

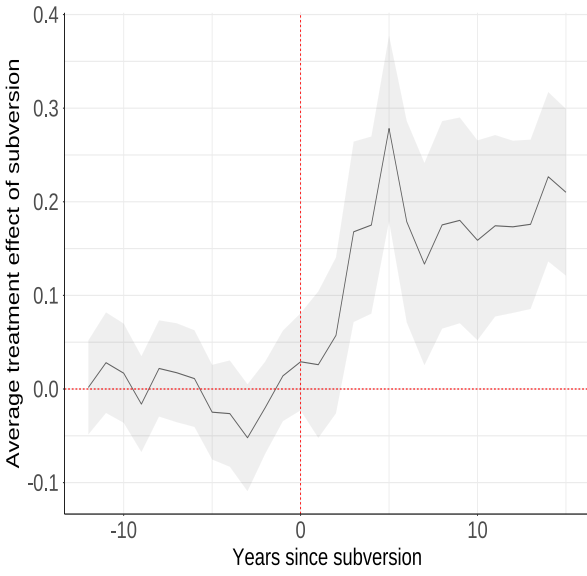
# A Supplementary materials

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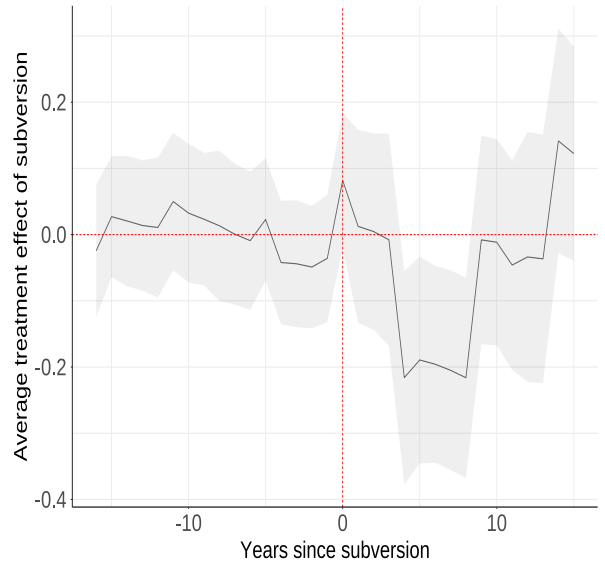
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## A.1 GSC model including only regimes relying on low or no foreign support

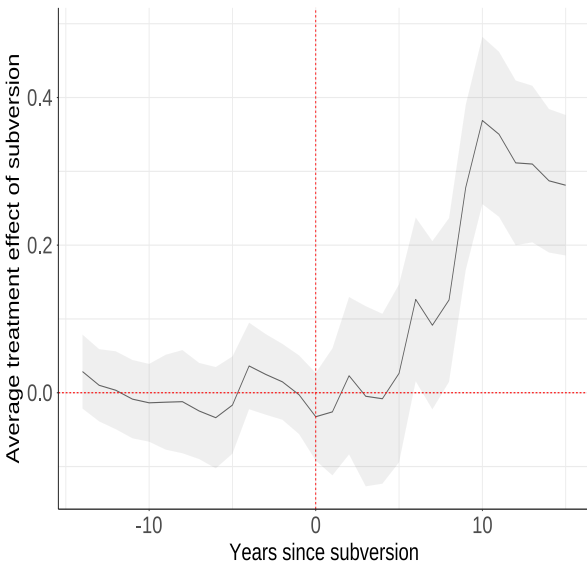
Figures [A1-A4](#) show our baseline model excluding all treated cases that rely on a foreign or colonial power as regime support group, as coded in the V-Dem “regime support groups” variable. A group is defined as support group if its withdrawal of backing would substantially increase the chance that the regime loses power. While V-Dem coders enter this as a binary variable, the dataset contains a cross-coder mean ranging from 0 (no support) to 1 (support). We use 0.33 as a conservative cut-off; other cut-offs between 0 and 1 do not substantially change results. Core results remain substantially unchanged from the model with all treated cases.



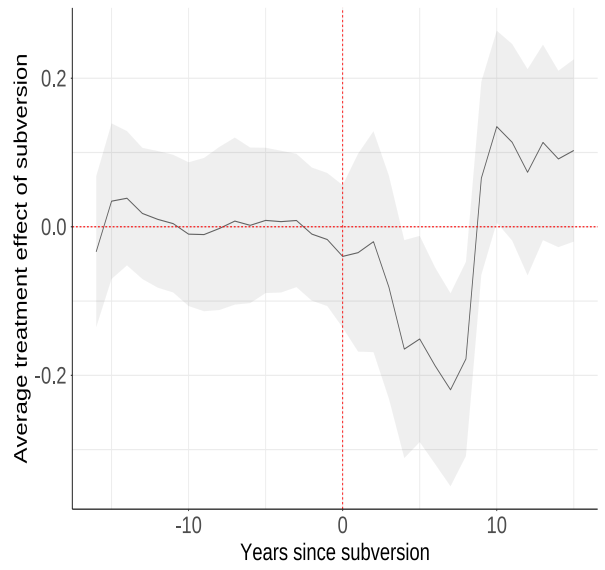
(a) center-seeking subversion, oil countries



(b) separatist subversion, oil countries

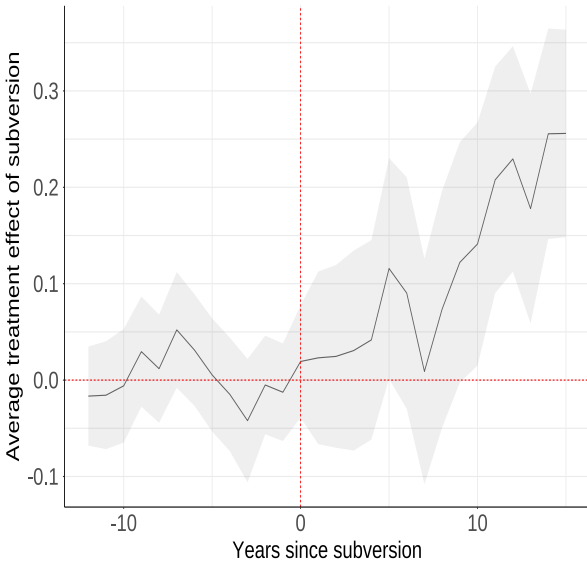


(c) center-seeking subversion, non-oil countries

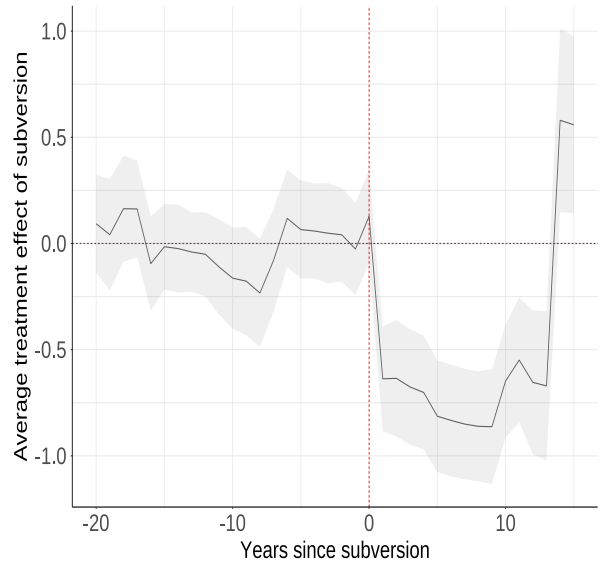


(d) separatist subversion, non-oil countries

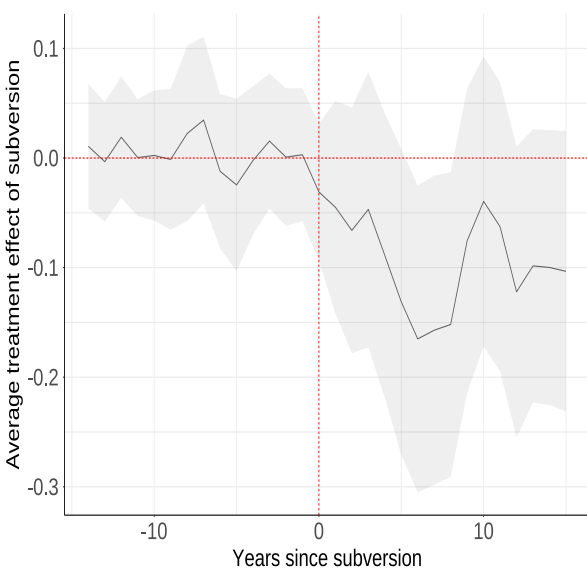
Figure A1: Effect of subversion on health equality (95% confidence intervals)



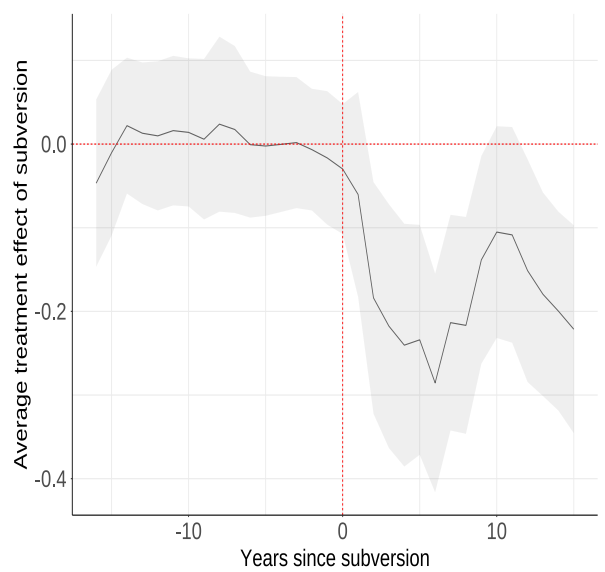
(a) center-seeking subversion, oil countries



