

2 | *Theory of Separate Independence*

What do we know about the separate independence of colonial areas, and how can we explain it? This chapter discusses the historical background of separate independence and presents a theory that explains it. Within roughly 30–40 years after the end of World War II, numerous new members joined the international community of sovereign states. Before this period, however, self-determination was exceptional outside Europe, and after this period, the territorial integrity norm strictly limited the creation of new states. Therefore, the successful cases of separate independence covered in this book are cases where oil production started at a specific time: after colonization but well before this “window of sovereignty” closed. When this economic activity occurred in protectorates where the colonizers offered protection to the local rulers and ruled through them, the result was separate independence.

The central argument of this book, therefore, is that the colonial politics of oil carved out some producing areas to create “unlikely” states that would otherwise not exist. More concretely, I argue that when faced with a project for amalgamation with neighboring areas, (1) oil production during the colonial period and (2) the protectorate system led to separate independence. The two factors enabled some colonial entities to achieve statehood separately by providing them with material and political incentives to pursue separate independence, perceived viability as a sovereign state, which includes both financial self-sufficiency and security, and bargaining power vis-à-vis the colonizers. This chapter explains the conditions for separate independence and how the two factors interacted to create the outcome. After presenting the theory, it also discusses its scope condition and alternative explanations.

A Tale of Two Histories

Imperialism and the Window of Sovereignty

In the late fifteenth century, European powers began implementing imperial projects to conquer and exploit “new” lands outside of Europe, but it was only in the late nineteenth century that European imperialism expanded to cover nearly the entire globe.¹ With Latin America as an exception, European powers did not seek or exert territorial control in non-European regions until the nineteenth century. Their interests were commercial rather than territorial, and they were not powerful enough to conquer local polities in Asia, Africa, or the Middle East.²

Whether there was a complete break from the previous period or it was part of a continuous process of expansion is a matter of debate,³ but the pace of colonization accelerated in the last two decades of the nineteenth century, as Figure 2.1 makes evident. The increase in the number of colonial areas was relatively slow until 1883. In 1816, there were 236 colonial entities, and in 1883, there were 424, reflecting an annual average addition of 2.8 colonial entities. In the next two decades, however, the number rose rapidly, reaching over 700; between 1883 and 1903, colonial powers added an average of 13.5 new colonial entities to their empires every year. The newly acquired colonies included the entirety of sub-Saharan Africa except for Ethiopia and Liberia, marking this period as the “Scramble for Africa.” There were also new colonial areas in Southeast Asia, Latin America, and the Pacific, among other places.

¹ Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper, *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton, NJ; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2010); Barry Buzan and George Lawson, *The Global Transformation: History, Modernity and the Making of International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); John Darwin, *After Tamerlane: The Rise and Fall of Global Empires, 1400–2000* (London: Penguin, 2008); J. C. Sharman, *Empires of the Weak: The Real Story of European Expansion and the Creation of the New World Order* (Princeton, NJ; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2019).

² Darwin, *After Tamerlane*.

³ P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism: 1688–2015* (Routledge, 2016); Gallagher and Robinson, “The Imperialism of Free Trade”; J. A. Hobson, *Imperialism: A Study* (New York: Cosimo, 2005).

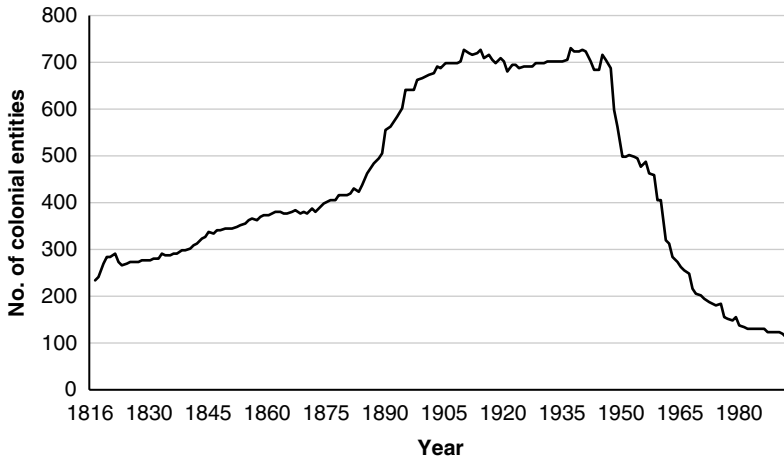


Figure 2.1 Number of colonial areas, 1816–1993

Source: Correlates of War Project, Colonial Contiguity Data, 1816–2016 (Version 3.1).

This “New Imperialism” was in part a product of the intensifying competition among European powers.⁴ Before the 1870s, Britain was the dominant power outside of Europe and served as the guarantor of free trade. Under the Pax Britannica, other European powers could conduct commercial activities without paying for public goods. For Britain, openness made sense because other states posed little threat to its interests. With the rise of Germany, France, Italy, and the United States, however, British dominance began to erode, and the new multipolar international system rendered the Pax Britannica untenable, resulting in a surge of competition for peripheral markets.⁵ Imperial powers scrambled for Africa and other regions, leaving almost no land on the globe unclaimed.

As a response to increasing competition, the mode of colonial rule changed in two ways. On the one hand, it became more formal and direct in existing colonies. According to Steinmetz, this period saw “a

⁴ Note that Doyle argues that it was not just one factor but an interaction of four factors, namely the “changes in the character of the international environment, in the domestic society of the metropole, and in the development of social change and the balance of collaboration in the peripheries,” that shaped the Scramble. Michael W. Doyle, *Empires* (Cornell University Press, 1986), 353.

⁵ Doyle, chap. 10.

gradual move away from mercantile colonialism and chartered company rule and toward a convergence on the Spanish model of direct metropolitan state governance over colonies.”⁶ On the other hand, because colonial powers could not afford to be left behind by their competitors, they tended to acquire lands of little economic value that were not suitable for European settlement solely for strategic concerns.⁷ They resorted to preemptive colonization of these “little-known lands.”⁸ Doyle describes the change in the metropole’s attitude by using several examples:

In the 1840s the Dominican Republic attempted to give itself to Britain, France, Spain, and the United States. All refused the burden of formal rule. Later Sarawak under the aegis of the Brookes – British subjects who had through local influence become the rajahs of the area – tried to give their public estate to Britain. They were also refused. Germany refused Togo in 1874, and as late as 1876 the Colonial Office of Great Britain declined the acquisition of a large part of the Congo basin for which Lieutenant Cameron had obtained treaties of cession from African chiefs. During the Scramble from 1881 to 1885 and later, however, metropolitan responses were quite different. Next to nothing was refused, and explorers were sent out at public expense to amass as many treaties as possible, even in areas such as New Guinea (hotly contested between Britain and Germany) where there had previously been little interest or transnational contact.⁹

When acquiring these lands, the colonizers frequently made them protectorates, rather than colonies, utilizing local rulers by letting them continue to govern and supporting them.¹⁰ This method was useful for the colonizers because it enabled them to exclude other European powers while minimizing administrative costs. Lindley explains why the protectorate system was popular among European empires in the period of the “New Imperialism”:

By such an arrangement, one State could acquire complete control over another, so far as third nations were concerned, without necessarily assuming the burden of its administration, and it was this feature of the protectorate which favoured its extensive adoption by European Powers in the spread

⁶ George Steinmetz, “The Sociology of Empires, Colonies, and Postcolonialism,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 40, no. 1 (2014): 83, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-soc-071913-043131>.

