	(0.081)	(0.086)	(0.056)	(0.071)	(0.078)	(0.086)
Year-FE	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes
Colony-FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	448	448	448	448	448	448	448	448	448	448	448	448
R-squared	0.96	0.97	0.97	0.98	0.91	0.93	0.93	0.94	0.93	0.93	0.93	0.93

Panel B: Separate Indicators for Semi-Representative and Crown Colonial Status

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
	Dep: log(Total Exp)				Dep: log(Education-Exp.)				Dep: log(Coercive Exp.)			
D(Semi-Representative)	0.431***	0.099*	-0.134**	-0.03	-0.002	-0.374***	-0.229**	-0.199**	0.448***	0.532***	0.555***	0.511***
	(0.059)	(0.060)	(0.056)	(0.058)	(0.090)	(0.088)	(0.091)	(0.098)	(0.075)	(0.083)	(0.088)	(0.098)
D(Crown Colony)	0.528***	0.055	-0.153**	-0.075	0.141	-0.415***	-0.303***	-0.288***	0.166**	0.300***	0.318***	0.296***
	(0.064)	(0.071)	(0.064)	(0.069)	(0.091)	(0.097)	(0.097)	(0.106)	(0.079)	(0.096)	(0.100)	(0.114)
log(Population)	1.846***	1.068***	1.198***	1.162***								
	(0.168)	(0.164)	(0.142)	(0.141)								
Year		0.026***	4.654***			0.037***	-3.374***			-0.009**	-0.549	
		(0.002)	(0.386)			(0.004)	(0.713)			(0.004)	(0.700)	
Year squared			-0.001***				0.001***				0	
			(0.000)				(0.000)				(0.000)	
log(Total Other Exp.)					0.897***	0.417***	0.528***	0.537***	0.389***	0.491***	0.516***	0.553***
					(0.073)	(0.080)	(0.081)	(0.086)	(0.056)	(0.071)	(0.077)	(0.085)
Year-FE	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes
Colony-FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	448	448	448	448	448	448	448	448	448	448	448	448
R-squared	0.96	0.97	0.97	0.98	0.92	0.93	0.94	0.94	0.93	0.93	0.93	0.93