(b) separatist subversion, oil countries

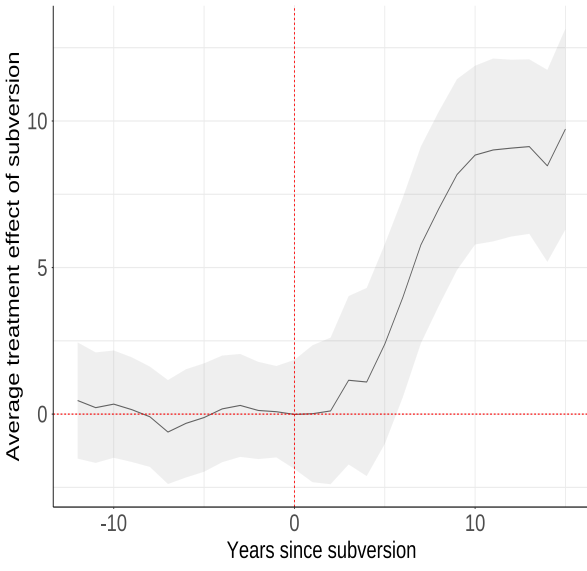


(c) center-seeking subversion, non-oil countries

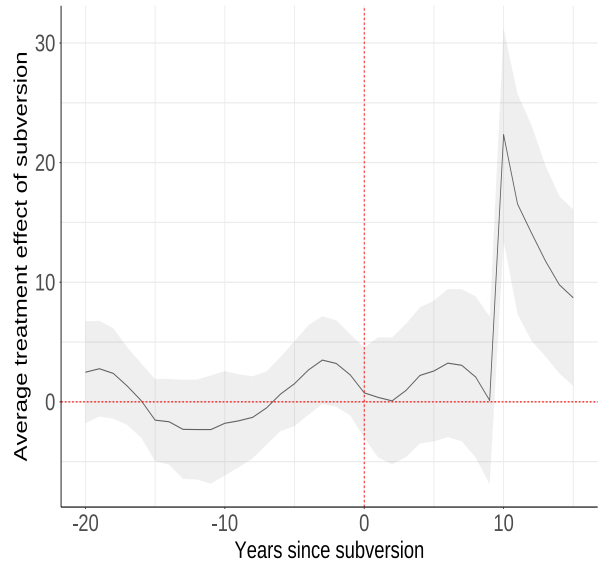


(d) separatist subversion, non-oil countries

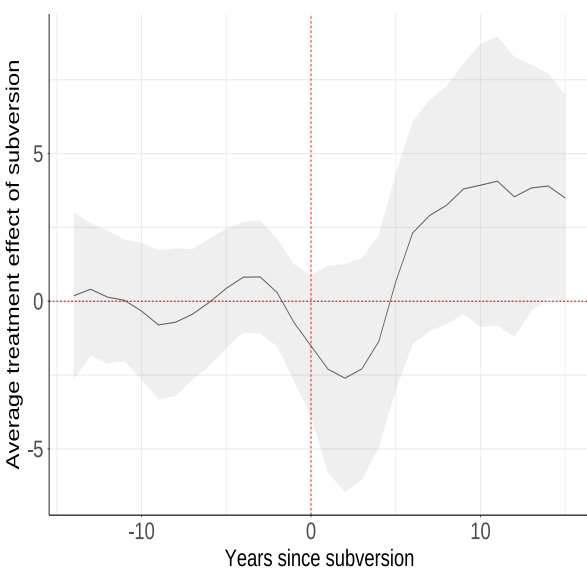
Figure A2: Effect of subversion on education equality (95% confidence intervals)



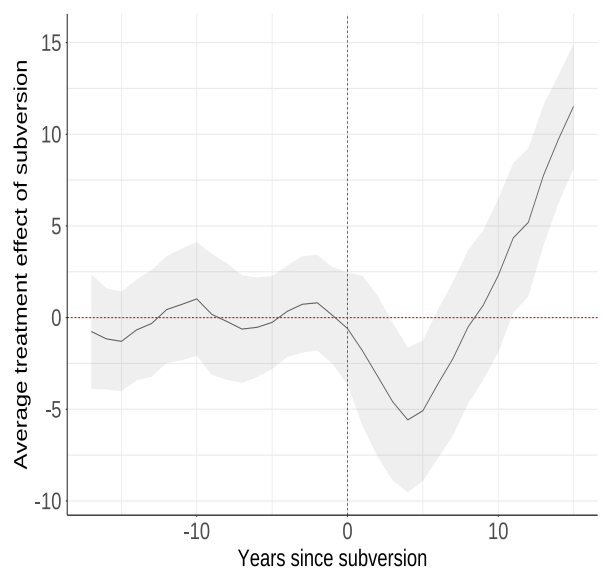
(a) center-seeking subversion, oil countries



(b) separatist subversion, oil countries

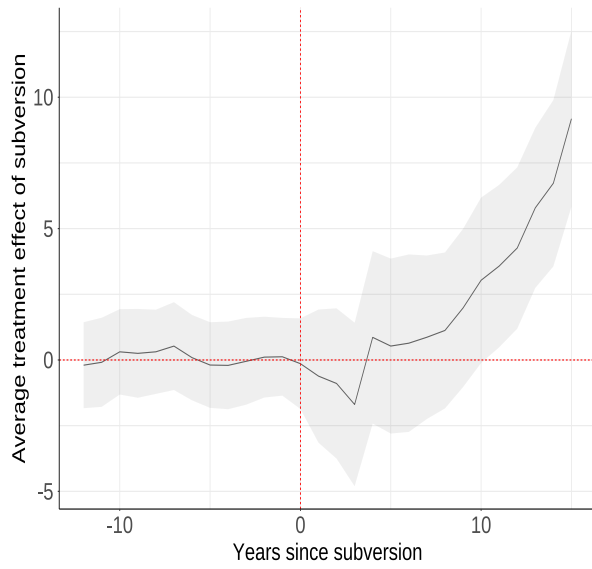


(c) center-seeking subversion, non-oil countries

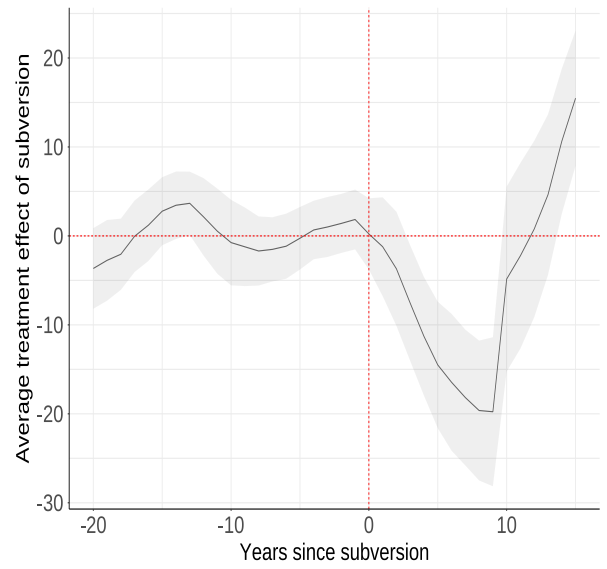


(d) separatist subversion, non-oil countries

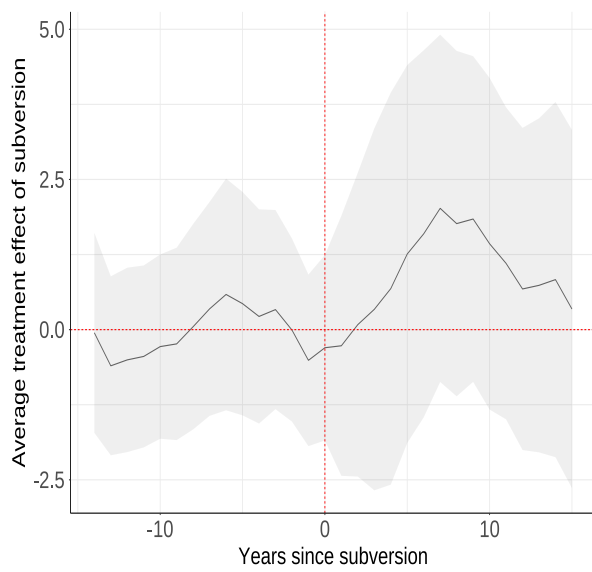
Figure A3: Effect of subversion on primary enrollment (95% confidence intervals)