⁷ Steinmetz, 83. ⁸ Doyle, *Empires*, 233. ⁹ Doyle, 254.

¹⁰ Mitchell, *Carbon Democracy: Political Power in the Age of Oil*, 90.

of their dominion. It was possible, by concluding a treaty of protection with the local government or the native chiefs, to exclude other Powers from the region so dealt with, and thus, by a rapid and inexpensive method, to acquire over considerable areas rights which, so far as other Powers were concerned, could be developed into complete sovereignty by degrees.¹¹

As historians of empire note, the metropole preferred an “empire on the cheap.”¹² Even in India, the most important colonial region for the British, economically important areas were often placed under direct rule, while princely states under indirect rule tended to encompass less fertile lands.¹³

As we shall see, this approach applies to the cases that are the focus of the following chapters. Brunei became a British protectorate in 1888 along with its two neighbors, Sarawak and North Borneo. Before the discovery of oil, Britain did not recognize any economic potential in Brunei, but it still added it to the British Empire because of increasing competition. The British also incorporated the Persian Gulf into its spheres of influence during this period. The Gulf meant little economically to the metropole; colonization there was to secure access to India, the “Jewel in the Crown” of the British Empire. Because of the lack of interest in the lands themselves, Britain chose to govern these areas through local rulers by offering them protection. These local rulers were able to benefit from oil in later periods precisely because their territories were economically unimportant to the metropole prior to the oil era. This historical contingency would exert an enormous influence on the future of these entities.

After the Scramble for Africa finally reached an end, the number of colonial areas leveled out at around 700 for several decades until the end of World War II. In the postwar period, there was a sharp decline due to the wave of decolonization sweeping European empires. In fewer than five years after the end of the war, the number of colonial areas dropped to 500. It declined further in the following decades, falling below 200 for the first time in 1971. Several factors contributed to the rapid collapse

¹¹ Lindley, *The Acquisition and Government of Backward Territory in International Law*, 182.

¹² Jansen and Osterhammel, *Decolonization*, 121; W. M. Roger Louis and Ronald Robinson, “The Imperialism of Decolonization,” *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 22, no. 3 (1994): 464, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03086539408582936>.

¹³ Rothermund, *The Routledge Companion to Decolonization*, 64.

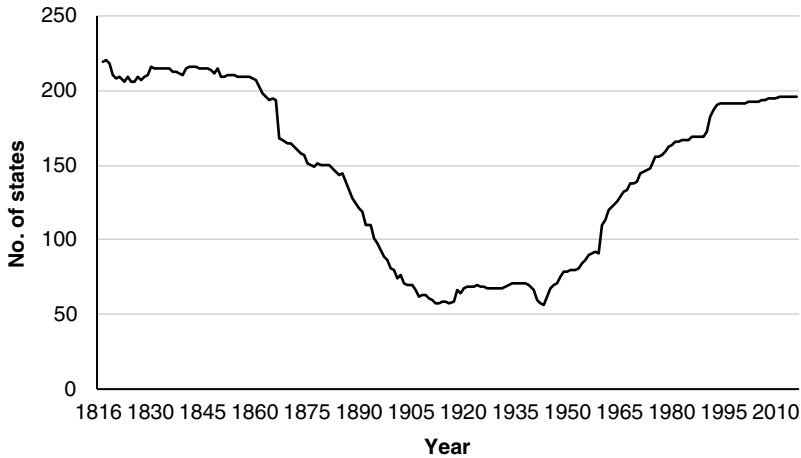


Figure 2.2 Number of states, 1816–2011

Source: International Systems Dataset. Griffiths and Butcher.

of imperialism, including the bipolar system, the development of nuclear weapons, a liberal international economy, and nationalism.¹⁴ In the postwar world, the benefits of having large territories declined.

This trend corresponds to that of the number of states in the same period, as shown in Figure 2.2.¹⁵ The number of states remained at roughly 210 until around 1860 but declined sharply in the following decades, reaching a little over 50 in the early twentieth century.¹⁶ In

¹⁴ Griffiths, *Age of Secession*, 7; Hendrik Spruyt, *Ending Empire: Contested Sovereignty and Territorial Partition* (Cornell University Press, 2005), 4.

¹⁵ This point may seem obvious, but the number of states in conventional datasets such as the Correlates of War (COW) do not necessarily correspond to the number of colonial entities. The COW datasets, for example, practically count only European states until 1920 because they require an entity to have a diplomatic relationship with either Britain or France to qualify as a state. The International Systems Dataset (ISD), in contrast, requires recognition from relevant international actors, resulting in a much higher number of states in the precolonial period outside of Europe. See Charles R. Butcher and Ryan D. Griffiths, “States and Their International Relations since 1816: Introducing Version 2 of the International System(s) Dataset (ISD),” *International Interactions* 46, no. 2 (March 3, 2020): 291–308, for further discussion.

¹⁶ See Tanisha M. Fazal, *State Death: The Politics and Geography of Conquest, Occupation, and Annexation* (Princeton; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2007) on state death.

many parts of the world, what was once an independent state became a colonial entity of another. After fluctuating between 50 and 70 for several decades, the number of states increased rapidly after World War II as a result of the collapse of empires.¹⁷ The number of sovereign states eventually reached nearly 200 at the end of the twentieth century.¹⁸

Among former colonies, those in the Americas became independent first. The United States achieved independence in 1783, Mexico in 1810, and most Latin American states by the middle of the nineteenth century. Although the latter half of the nineteenth century witnessed further colonization rather than decolonization, the end of World War I was followed by the collapse of the Ottoman, Austro-Hungarian, and Russian Empires, creating new states, some of which were later re-annexed by regional powers. The largest expansion occurred in the aftermath of World War II. The end of the war terminated Japanese rule in East Asia, while the British and the Americans decolonized South Asia and the Philippines, respectively, and former mandatory territories such as Syria and Jordan also achieved independence. Although the colonial powers reasserted control over their colonies elsewhere, Indonesia as well as French colonies in Southeast Asia and North Africa were decolonized by the 1950s, while the 1960s saw the independence of most African countries. In the early 1970s, the British implemented their retreat from East of Suez, followed by the Portuguese withdrawal from its colonies, largely ending the period of decolonization.¹⁹ The next major event was the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union in the 1990s.²⁰

It is important to note, however, that the number of sovereign states has stopped increasing. With more and more colonial areas experiencing

¹⁷ Spruyt, *Ending Empire*.

¹⁸ See Christian Reus-Smit, "Struggles for Individual Rights and the Expansion of the International System," *International Organization* 65, no. 2 (April 2011): 207–42, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818311000038>; Philip G. Roeder, *Where Nation-States Come From: Institutional Change in the Age of Nationalism* (Princeton, NJ; Woodstock: Princeton University Press, 2007) for the expansion of the sovereign state system, but beware that they do not count precolonial states, just like the COW dataset.

¹⁹ Rothermund, *The Routledge Companion to Decolonization*, 43–44.