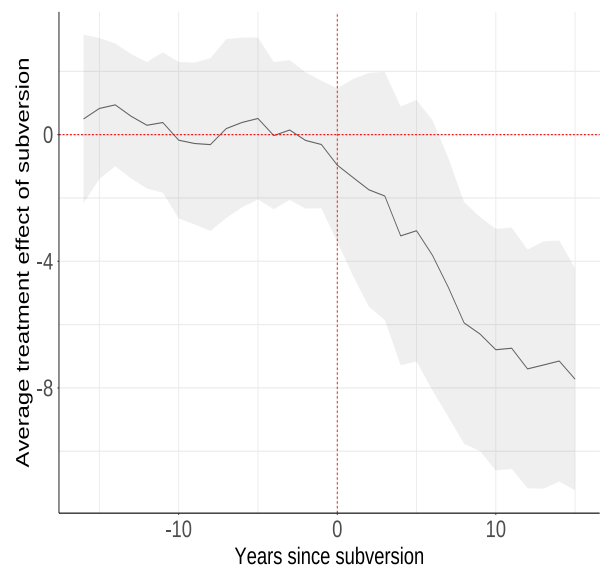
(a) center-seeking subversion, oil countries



(b) separatist subversion, oil countries



(c) center-seeking subversion, non-oil countries



(d) separatist subversion, non-oil countries

Figure A4: Effect of subversion on secondary enrollment (95% confidence intervals)

## A.2 DID model interacting treatment with foreign support

Table [A1](#) and Figures [A5-A8](#) show DID models in which treatments are interacted with a dummy measuring whether the regime in place relies on a foreign power as a support group as per V-Dem’s “regime support groups” variable. This effectively results in triple difference model. Like the GSC models in the previous section, the DID models show that having no foreign support, if anything, strengthens the effects of subversion on welfare provision.<sup>1</sup>

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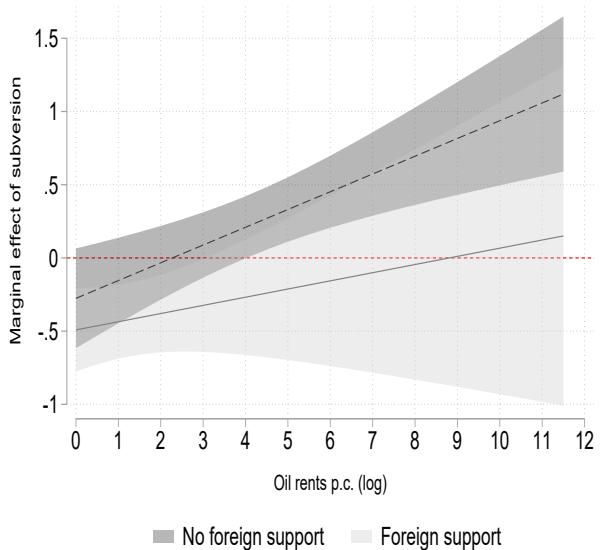
1. The results for separatist subversion in Figure [A7](#) are driven by a single outlying case with very high levels of foreign support. We would caution against over-interpreting these results.

Table A1: Effect of subversion conditioned by oil and foreign support (DID model)

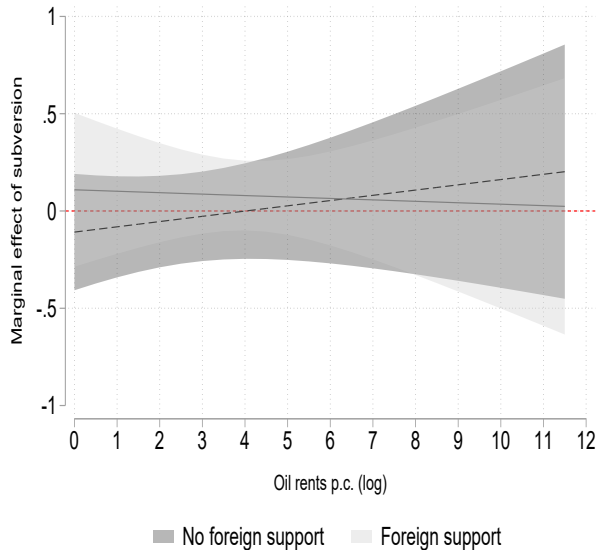
	Center-seeking subversion				Separatist subversion			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
	Health equal.	Education equal.	Prim. enrol.	Second. enrol.	Health equal.	Education equal.	Prim. enrol.	Second. enrol.
Subversion	-0.276 (0.174)	-0.220 (0.188)	5.018 (4.643)	-2.592 (2.640)	-0.108 (0.153)	-0.185** (0.092)	-0.796 (5.843)	-5.402 (3.540)
Oil rents p.c. (log)	0.063*** (0.020)	0.084*** (0.022)	0.025 (1.137)	0.768** (0.382)	0.072*** (0.027)	0.084*** (0.031)	0.954 (0.909)	0.867* (0.442)
Foreign support	-0.096 (0.077)	-0.173** (0.084)	-3.643 (3.663)	0.572 (2.174)	-0.102 (0.109)	-0.166* (0.090)	-0.332 (3.577)	0.003 (2.210)
Subversion × Oil rents p.c. (log)	0.121*** (0.033)	0.090*** (0.031)	-0.433 (0.799)	1.000* (0.574)	0.027 (0.036)	-0.021 (0.042)	0.057 (1.443)	1.645* (0.888)
Subversion × Foreign support	-0.215 (0.143)	-0.004 (0.214)	4.266 (4.898)	-2.796 (3.350)	0.217 (0.182)	0.392*** (0.111)	-92.448*** (3.823)	-8.186 (5.121)
Oil rents p.c. (log) × Foreign support	-0.043** (0.020)	-0.076*** (0.028)	1.294* (0.656)	-1.203** (0.531)	-0.079*** (0.024)	-0.106*** (0.037)	-0.121 (0.747)	-0.588 (0.713)
Subversion × Foreign support × Oil rents p.c. (log)	-0.066 (0.049)	-0.037 (0.050)	-0.093 (1.808)	-0.243 (1.475)	-0.034 (0.051)	0.045 (0.053)	15.256*** (1.015)	1.225 (1.003)
Ethnic fractionalization × Year	-0.004 (0.005)	-0.010 (0.006)	0.073 (0.221)	-0.186 (0.120)	-0.007 (0.009)	-0.005 (0.006)	0.205 (0.172)	-0.380*** (0.140)
Ruggedness p.c. × Year	-0.001 (0.002)	0.000 (0.003)	-0.067 (0.103)	0.023 (0.065)	-0.004 (0.003)	0.002 (0.004)	-0.013 (0.073)	-0.054 (0.090)
Population in 1400 × Year	-0.001* (0.001)	-0.001 (0.001)	-0.011 (0.029)	-0.030* (0.017)	-0.002*** (0.001)	-0.002** (0.001)	0.037 (0.027)	-0.046** (0.019)
Slave exports (log) × Year	-0.001 (0.001)	-0.001 (0.001)	0.004 (0.015)	-0.025** (0.012)	-0.001 (0.001)	0.000 (0.001)	-0.005 (0.010)	-0.041*** (0.013)
State antiquity × Year	0.000** (0.000)	0.000** (0.000)	0.007 (0.005)	-0.006* (0.003)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000* (0.000)	0.002 (0.004)	-0.010** (0.004)
Land area (log) × Year	0.000 (0.001)	-0.001 (0.001)	0.055 (0.037)	0.028 (0.017)	0.001 (0.001)	0.000 (0.001)	0.024 (0.040)	0.054** (0.024)
Observations	7,610	7,610	4,574	6,264	7,610	7,610	4,574	6,264
R-squared	0.74	0.67	0.84	0.90	0.73	0.66	0.87	0.89
Country FE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Year FE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Region FE × Year	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y

Notes: Standard errors are clustered at the country level. All regressions apply entropy matching using time-varying and time-invariant variables to balance treatment and control group in the pre-period. See Quantitative Tests section for a full list of matching and control variables. \*  $p < 0.10$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$



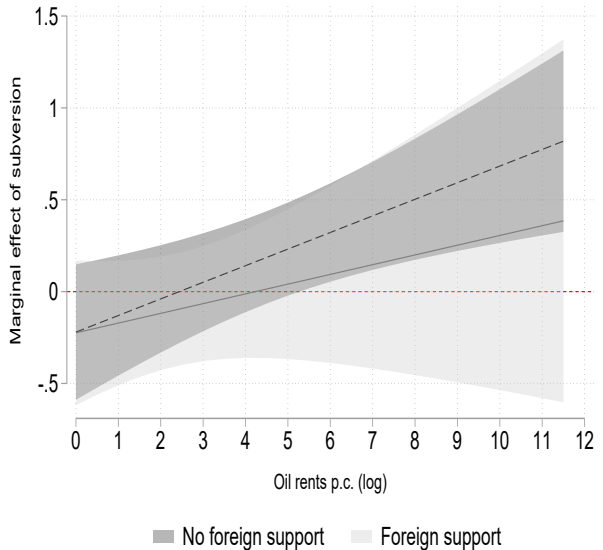


(a) center-seeking subversion

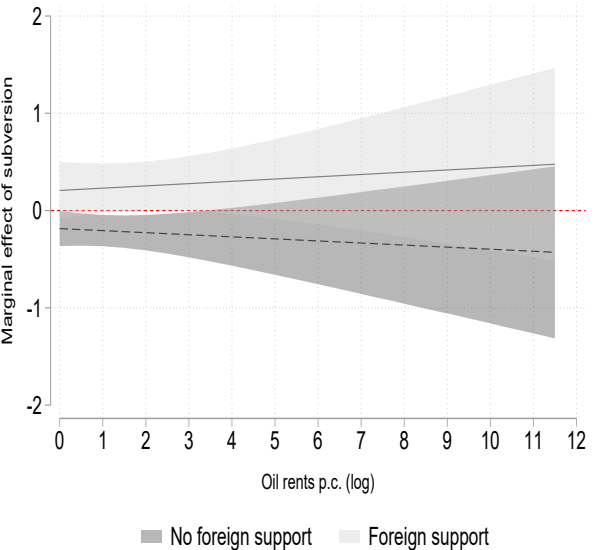


(b) separatist subversion

Figure A5: Effect of subversion on health equality (95% confidence intervals)