²⁰ Although this event created multiple new states, it is called a dissolution rather than decolonization because the "new" countries were not colonies during the Soviet period, and some of them had existed as independent countries before being integrated into the Soviet Union. For this distinction, see Jansen and Osterhammel, *Decolonization*, 18–19.

decolonization, the rate of increase gradually slowed in the 1970s and 1980s. Although it leaped once again in the aftermath of the Cold War due to the dissolution of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, the number has remained roughly the same for more than two decades since then, despite the numerous secessionist civil conflicts during the same period.²¹ This trend reflects what Atzili calls the “norm of border fixity”²² and Zacher calls the “territorial integrity norm,”²³ which has prevented a change in the existing sovereign territorial order. Post-colonial borders have persisted even if the state is too weak to take control of the society, and the international community has generally opposed secession outside of decolonization.²⁴ In the postwar international society, the norms of decolonization and secession have been contrary to each other; the former encourages the creation of new states, while the latter discourages it.²⁵ Even, or especially, former colonies proved intolerant to the self-determination of minority groups within existing states.²⁶ As a result, the success rate of secessionist movements between 1946 and 2011 was just 2 percent.²⁷ Therefore, it is safe to say that the “window of sovereignty” was open for only 30–40 years after the end of World War II for most non-European nations and societies.

Oil in the Age of Imperialism

Since ancient times, petroleum that seeped to the surface had been used for various purposes including lighting and medication.²⁸ However, not until 1859, when Edwin Drake succeeded in pumping oil from

²¹ Tanisha M. Fazal and Ryan D. Griffiths, “Membership Has Its Privileges: The Changing Benefits of Statehood,” *International Studies Review* 16, no. 1 (2014): 79–106, <https://doi.org/10.1111/misr.12099>.

²² Atzili, *Good Fences, Bad Neighbors*.

²³ Zacher, “The Territorial Integrity Norm.”

²⁴ Jackson, *Quasi-States*; Aleksandar Pavković and Peter Radan, “What Is Secession?,” in *Creating New States: Theory and Practice of Secession*, ed. Aleksandar Pavković and Peter Radan (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 5–30.

²⁵ Gary Goertz, Paul F. Diehl, and Alexandru Balas, “Managing New States: Secession, Decolonization, and Peace,” in *The Puzzle of Peace: The Evolution of Peace in the International System*, ed. Gary Goertz, Paul F. Diehl, and Alexandru Balas (Oxford University Press, 2016), 122.

²⁶ James Mayall, *Nationalism and International Society* (Cambridge: University Press, 1990), 49.

²⁷ Goertz, Diehl, and Balas, “Managing New States,” 126.

²⁸ The following paragraphs on the history of the oil industry are based on Mitchell, *Carbon Democracy: Political Power in the Age of Oil*; Daniel

underground in Titusville, Pennsylvania, did the oil “industry” come into being. With a large demand for and a shortage in the supply of illuminating oil, Drake’s success initiated a rush for the “black gold” across the United States. Out of fierce competition among numerous oil companies, John D. Rockefeller’s Standard Oil emerged as a corporate giant. In the European market, American oil faced competition from Russian oil produced in Baku and supplied by the Nobel Brothers Petroleum Company and the Rothschilds.

In the early twentieth century, technological advances made oil an even more important and strategic resource. With the development of the internal combustion engine, the automobile became increasingly popular. Military innovation also spurred the demand for oil, as nations began to employ tanks and aircraft in battles, and navies shifted from coal to oil to fuel their ships. These developments prompted European colonial powers to search for additional sources of oil in Asia and the Middle East. Royal Dutch Shell became a major competitor of Standard Oil by selling Sumatran and Bornean oil in the Dutch East Indies. The British capitalized on William Knox D’Arcy’s oil exploration in Persia, striking oil there in 1908, and established the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, which later became British Petroleum (BP). Oil exploration and production also began in other places, including Burma and Mexico.

The interwar period saw a new development in the global oil market. With a growing demand for oil during and after World War I, major players, concerned about the shortage of oil, turned their attention to the Gulf. Iraq and the Arabian Peninsula became a major focus for countries and companies seeking new oil fields. The establishment of the Turkish Petroleum Company by major European (and later American) companies and the “Red Line Agreement,” which bound them “not to engage in any oil operations within that vast territory except in cooperation with the other members of the Turkish Petroleum Company,”²⁹ slowed oil development in the region for a few decades. However, the interests of some smaller companies seeking new oil fields matched the Gulf rulers’ desperate need for new sources of income in the 1930s. As

Yergin, *The Prize: The Epic Quest for Oil, Money, and Power* (New York; London: Simon & Schuster, 1991); Daniel Yergin, *The Quest: Energy, Security and the Remaking of the Modern World* (London: Allen Lane, 2011).

²⁹ Yergin, *The Prize*, 205.

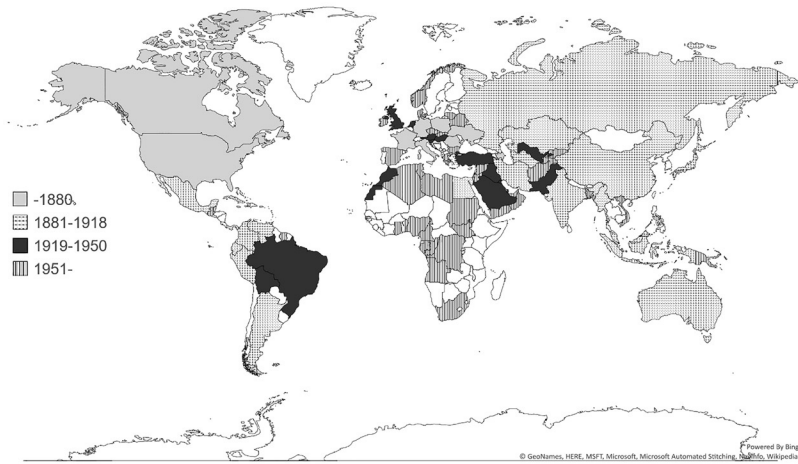


Figure 2.3 Map of oil producers by the year of the first production
 Source: Päivi Lujala, Jan Ketil Rod, and Nadja Thieme, “Fighting over Oil: Introducing a New Dataset,” *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 24, no. 3 (2007): 239–56, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07388940701468526>.

a result, that decade saw successive oil concessions across the region. By the 1940s, a significant number of new sources of oil had been located in Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Qatar.

Although oil production began and developed during the interwar period in various colonies and countries in Latin America, Asia, and the Middle East, there was one region where oil production lagged until the 1950s: Africa. The African continent became the new frontier of the oil industry in the post–World War II period. Oil companies competed with each other to obtain concessions, and oil production started in Angola in 1956, Gabon in 1957, Algeria in 1958, and Libya in 1961.

In sum, the history of the oil industry began in the latter half of the nineteenth century in North America and Europe and then spread to Southeast Asia and Latin America. In the interwar period, oil production began in the Middle East, and more oil fields were found and exploited in existing oil-producing regions. In the 1950s and 1960s, the oil industry reached Africa. Figure 2.3 visualizes this history. Most of the countries in which oil production began before 1880 are in Europe and North America. Those that started producing oil

around the turn of the century are concentrated in Asia and Latin America. Production in much of the Arabian Peninsula began by the 1940s, while most producers in Africa began their production in the 1950s or later.

Overlap between the Two Histories

How do the history of sovereign states and that of oil production overlap? Table 2.1 offers an answer. It lists major postcolonial oil-rich countries for each geographical region. The numbers in the first column denote the country's rank in the total production of petroleum

Table 2.1 *Oil production and independence in major oil-producing postcolonial states.*

Ranking	Country	First oil production	Independence	Time difference
Latin America and the Caribbean				
9	Brazil	1940	1822	118
11	Venezuela	1917	1811	106
12	Mexico	1901	1810	91
19	Colombia	1918	1810	108
27	Argentina	1907	1816	91
28	Ecuador	1917	1809	108
40	Peru	1883	1821	62
47	Trinidad and Tobago	1908	1962	-54
54	Bolivia	1925	1825	100
Middle East and North Africa				
2	Saudi Arabia	1938	1932	6
6	Iraq	1934	1932	2
7	United Arab Emirates	1962	1971	-9
10	Kuwait	1946	1961	-15
14	Qatar	1949	1971	-22
17	Algeria	1958	1962	-4
22	Oman	1967	1970	-3
26	Egypt	1910	1922	-12
30	Libya	1961	1951	10
56	Bahrain	1933	1971	-38

Table 2.1 (*cont.*)

Ranking	Country	First oil production	Independence	Time difference
Sub-Saharan Africa				
13	Nigeria	1958	1960	-2
16	Angola	1956	1975	-19
34	Equatorial Guinea	1992	1968	24
35	Congo – Brazzaville	1957	1960	-3
36	Gabon	1957	1960	-3
43	South Africa	1992	1931	61
45	Chad	1975	1960	15
46	Sudan	1992	1956	36
48	Ghana	1978	1957	21
50	Cameroon	1978	1960	18
Southeast Asia				
23	Indonesia	1885	1945	-60
25	Malaysia	1913	1963	-50
32	Vietnam	1986	1945	41
44	Brunei	1929	1984	-55
57	East Timor	2004	2002	2

The ranking is from “Total petroleum and other liquids production,” U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA), accessed December 9, 2020, www.eia.gov/international/overview/world. The year of oil production is taken from the Petroleum Dataset mentioned earlier.

and other liquids in 2017. The third and fourth columns refer to the year of first oil production and independence, respectively. The fifth column provides the number of years between independence and the first oil production. A positive number means that independence preceded the first oil production, while a negative number indicates that oil production began during the colonial era.

Although there is some variation, the table reveals a pattern for each region. In Latin America, oil production began around 100 years after independence, largely because most Latin American countries achieved independence in the early nineteenth century, while oil production, in general, started only in the late nineteenth

or early twentieth centuries.³⁰ In Africa, oil production began at roughly the same time as independence, or the latter preceded the former by a few decades. The oil industry started exploiting African oil fields only after World War II, and there were some new discoveries in the last quarter of the twentieth century.³¹ In the remaining two regions, the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and Southeast Asia, oil production began significantly earlier than sovereignty, especially in the Gulf and maritime Southeast Asia. At least fifty years passed between the first oil production in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Brunei and their independence, while countries such as Bahrain, Qatar, and Kuwait began oil production around twenty years before their independence.

What is important here is that in cases where oil production started significantly earlier than independence, oil production may have affected the local colonial politics, eventually influencing the territorial form of the postcolonial state, whereas it is logically impossible in countries where independence preceded oil production. This possibility is especially likely in the Gulf and maritime Southeast Asia, where I focus my empirical analysis. Oil production during the colonial period, together with the protectorate system, affected territorial sovereignty in a particular way, leading to the separate independence of oil-rich colonial areas.

Theory of Separate Independence

Small or Large?

As I mentioned in Chapter 1, decolonization did not always mean a simple transition from colonial entities to sovereign states. If it had, there would be an independent Sikkim, Aden, Buganda, and Johor, along with numerous others. The era of decolonization was also an era of amalgamation, during which colonial areas frequently became

³⁰ One exception is Trinidad and Tobago, which became independent much later than most Latin American states, while the beginning of oil production there happened in approximately the same period.

³¹ Angola seems exceptional because its independence came later than that of others since the Portuguese withdrew from their colonies later than did other colonial powers. See Ricardo Soares de Oliveira, *Magnificent and Beggar Land: Angola since the Civil War* (London: Hurst, 2013) on the politics of oil in Angola.

integrated into a larger state, and it was difficult for many areas to resist that transformation.

The collapse of imperialism forced many colonial areas to stand at the crossroads between two alternatives: become independent as a separate sovereign state or become part of a larger state.³² Although the first option allows more autonomy, it also renders the newly independent state more vulnerable to foreign aggression or financial hardship. On the other hand, although the second option creates a larger and usually more powerful state, the constituent units lose their independent status and autonomy.

Because the metropole was skeptical about letting small colonial areas become independent, it tended to prefer the latter option and actively pursued the formation of federations.³³ Neighboring countries, on the other hand, sometimes tried to annex colonial territories rather than allowing them to become independent states. Christopher summarizes the interests of both colonial powers and neighbors:

Given the pressures to effect rapid decolonisation, the colonial powers occasionally sought to amalgamate existing colonies to produce larger, and therefore nominally more politically and economically viable entities. In other cases, powerful neighbours prevented decolonisation from becoming independence, through the transfer of territory and its annexation, either by threat or direct act.³⁴

Although the policy of preventing small colonial areas from becoming independent began to change later, creating a viable state through merger before granting statehood was a common practice for several decades after the end of World War II.³⁵

³² William H. Riker, *The Development of American Federalism* (Boston, MA; Lancaster: Kluwer, 1987), 8–9.

³³ One may think that the metropole could also prefer the formation of smaller states for the sake of “divide and rule” because smaller states are easier to manipulate. In fact, it was the case, for example, in Britain’s policy of deterring Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Iraq from annexing smaller sheikhdoms in the Gulf; the British feared the formation of strong regional powers. However, for those that were included in merger projects, creating a state that was too large was not the metropole’s concern. On the contrary, its concern was to create a state that was too small, and therefore, it preferred amalgamation for the stability of its spheres of influence.

³⁴ Christopher, “Decolonisation without Independence,” 215.

³⁵ Christopher, 220.

Because of the preferences of the metropole and neighboring states, the first option was not always available to all colonial areas. Therefore, separate independence became more of an exception than the norm. However, even among those proposed to be included in a merger, some colonial areas did achieve statehood separately.

Conditions for Separate Independence

What do colonial areas need to become independent separately? The literature on the determinants of state size helps answer this question.³⁶ Alesina and Spolaore argue that in a choice between small and large, there is a fundamental trade-off between “the benefits of size and the costs of heterogeneity of preferences over public goods and policies provided by government.”³⁷

They list five advantages that larger countries enjoy: lower per capita cost of public goods, better protection from foreign aggression, a larger economy, interregional support, and internal redistributive schemes. Theoretically, these advantages could lead to a world governed by a single government, but such has not been the case because there is also a cost of being large: Larger countries have more diverse preferences. As the state grows in size, it becomes increasingly difficult to please all citizens. There are inevitably more people who are dissatisfied with the central government’s policies. They may eventually consider breaking up the country and forming a smaller state on their own.³⁸

Whether the benefits of state size outweigh the costs depends on several political and economic factors.³⁹ First, security is of the utmost

³⁶ Alberto Alesina and Enrico Spolaore, *The Size of Nations* (Cambridge, MA; London: MIT Press, 2003); Enrico Spolaore and Alberto Alesina, “War, Peace, and the Size of Countries,” *Journal of Public Economics* 89, no. 7 (2005): 1333–54, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpubeco.2003.07.013>; David A. Lake and Angela O’Mahony, “The Incredible Shrinking State: Explaining Change in the Territorial Size of Countries,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 48, no. 5 (2004): 699–722, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002704267766>; Chad Rector, *Federations: The Political Dynamics of Cooperation* (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 2009); Riker, *The Development of American Federalism*; Daniel Ziblatt, *Structuring the State: The Formation of Italy and Germany and the Puzzle of Federalism* (Princeton, NJ; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2006).