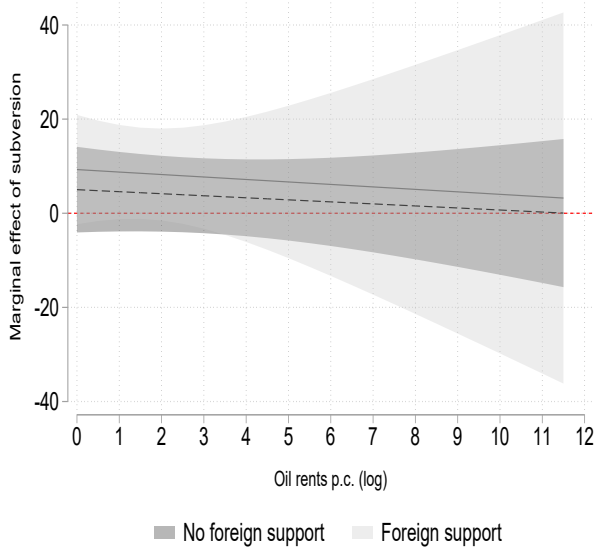


(a) center-seeking subversion

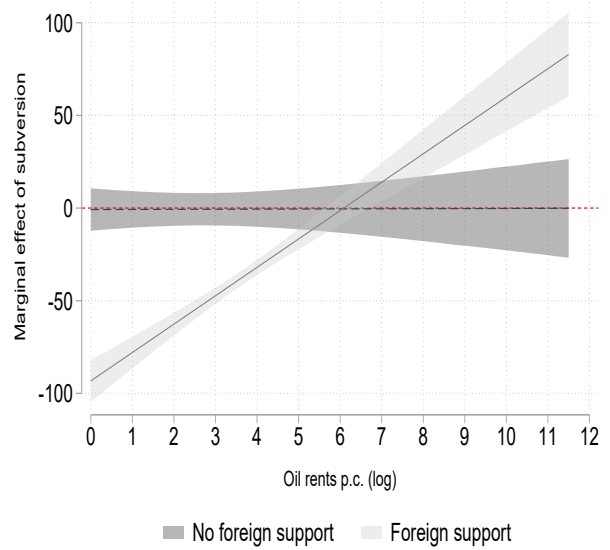


(b) separatist subversion

Figure A6: Effect of subversion on education equality (95% confidence intervals)

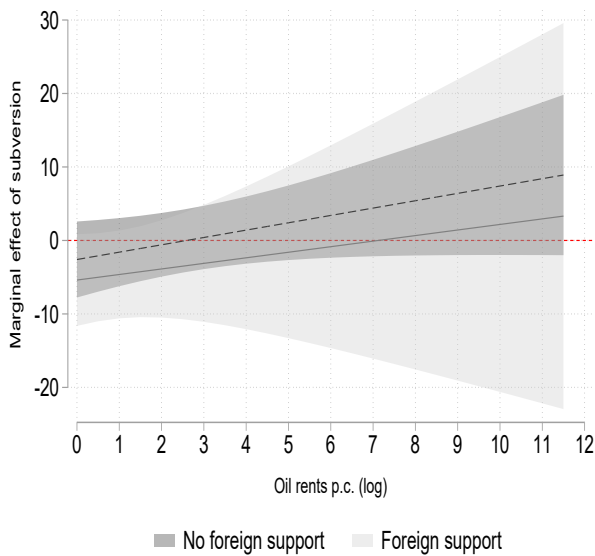


(a) center-seeking subversion

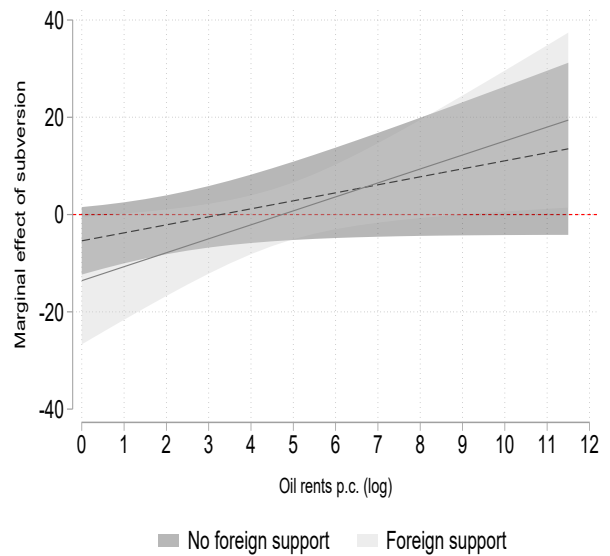


(b) separatist subversion

Figure A7: Effect of subversion on primary enrollment (95% confidence intervals)



(a) center-seeking subversion

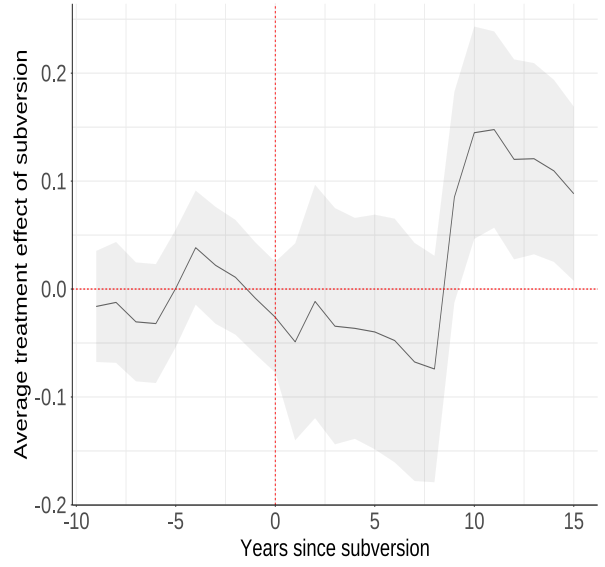
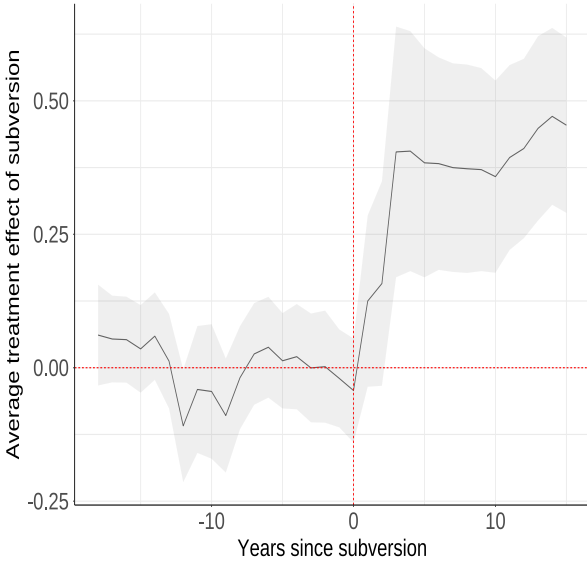


(b) separatist subversion

Figure A8: Effect of subversion on secondary enrollment (95% confidence intervals)

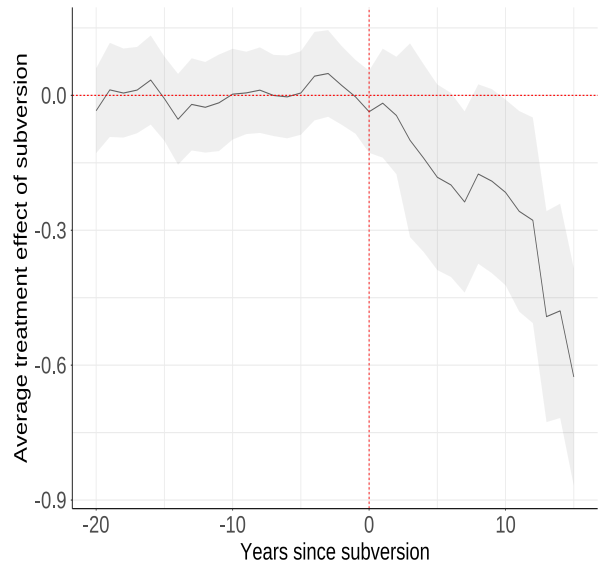
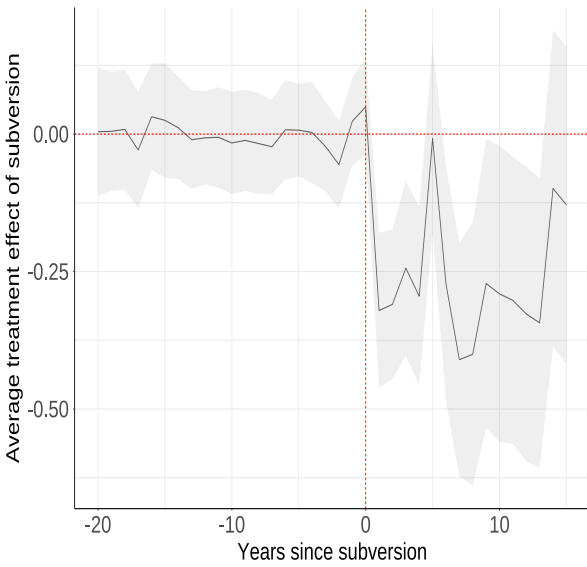
### A.3 GSC model with leftist vs. other center-seeking subversion

Figures [A9-A12](#) show our baseline model with center-seeking subversion treatments split into leftist subversions vs. other types. While the lower number of treated observations per model make this investigation only suggestive – and some of the pre-treatment trends are noisy – the overall pattern is that leftist subversions in oil-rich cases lead to welfare improvements, while other types of center-seeking subversion have no clear or sometimes even a negative impact. Similarly, leftist subversions without oil do not lead to systematic welfare improvements. Due to small case numbers and the heterogeneous nature of the “other” category, we are hesitant to draw firm conclusions, however.