³⁷ Alesina and Spolaore, *The Size of Nations*, 3. ³⁸ Alesina and Spolaore, 4.

³⁹ For a review of relevant literature and a discussion of these factors, see Lake and O’Mahony, “The Incredible Shrinking State.”

importance. Riker argues in his study of federations that it is “the” reason why larger entities are preferable to smaller units.⁴⁰ Other empirical studies also suggest that the degree of international conflict is positively correlated with state size.⁴¹ In a friendly security environment, small states thrive, while those with serious security concerns tend to choose to be a part of larger entities. Another important factor is international economic openness. While in a world of protectionism and autarky, larger states fare better because they have large markets, the size of the country becomes less important in conditions of free trade because state borders do not delimit the market.⁴²

Based on these considerations and adding factors specific to colonial areas, I assume that colonial areas facing pressure for amalgamation need to meet three criteria to achieve separate independence: (1) material and political incentive, (2) perceived viability as a sovereign state, which includes both financial self-sufficiency and security, and (3) bargaining power vis-à-vis the colonizers. First, because a larger state generally brings a variety of benefits and the metropole and sometimes neighboring states promote a merger, the colonial area needs to have a compelling reason to pursue separate independence. Such reasons include both material (i.e., separate independence brings more economic benefits) and political (i.e., a separate entity can better serve the political preferences of the leaders of the colonial area) incentives. Separate independence must offer benefits that can offset and outweigh the benefits of the economies of scale that the colonial area can otherwise achieve through a merger.

Second, independence must be feasible. Maintaining a sovereign state requires sufficient financial resources and a friendly security environment. Contemporary policymakers, in general, assumed that without these conditions, small colonial areas could easily become bankrupt or be invaded by aggressors, thus failing to maintain independence.⁴³ This concern was especially strong in the context of the Cold War; Western colonial powers feared that their colonies might fall into the hands of communists.⁴⁴ The colonial area, therefore, needs to find sources of revenue and security on its own or with the support of an outside power.

⁴⁰ Riker, *The Development of American Federalism*.

⁴¹ Spolaore and Alesina, “War, Peace, and the Size of Countries.”

⁴² Alesina and Spolaore, *The Size of Nations*, chap. 6.

⁴³ McIntyre, “The Admission of Small States to the Commonwealth.”

⁴⁴ Matthew Jones, *Conflict and Confrontation in South East Asia, 1961–1965: Britain, the United States and the Creation of Malaysia* (Cambridge: Cambridge

Because viability cannot be known *ex-ante*, it is viability perceived by relevant actors including the ruler, the metropole, and neighboring states.

Third, colonial areas need to have a say in their future and sufficient bargaining power to induce the colonizers to agree to separate independence. Because the metropole usually preferred creating a larger entity, it was difficult to obtain its consent for individual areas to achieve separate statehood. Therefore, the colonial area must have the power to persuade the colonizers. Without the consent of the metropole, independence had to be achieved through armed struggle, but those included in postcolonial merger projects could not usually mount a credible armed challenge to the colonizing power in the first place. As Coggins shows, recognition is crucial, and having “friends in high places” rather than enemies is key to achieving independence.⁴⁵

How Oil and the Protectorate System Change the Calculation

My explanation is that oil-rich protectorates meet all three criteria outlined earlier and thus achieve separate independence because, in a nutshell, oil and the protectorate system offset the benefits of the economies of scale and minimize the cost of being small. First, with regard to the incentive, there are two ways in which oil produces the incentive for separate statehood. Because the oil industry is capital-intensive and global by nature (i.e., oil can be easily exported abroad using pipelines and tankers), oil-producing areas do not need a large population or domestic market and have fewer concerns about economies of scale. On the contrary, they have reasons to avoid forming a larger entity because the size of the country is negatively correlated with the amount of oil revenue they receive. In addition to this direct effect of oil revenues, there is also an indirect effect. A long history of oil production leads to socioeconomic development, which in turn creates the perception that the colonial area is more developed than its neighbors, making it avoid a merger with less developed territories. The relative size of these effects depends on case-specific factors.

University Press, 2002); Jeffrey R. Macris, *The Politics and Security of the Gulf: Anglo-American Hegemony and the Shaping of a Region* (London; New York: Routledge, 2010).

⁴⁵ Bridget Coggins, “Friends in High Places: International Politics and the Emergence of States from Secessionism,” *International Organization* 65, no. 3 (2011): 433–67, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818311000105>.

The protectorate system also creates a political incentive. Under the protectorate system, the local ruler enjoyed extensive domestic power thanks to the protection offered by the metropole. If the colonial area joins a larger entity, the ruler's political authority diminishes, as he would become merely one of several rulers in the new state, and those facing the pressure to join a larger entity are not the most powerful in the first place. Therefore, they have a strong incentive to maintain the status quo. They prefer staying in power in their territory to losing their status in a larger entity, so they oppose joining a federation over which they do not exercise control.

Second, oil and the protectorate system also enhance the perceived viability of the colonial area. As with the incentive, oil production operates in two ways. Large oil revenues help achieve financial self-sufficiency, and socioeconomic development through a long history of oil production also contributes to a perception that the colonial area can be self-sufficient. In terms of security, the protectorate system obliges the colonizers to offer protection to the colonial area. As Lindley points out, “[t]he necessary and sufficient condition for the setting up of a protectorate is the conclusion of an agreement with the local independent government or chief by which the external relations of the district to be protected are placed in the hands of the protecting Power.”⁴⁶

Based on this existing arrangement, oil strengthens the ties and enhances the colonial area's chances of survival. Because oil is vital for modern states, the colonizers and their allies need to guarantee the security of oil-exporting areas.⁴⁷ As Kim points out, oil can work as “a security asset that helps oil states reduce security burdens and as a security cooperation facilitator.”⁴⁸ Therefore, they remove threats to the colonial area posed primarily by regional powers. As a result, even if the colonial area is unable to protect itself, it can rely on outside

⁴⁶ Lindley, *The Acquisition and Government of Backward Territory in International Law*.

⁴⁷ F. Gregory Gause, “‘Hegemony’ Compared: Great Britain and the United States in the Middle East,” *Security Studies* 28, no. 3 (2019): 565–87, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09636412.2019.1604987>; Gholz and Press, “Protecting ‘The Prize’”; Rovner and Talmadge, “Hegemony, Force Posture, and the Provision of Public Goods”; Roger J. Stern, “Oil Scarcity Ideology in US Foreign Policy, 1908–97,” *Security Studies* 25, no. 2 (2016): 214–57, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09636412.2016.1171967>.