(a) leftist center-seeking subversion, oil countries

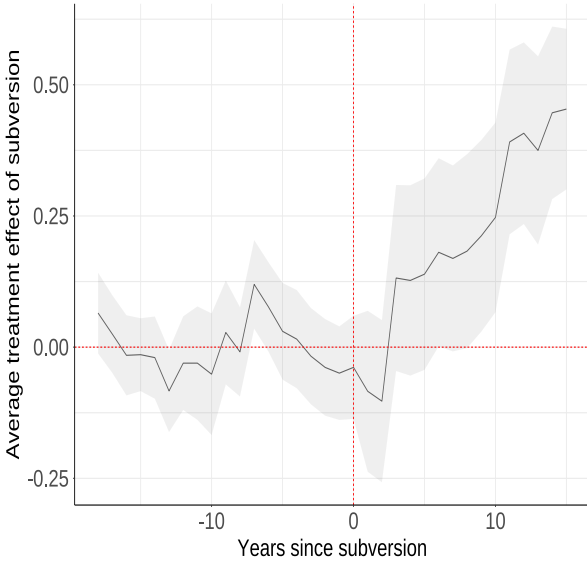
(b) leftist center-seeking subversion, non-oil countries



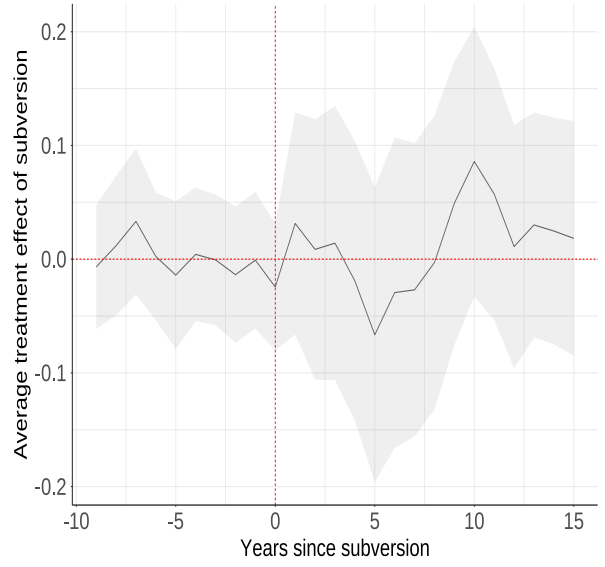
(c) other center-seeking subversion, oil countries

(d) other center-seeking subversion, non-oil countries

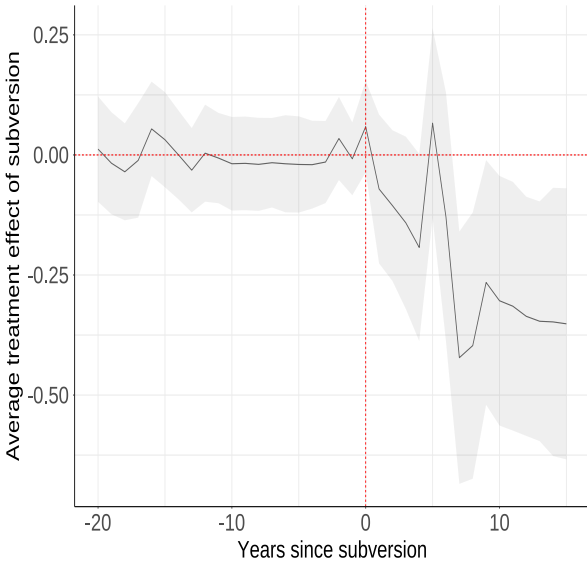
Figure A9: Effect of subversion on health equality (95% confidence intervals)



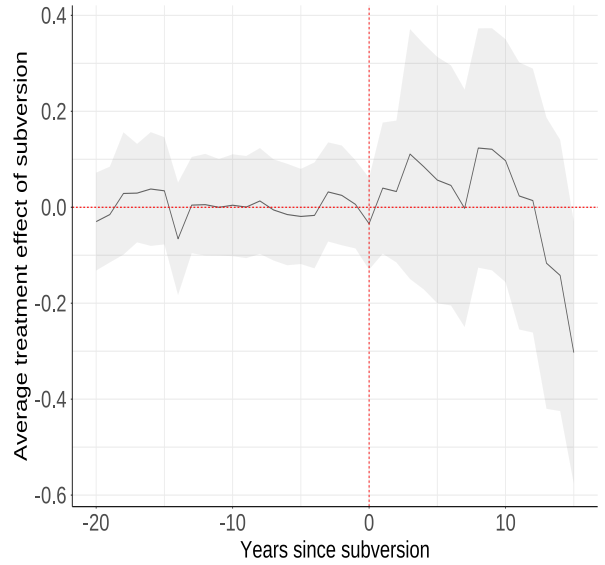
(a) leftist center-seeking subversion, oil countries



(b) leftist center-seeking subversion, non-oil countries

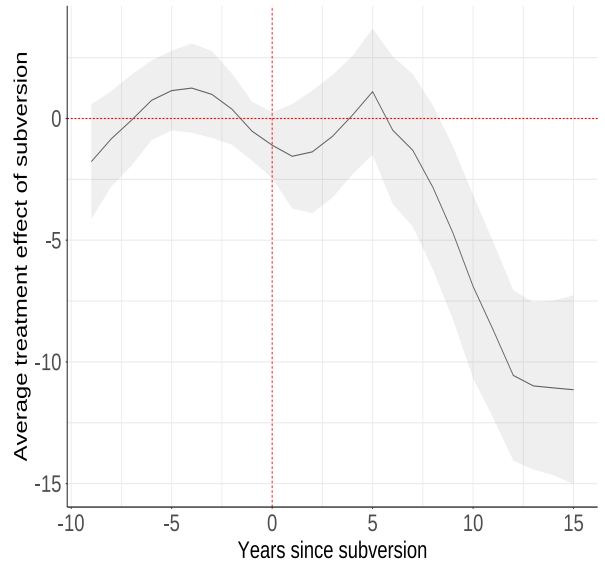
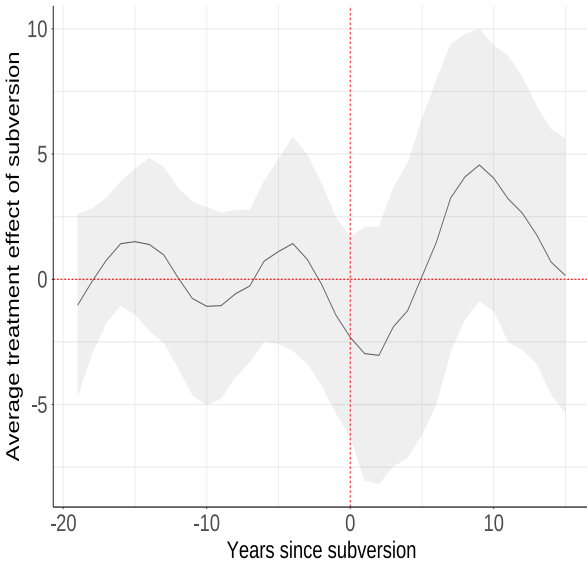


(c) other center-seeking subversion, oil countries



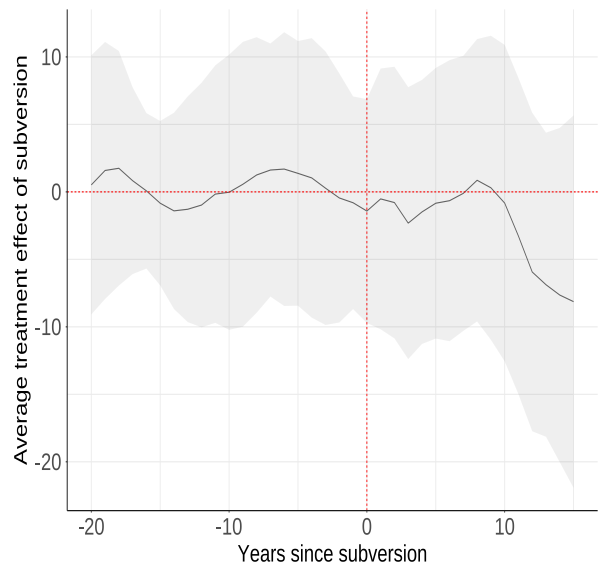
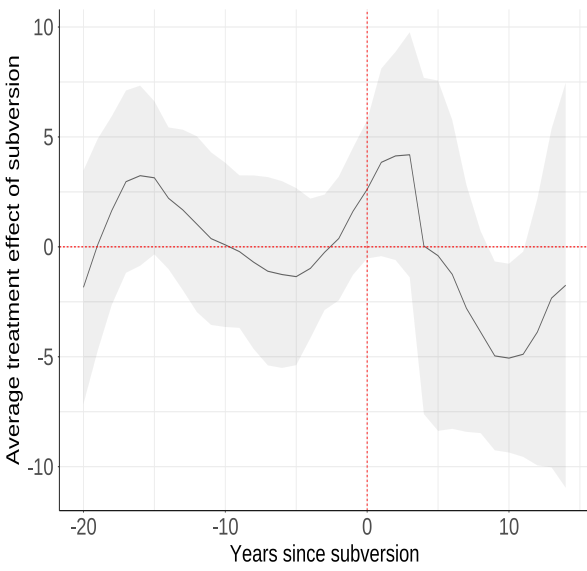
(d) other center-seeking subversion, non-oil countries

Figure A10: Effect of subversion on education equality (95% confidence intervals)



(a) leftist center-seeking subversion, oil countries

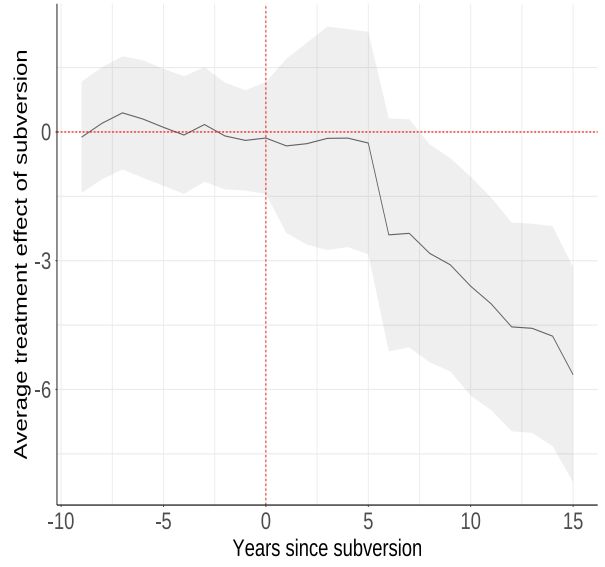
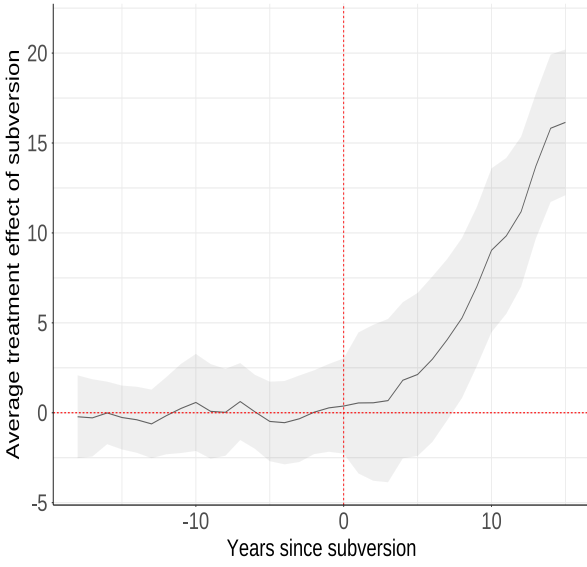
(b) leftist center-seeking subversion, non-oil countries



(c) other center-seeking subversion, oil countries

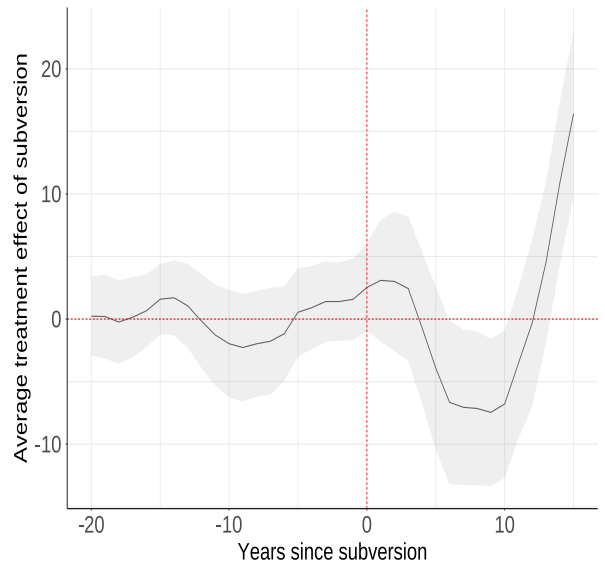
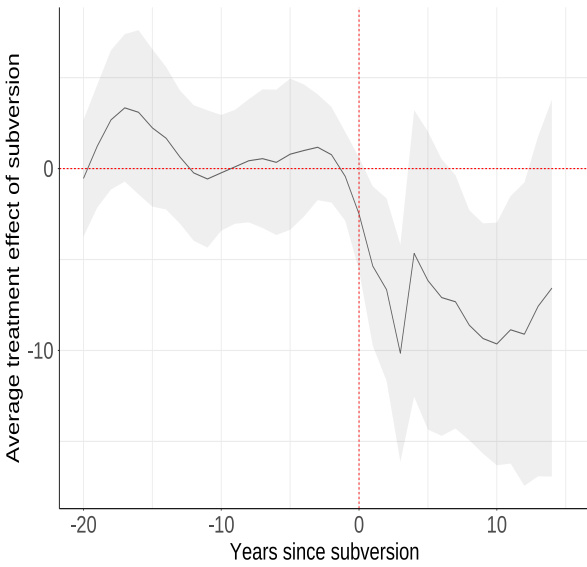
(d) other center-seeking subversion, non-oil countries

Figure A11: Effect of subversion on primary enrollment (95% confidence intervals)



(a) leftist center-seeking subversion, oil countries

(b) leftist center-seeking subversion, non-oil countries



(c) other center-seeking subversion, oil countries

(d) other center-seeking subversion, non-oil countries

Figure A12: Effect of subversion on secondary enrollment (95% confidence intervals)

## A.4 DID model with leftist vs. other center-seeking subversion

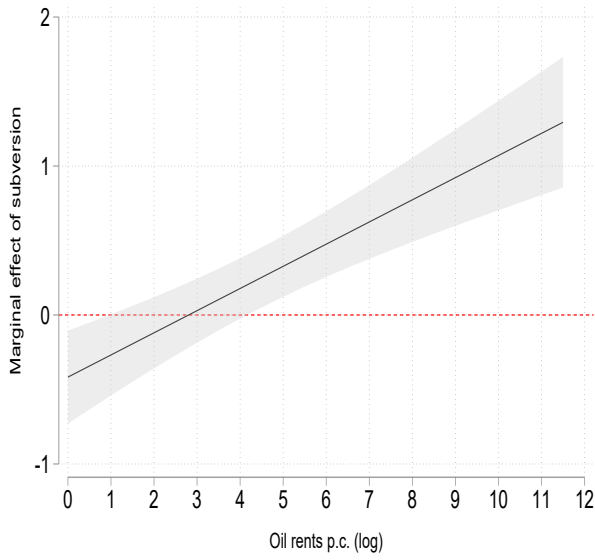
Table [A2](#) and Figures [A13-A16](#) show our DID models with center-seeking subversion treatments split into leftist subversions vs. other types. The models broadly confirm the pattern of the similarly split GSC models in the previous section. We see a systematic positive effect on welfare provision only for leftist movements in oil-rich countries – although, similar to the GSC models, there is a positive effect for non-leftist movements in the case of secondary enrolment.



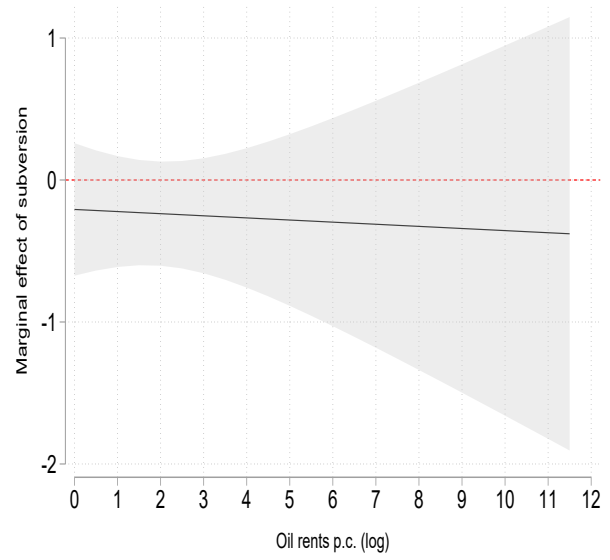
Table A2: Leftist and non-leftist center-seeking subversions compared (DID model)