⁴⁸ Kim, “A Crude Bargain,” 835.

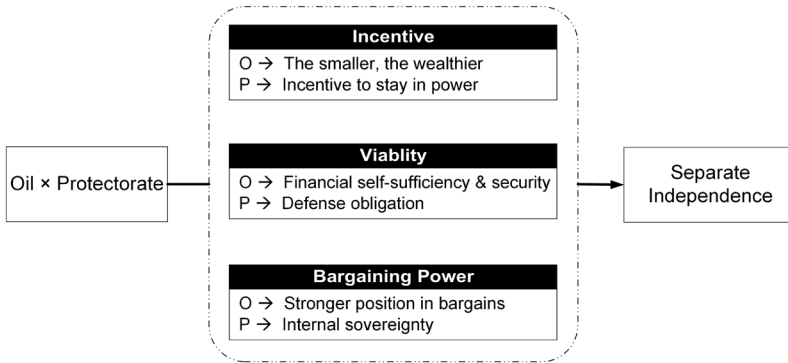


Figure 2.4 Causal mechanisms of separate independence

powers to ensure its safety. This removes security concerns, which are usually the largest obstacle to forming small countries.

Third, the same factors enhance the bargaining power of the oil-rich colonial area. The importance of its oil to the metropole places it in a stronger position in the process of decolonization, and a higher level of development becomes a reason to justify separate independence. Although the colonizers have to withdraw from their dependencies, they are still in need of a continued supply of oil. Therefore, maintaining a friendly relationship with oil producers is important to the metropole, which tends to create more room for them to negotiate their treatment in the decolonization process. However, this does not mean that all oil-producing areas can achieve sovereignty. When the colonizers can dictate the future of the colonial area, the presence of oil does not give it an advantage. Oil-producing areas must have a say in the decolonization outcome. When colonizers rule through the preexisting political structure and the local ruler has legitimacy and authority to govern, the colonial area meets this criterion. As Alexandrowicz notes, the status of a protectorate means “a split of sovereignty and its purpose is to vest in the Protector rights of external sovereignty while leaving rights of internal sovereignty in the protected entity.”⁴⁹ As such, the ruler retains internal sovereignty, and the metropole must listen to local rulers in decolonizing these areas. In short, the two factors alter the patron–client relationship between the colonizers and the ruler in favor of the latter. Figure 2.4 visualizes these causal mechanisms.

⁴⁹ Alexandrowicz, *The European-African Confrontation*, 62.



Figure 2.5 Timeline of separate independence

One may wonder whether the two explanatory variables are independent of each other. They are not; they are intertwined. Oil production strengthens colonial ties, and its export to Europe enriches the colonial rulers because of those ties. However, one is not a mere product of the other. Oil production does not create the protectorate system, which comes before the production of oil in cases of separate independence. The colonizers begin their administration without the knowledge of the presence of oil. Neither does the protectorate system produce oil. Geological, not political, conditions produce oil in these colonial areas. The two conditions cannot be reduced to one.

For these mechanisms to produce separate independence, colonization must occur during the period in which the colonizers preferred an indirect system of rule in less attractive places and the discovery of oil must happen after colonization. The beginning of the “New Imperialism,” colonization, oil discovery, and decolonization must occur in this order (Figure 2.5). Separate independence is a historically contingent process, in which timing is crucial, although it is not limited to specific geographical areas.

My explanation may look similar to the existing discussion on oil-led secessionism. Indeed, the literature on the “resource curse” is somewhat useful in understanding the impact of oil on separate independence. In the civil war branch of this literature, scholars have shown that natural resources, especially oil, increase the likelihood of secessionism, namely the pursuit of independence by sub-state regions.⁵⁰ This is particularly evident when an area inhabited

⁵⁰ Aspinall, “The Construction of Grievance”; Basedau and Richter, “Why Do Some Oil Exporters Experience Civil War but Others Do Not?: Investigating the Conditional Effects of Oil”; Hunziker and Cederman, “No Extraction without Representation”; Morelli and Rohner, “Resource Concentration and Civil Wars.”

by excluded ethnic minority groups produces oil. Local elites in the producing region develop grievances over rent distribution and gain support by emphasizing how rich they can be if they gain full control of oil revenues. For example, separatists in Aceh commonly claimed that Aceh would be as wealthy as Brunei if they were to become independent, creating the motive to pursue secession.⁵¹

Although this can also partly explain the incentive of oil-producing protectorates to pursue separate independence, studies on oil-led secessionism do not get us very far. This is primarily because they focus exclusively on separatism from existing sovereign states, assuming that there is already a host sovereign state from which a region seeks independence.⁵² This book, in contrast, concerns decolonization. Existing studies omit decolonization either because the time frame of their analysis is limited to the post-Cold War period or because the dataset they employ only covers existing sovereign states. It is problematic for the purpose of this book because decolonization is distinct from secession in that colonial areas were not technically “part of” an existing sovereign state.⁵³ In addition, the political phenomenon existing studies investigate is secessionism rather than actual secession, which is almost never successful in the postwar world because of the territorial integrity norm,⁵⁴ whereas this book looks at successful cases of separate independence. In other words, studies on secessionism examine what leads to a movement for independence, while this book studies what leads to independence itself. Therefore, my theory builds on insights from these studies but departs from them.

⁵¹ Aspinall, “The Construction of Grievance,” 955.

⁵² Within the broader literature on resource curse, there are a few exceptions to this that look at oil and historical state formation, which I engage with in empirical chapters. Naosuke Mukoyama, “Colonial Origins of the Resource Curse: Endogenous Sovereignty and Authoritarianism in Brunei,” *Democratization* 27, no. 2 (2020): 224–42, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2019.1678591>; Naosuke Mukoyama, “Colonial Oil and State-Making: The Separate Independence of Qatar and Bahrain,” *Comparative Politics* 55, no. 4 (2023): 573–95, <https://doi.org/10.5129/001041523X16801041950603>; David Waldner and Benjamin Smith, “Survivorship Bias in Comparative Politics: Endogenous Sovereignty and the Resource Curse,” *Perspectives on Politics* 19, no. 3 (2021): 890–905, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592720003497>.

⁵³ Pavković and Radan, “What Is Secession?”; Goertz, Diehl, and Balas, “Managing New States.”

⁵⁴ Goertz, Diehl, and Balas, “Managing New States” suggest that there has been a strong positive norm for decolonization and a strong negative norm against secession in the postwar international community.

Scope Condition

This theory applies to colonial areas that faced the pressure to amalgamate with their neighbors to create a larger state. This means that cases with no such pressure are excluded from the universe of cases. Therefore, the mere existence of colonial areas that became independent separately without either of these two conditions does not disconfirm my theory if there were no merger projects in place. This theory also does not include colonial areas that exerted pressure on others to join a state that it would lead rather than one which it was being pressured to join. Therefore, Ras al-Khaimah and Sarawak, for instance, are included, but Abu Dhabi and Malaya are not.