	Leftist subversion				Non-leftist subversion			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
	Health equal.	Education equal.	Prim. enrol.	Second. enrol.	Health equal.	Education equal.	Prim. enrol.	Second. enrol.
Subversion	-0.417** (0.159)	-0.268 (0.162)	5.994 (4.802)	-1.830 (2.449)	-0.207 (0.238)	-0.260 (0.255)	-12.506*** (3.646)	-11.969** (5.250)
Oil rents p.c. (log)	0.050** (0.022)	0.060*** (0.020)	0.205 (1.034)	0.584* (0.346)	0.031 (0.020)	0.039** (0.017)	0.382 (1.140)	0.513* (0.305)
Subversion × Oil rents p.c. (log)	0.149*** (0.028)	0.112*** (0.036)	-0.924 (0.944)	1.186** (0.539)	-0.015 (0.079)	0.016 (0.070)	2.776** (1.238)	1.928 (1.248)
Ethnic fractionalization × Year	-0.003 (0.005)	-0.008 (0.007)	0.121 (0.206)	-0.201 (0.128)	-0.001 (0.007)	-0.004 (0.006)	-0.004 (0.254)	-0.153 (0.120)
Ruggedness p.c. × Year	-0.003 (0.003)	-0.002 (0.003)	-0.063 (0.107)	0.011 (0.082)	-0.004 (0.003)	-0.001 (0.003)	0.018 (0.153)	-0.027 (0.072)
Population in 1400 × Year	-0.001* (0.001)	-0.001 (0.001)	0.011 (0.027)	-0.034** (0.016)	0.000 (0.001)	0.000 (0.001)	-0.025 (0.044)	-0.030 (0.030)
Slave exports (log) × Year	-0.001** (0.001)	-0.001 (0.001)	-0.003 (0.014)	-0.031*** (0.010)	-0.001 (0.001)	-0.001 (0.001)	-0.008 (0.015)	-0.023** (0.009)
State antiquity × Year	0.000 (0.000)	0.000* (0.000)	0.007 (0.005)	-0.007** (0.003)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000* (0.000)	-0.001 (0.005)	-0.004 (0.003)
Land area (log) × Year	0.000 (0.001)	-0.001 (0.001)	0.029 (0.033)	0.042** (0.018)	-0.002** (0.001)	-0.002* (0.001)	0.064 (0.042)	0.016 (0.021)
Observations	8,345	8,345	5,083	6,962	7,275	7,275	4,273	5,993
R-squared	0.68	0.62	0.84	0.89	0.64	0.56	0.80	0.87
Country FE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Year FE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Region FE × Year	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y

*Notes:* Standard errors are clustered at the country level. All regressions apply entropy matching using time-varying and time-invariant variables to balance treatment and control group in the pre-period. See Quantitative Tests section for a full list of matching and control variables. \*  $p < 0.10$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

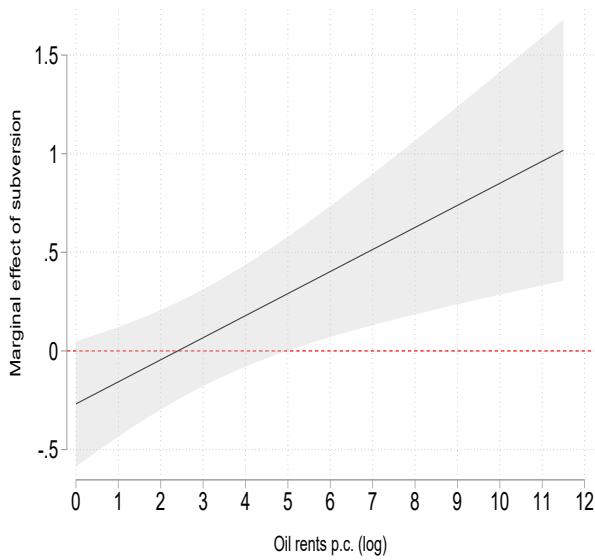


(a) leftist center-seeking subversion

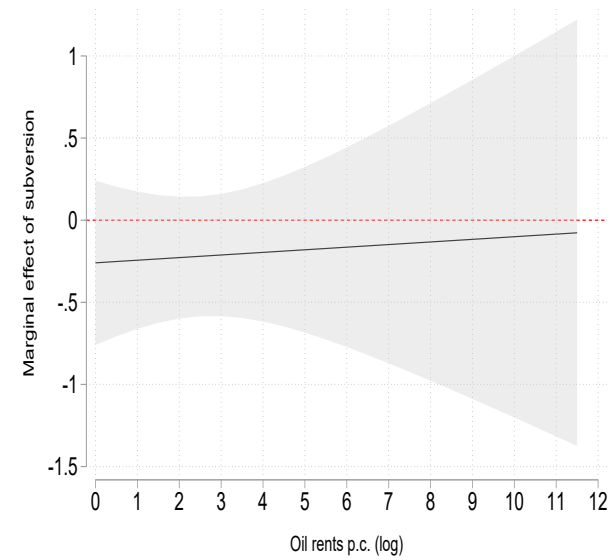


(b) other center-seeking subversion

Figure A13: Effect of subversion on health equality (95% confidence intervals)

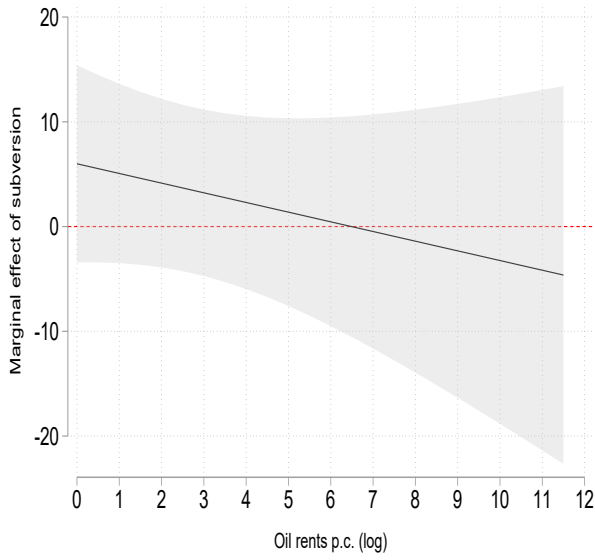


(a) leftist center-seeking subversion

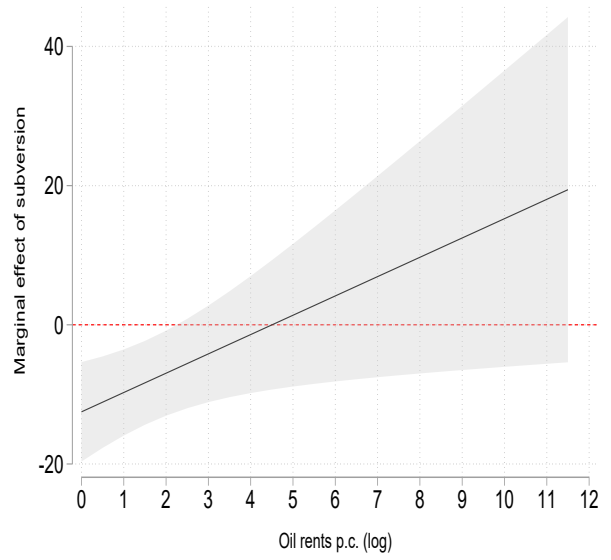


(b) other center-seeking subversion

Figure A14: Effect of subversion on education equality (95% confidence intervals)