For the cases included in the scope of this theory, the combination of oil and the protectorate system leads to separate independence. However, I do not claim that this is the only way to achieve separate independence; my theory allows other pathways to the outcome. Although their combination can, neither of the two factors can explain the outcome individually. There are protectorates that did not achieve separate independence. Likewise, oil production did not necessarily lead to separate independence. If it had, thousands of oil-rich micro-states just like Brunei would exist all over the world. Therefore, this causal path requires both of the two factors.⁵⁵

It is important to note that the theory of separate independence travels beyond the three positive cases I closely examine, namely Brunei, Qatar, and Bahrain. Readers may initially find my theory applicable to only a small number of cases. In fact, I do not find other cases in which the same mechanism led to separate independence except for Kuwait. However, this does not undermine the value of this theory for three reasons.

First, rare does not mean unimportant. Rare phenomena are sometimes of utmost importance for political scientists and international relations scholars. Skocpol's classic study of revolution provides an example. Revolutions, or at least what she calls "social revolutions,"

⁵⁵ These conditions are called INUS conditions, which are insufficient but necessary parts of an unnecessary but sufficient condition. See the following on INUS conditions: Goertz and Mahoney, *A Tale of Two Cultures: Qualitative and Quantitative Research in the Social Sciences*; Charles C. Ragin, *Redesigning Social Inquiry: Fuzzy Sets and Beyond* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

are rare; she studies only the three positive cases of France, Russia, and China. She notes that “[t]he study of social revolutions in their own right has been avoided in recent American social science because scholars believe that only phenomena of which there are a large number of cases can be studied in a truly scientific manner.”⁵⁶ However, Skocpol argues that by using comparative historical analysis, which I also employ in this book, one can develop explanations of revolutions that are “generalizable across cases and historically sensitive,” and goes on to state that “there is no inescapable requirement to formulate explanatory hypotheses only about categories with large numbers of cases.”⁵⁷

Second, studying only three positive cases is not the same as studying only three cases. Just as Skocpol compared her positive cases with England, Japan, and Prussia, I compare the positive case of Brunei with the negative cases of Sarawak, North Borneo, and Dutch Borneo, and the positive cases of Qatar and Bahrain with other sheikhdoms in the region. Moreover, my theory can be applied to those included in various federation projects in Central Africa, the West Indies, and South Arabia, among others. Although the number of positive cases is small, there are many more negative cases, which the theory also explains.

Third, being rare is important in its own right in my theory. Showing the importance of the interaction between oil and colonial politics to state formation is this book’s contribution to the study of the politics of natural resources and state formation. Only a limited number of colonial areas managed to go through the small window of sovereignty. The majority could have but did not make it. By focusing on deviant cases, I identify a unique historical causal mechanism leading to the creation of new states, and by outlining this causal process, I also offer a new way to understand other cases and shed light on counterfactual cases in history that we cannot observe and have thus failed to recognize.

It is also true that all three cases of separate independence examined in this book are within former British spheres of influence. This fact is neither arbitrary nor a coincidence. There are significant reasons why all are former British colonial areas. A large part of the explanation is

⁵⁶ Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 33.

⁵⁷ Skocpol, 35.

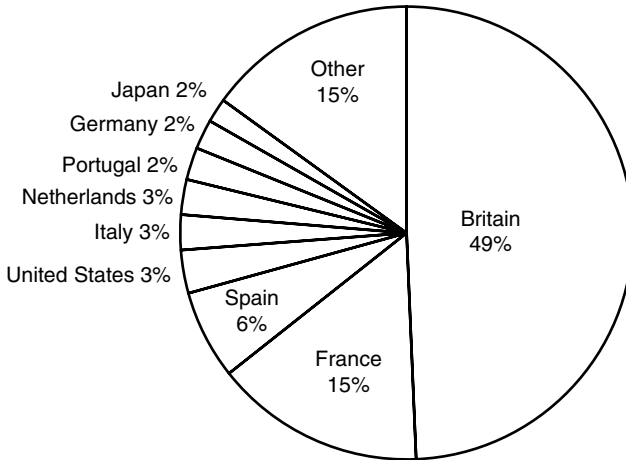


Figure 2.6 Ratio of colonial areas by the colonizing power
 Source: Correlates of War Project, Colonial Contiguity Data, 1816–2016 (Version 3.1).

that the British Empire was by far the largest in the world; nearly half of all colonial areas were controlled by Britain (Figure 2.6). The next-largest colonial empire, that of France, was less than a third of the size of the British Empire. Because of the British Empire’s unparalleled size, it is not surprising that these cases were British colonial areas.

In addition, this also presumably reflects different strategies among colonial powers. That is, the second condition of my theoretical framework, the protectorate system, was more likely to be met in a British colonial area than in those of other empires. Britain frequently employed the protectorate system, especially in less important colonial possessions, while other empires such as France, preferred direct rule.⁵⁸ The Spanish and Dutch empires were more similar to the French than to the British. Therefore, British colonial areas were more likely to meet the second condition for separate independence.

The fact that all three were former British colonial areas does not mean the theory is exclusively about the British Empire. Rather, the style of colonial administration is incorporated into its framework. The French or Dutch colonies are not outside of the scope condition

⁵⁸ See Carl Müller-Crepon, “Continuity or Change? (In)Direct Rule in British and French Colonial Africa,” *International Organization* 74, no. 4 (2020): 707–41, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818320000211> on this point.

of this theory but are included in the universe of cases of my theory as negative cases. There are no positive cases under French or Dutch rule not because I exclude them from my sample but because one of the causal variables is likely to be absent in these cases.

To reiterate, this theory does not explain the formation of all states, all formerly colonized states, or all small states. By focusing on the impact of the colonial politics of oil, this book seeks to explain one causal path leading to separate independence. Although this may not cover all cases of separate independence, it undoubtedly includes an important subset and also potentially has implications for other cases.

Alternative Explanations

What other explanations could potentially account for the separate independence of oil-rich protectorates? Although various scholars have investigated issues related to sovereignty and state formation, there are a limited number of studies that can offer an empirical explanation of separate independence. System-level theories, be it Krasner's discussion of "organized hypocrisy,"⁵⁹ Anghie's study of how the concept and norm of sovereignty developed hand in hand with colonialism,⁶⁰ or English School accounts of the formation and expansion of international society,⁶¹ do not provide concrete implications about the questions of this book, as they do not seek to explain the territoriality of states or the process by which states emerged in place of their possible alternatives. In addition, the issue of Eurocentrism plagues the study of state formation much like many other subfields within international relations, making it difficult to find a theory that can simply be applied to non-European states. Those who look at state formation outside Europe tend to focus more on the development of state capacity rather than the political process that created a certain territorial form of states instead of others.⁶²

⁵⁹ Krasner, *Sovereignty: Organized Hypocrisy*.

⁶⁰ Anghie, *Imperialism, Sovereignty, and the Making of International Law*.

⁶¹ Hedley Bull and Adam Watson, *The Expansion of International Society* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984); Buzan and Little, *International Systems in World History*; Gerrit W. Gong, *The Standard of "Civilization" in International Society* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984); Mayall, *Nationalism and International Society*.

⁶² Robert H. Bates, *Markets and States in Tropical Africa: The Political Basis of Agricultural Policies* (University of California Press, 1981); Centeno, *Blood*

However, although they do not necessarily address the same research question as this book, existing theories of state formation offer at least two categories of inferred alternative explanations: I term them internal and external explanations. Internal explanations emphasize local politics. They contend that state formation is an organic, autonomous process. One example is those that emphasize the rise of nationalism. Print capitalism or industrialization formed a national identity, and local political actors, through nationalistic and anti-colonial political mobilization, sought and gained independence.⁶³ This type of theory implies that some colonial areas achieved separate independence because they had a distinct national identity, while others failed to do so because their national identity was not sufficiently distinct from that of neighboring regions.

Some theories on the process of European state formation can also offer some potential explanations. Tilly and Spruyt view state formation as a process not dissimilar to “natural selection,” in which different states compete with each other and only the fittest entities survive, although they differ in the explanatory factor they emphasize.⁶⁴ Tilly emphasizes the role of war-making in the formation of the state. To wage war, state leaders had to raise enough money and recruit enough soldiers, necessitating more efficient means of extraction. What he calls “national states” were the most successful at these tasks and therefore eventually became the dominant form of state in Europe. On the other hand, Spruyt offers an institutionalist account, arguing that economic growth and the expansion of trade in the Middle Ages were key developments. Among different types of post-feudal institutions, the sovereign territorial state was best suited to extracting resources and maintaining stable foreign relations, and it spread across Europe through imitation and the delegitimization of other institutions. These

and Debt; Herbst, “War and the State in Africa”; Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1968); Atul Kohli, *State-Directed Development: Political Power and Industrialization in the Global Periphery* (Cambridge University Press, 2004); Joel S. Migdal, *Strong Societies and Weak States: State-Society Relations and State Capabilities in the Third World* (Princeton University Press, 1988).

⁶³ Benedict R. O’G Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983); Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 1983).

⁶⁴ Spruyt, *The Sovereign State and Its Competitors*; Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States*.

views imply that oil-rich colonial areas became independent separately because they succeeded in building a strong state that managed to remain independent of foreign actors.

By contrast, external explanations maintain that international politics determined state formation in former colonies. Decolonization occurred when colonizers, great powers, or regional powers, intentionally or unintentionally, allowed it to happen. Therefore, outside powers also determined the territorial scope of new sovereign states. For instance, Chong studies the case of China, Indonesia, and Thailand to argue that state formation in non-European polities occur when rival outside actors expect high opportunity cost for intervention.⁶⁵ Similarly, Hager and Lake maintain that state formation often resulted from a policy of “competitive decolonization” in which colonial powers support independence for colonies of their rivals.⁶⁶ In her analysis of French colonies, Lawrence contends that movements for national independence occurred only when reform was rejected by the metropole and was triggered by a disruption of imperial authority.⁶⁷ Spruyt compares different European empires to explain variations in the decolonization process and argues that the degree of fragmentation (i.e., number of veto players) in the decision-making process in the metropole is positively associated with resistance to decolonization.⁶⁸ It would follow from these studies that some oil-rich colonial areas achieved separate independence because of the policy of external powers.

I argue that separate independence was an outcome of neither an entirely internal nor an entirely external process, but rather of an interaction between different mechanisms including the two. First, it is true that those areas that achieved separate independence had a separate national identity at the time of decolonization, and this nationalism contributed to the outcome. They also succeeded in proving that they could afford sovereignty. However, their national identity and perceived viability were formed not solely internally but also through interactions

⁶⁵ Ja Ian Chong, *External Intervention and the Politics of State Formation: China, Indonesia, and Thailand, 1893–1952* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

⁶⁶ Robert P. Hager and David A. Lake, “Balancing Empires: Competitive Decolonization in International Politics,” *Security Studies* 9, no. 3 (2000): 108–48, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09636410008429407>.

⁶⁷ Adria Lawrence, *Imperial Rule and the Politics of Nationalism: Anti-Colonial Protest in the French Empire* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

⁶⁸ Spruyt, *Ending Empire*.

with the colonizers. As for identity, the colonizers recognized or sometimes set the boundaries of the colonial unit and by doing so, they created the borders between different nations. A distinct national identity alone was not sufficient to achieve separate independence; some entities with a strong national identity still failed to become independent. As for perceived viability, successful entities were considered viable in part because the colonizers and their allies ensured that they remained safe.

Second, although the colonizers played an important role in making separate independence possible by providing security and convincing relevant actors, separate independence was never solely their decision or even their preferred outcome. They often favored federation plans and tried their best to implement them. Ultimately, the preferences and bargaining power of the colonial areas enabled separate independence. External theories also fail to explain different outcomes in the same international environment during the same period, as federation projects demonstrate. Local actors had more agency than external explanations assume.⁶⁹ Although I accept that external explanations can account for many cases of decolonization, my cases are those in which colonies rejected the preferred policy of the metropole with a significant agency. Therefore, in a way, my explanation complements rather than challenges external explanations by explaining these anomalous cases that are not covered by the latter.

In Chapters 3 and 4, I contrast my theory with these alternative explanations. How Bornean and Gulf colonial areas would be decolonized remained unknown until it happened. The rulers of Brunei, Qatar, and Bahrain originally intended to join the federation, while some areas that eventually became part of the federation initially opposed the amalgamation. The colonial power, namely Britain, lacked both a clear plan for decolonization and the power to implement their plan forcefully. At least in those cases, state formation was a dynamic process in which local political leaders, the metropole, and other outside powers each played an important role. Separate independence was an unforeseen result of this process, the trajectories of which were significantly affected by oil production and the protectorate system.

⁶⁹ For the agency of local actors in Western colonialism, see Andrew Phillips, "From Global Transformation to Big Bang – A Response to Buzan and Lawson," *International Studies Quarterly* 57, no. 3 (September 2013): 640–42, <https://doi.org/10.1111/isqu.12089>.

Conclusion

The sovereign state system and oil development have distinct histories. The two overlap differently in different parts of the world, and when they intersect in a certain way, the result is separate independence. Colonizers tended to rule areas acquired during the “New Imperialism” through a local ruler whom they supported. In some of these areas, oil production began between colonization and decolonization. It was these colonial areas that achieved independence separately from neighboring regions. Oil production and the protectorate system changed the calculation of the benefits of separate statehood versus integration into a larger state by providing material incentives for separation, making the area more viable as a sovereign state, and augmenting its bargaining power vis-à-vis the metropole.

Contemporaries could not predict the separate independence of Brunei, Qatar, and Bahrain, and the lack thereof in other colonial areas. The British colonizers consistently advocated federations. The rulers of these colonial areas were initially favorable to such plans and participated in negotiations for years to join a federation. For those who read contemporary discussions referring to primary sources, it is never obvious that they became independent separately and others did not.

In his study of European state formation, Tilly writes:

To use twentieth-century strength as the main criterion of effective state formation (as many analysts do) means succumbing to the temptations of teleology, misconceiving the relations among cities, states, capital, and coercion in the European past. We can avoid these pitfalls by following the choices of statemakers, and the consequences of those choices, forward from an early date – here set arbitrarily at AD 990 – to the present.⁷⁰

In the following chapters, I follow this “forward-looking strategy” and start my investigation of cases on the island of Borneo and in the Gulf from the beginning of the colonial period, rather than treating contemporary statehood as a given result. In doing so, I show how separate independence occurred when “several distinctly different futures were possible.”⁷¹

⁷⁰ Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States*, 32. ⁷¹ Tilly, 33.