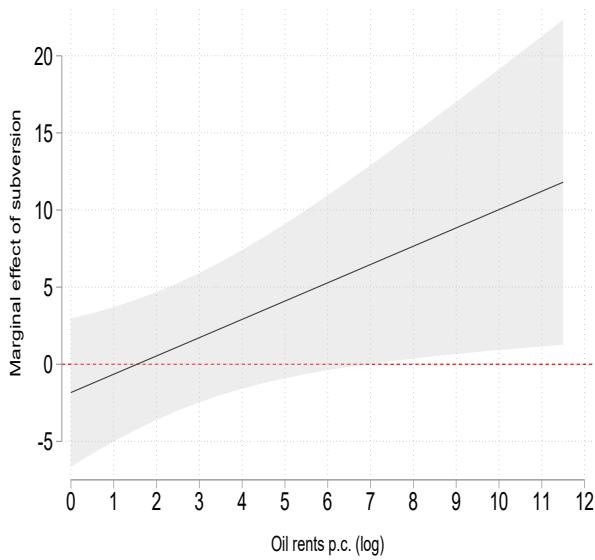


(a) leftist center-seeking subversion

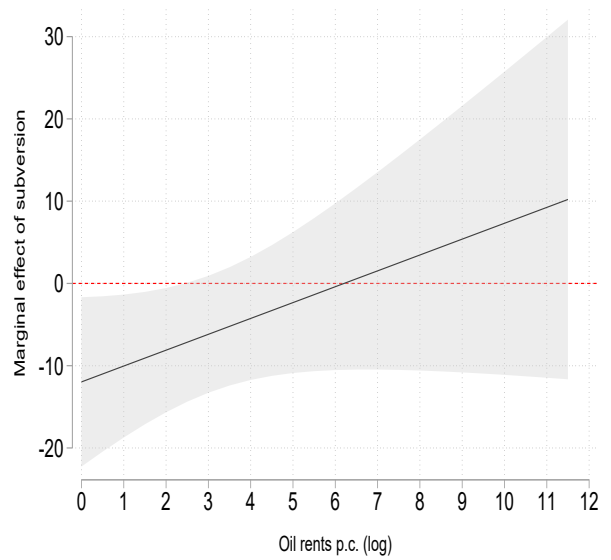


(b) other center-seeking subversion

Figure A15: Effect of subversion on primary enrolment



(a) leftist center-seeking subversion

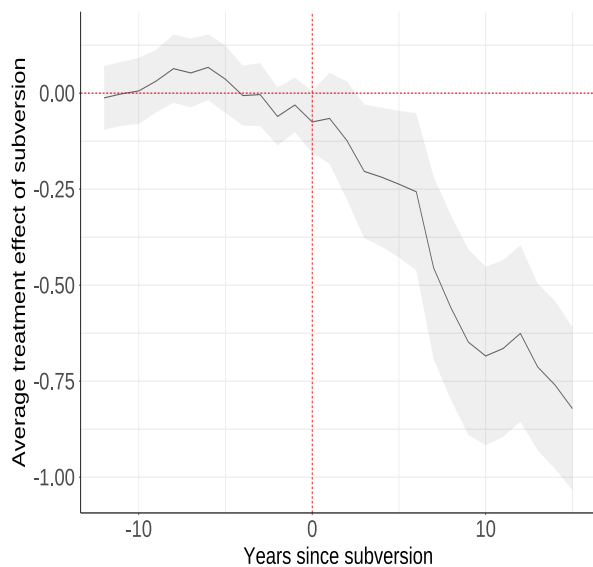


(b) other center-seeking subversion

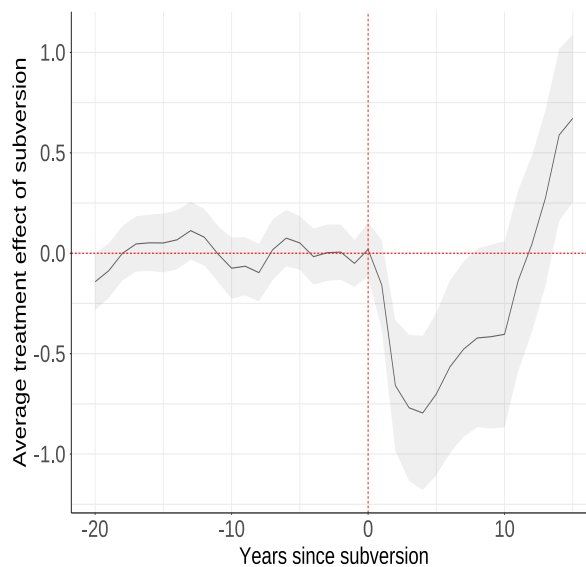
Figure A16: Effect of subversion on secondary enrolment

## A.5 GSC model with physical integrity as outcome variable

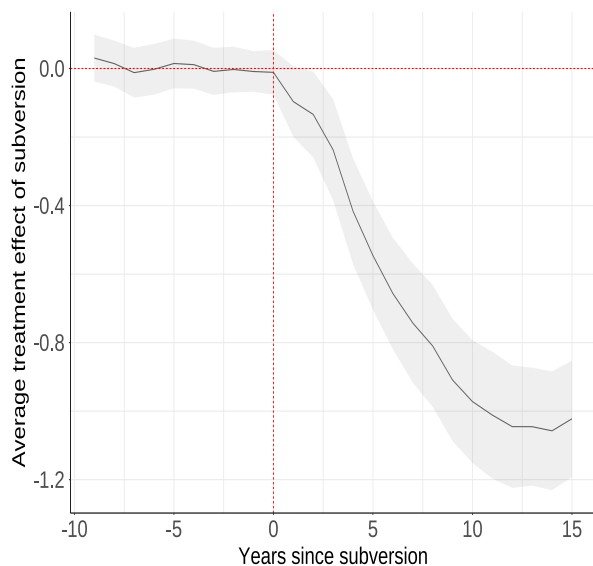
Figure A17 shows our baseline model with physical integrity as dependent variable (data from Fariss 2014). Lower values mean less physical integrity, i.e. higher exposure to repression. In all cases, subversion seems to lead to higher subsequent levels of repression.



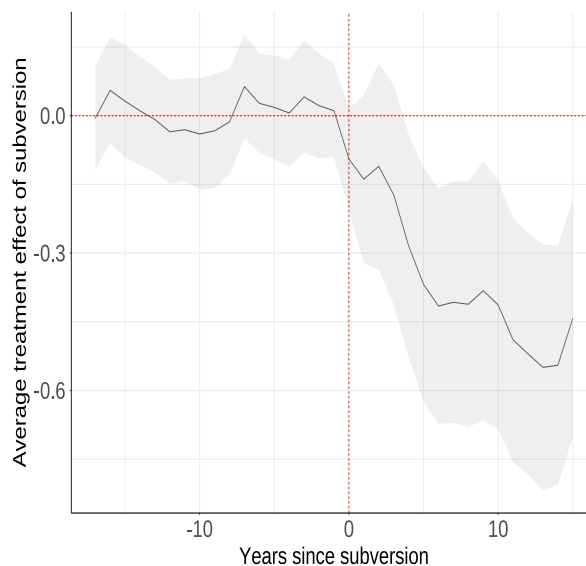
(a) center-seeking subversion, oil countries



(b) separatist subversion, oil countries



(c) center-seeking subversion, non-oil countries



(d) separatist subversion, non-oil countries

Figure A17: Effect of subversion on physical integrity (95% confidence intervals)

## A.6 Evidence on fiscal mechanisms

While trends in welfare outcomes usually reflect government efforts, they are also one step removed from them and can be affected by institutional, social and cultural context. We would ideally want to observe government welfare policy efforts more directly, notably in terms of deployment of personnel or finances. Historical data on such resource allocation is very patchy, however, and missing for many of our cases. The best we can do is to provide some basic descriptives from the GSRE database (Lucas and Richter 2016), which provides data on subsidies and transfers for a subset of cases. This category arguably represents the most direct reflection of regimes' efforts to engage in mass co-optation. As Figure A18 shows, subsidy spending per capita does indeed rise substantially in the five-year period after the onset of center-seeking subversion in oil-rich cases, while they grow less or remain stagnant in the other case categories.<sup>2</sup>

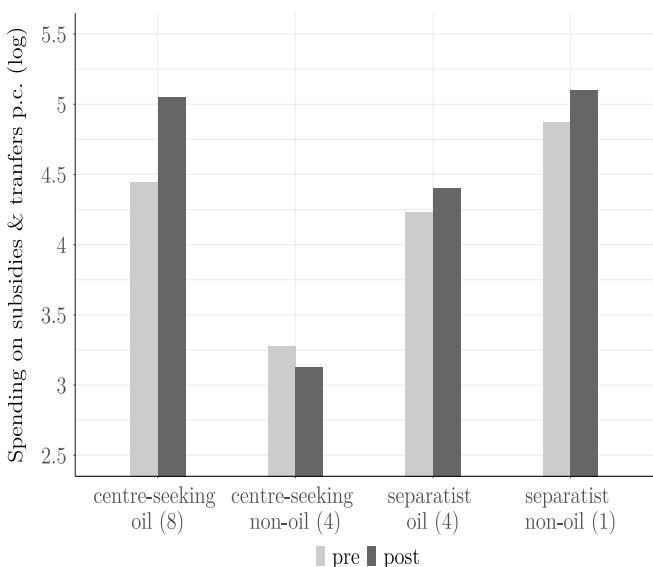


Figure A18: Subsidy spending pre-post subversion by oil and subversion type

GSRE data also show that spending on public order – mostly policing, the most immediate repressive tool against subversion – rises the fastest among oil cases facing center-seeking subversion, while in fact slightly dropping as share of total expenditure (see Figure A19).

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2. The slight rise in the category of oil states facing separatism is less meaningful as there is only one country case with data.

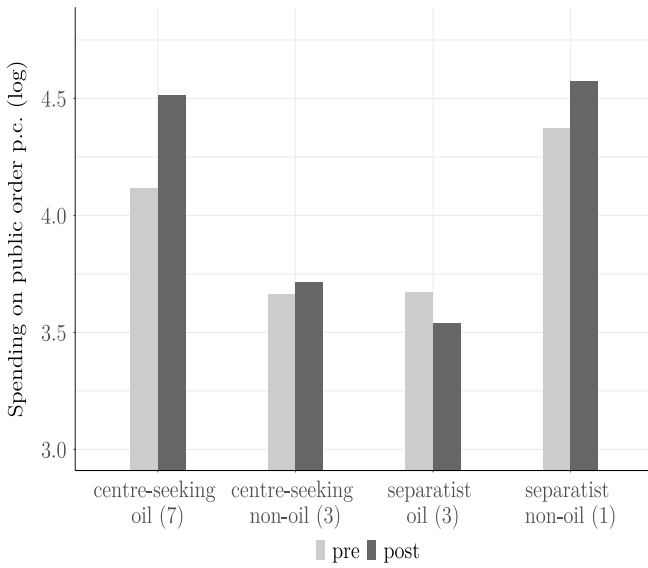


Figure A19: Public order spending pre-post subversion by oil and subversion type

This is further suggestive evidence that the fiscal trade-off between guns and butter is mitigated for such cases, as already shown in the Oman case study. They can both invest in hard security and engage in mass co-optation. As the previous appendix section has demonstrated, repression increases after subversion in all four case categories, suggesting that oil-rich rulers use repression and mass co-optation as complements, not substitutes.

## A.7 Case evidence from other Gulf countries

While the main case study focus of this paper is on Oman, our archival research has yielded ample material on other Gulf monarchies illustrating a similar historical pattern of developments: Against a background of weak pre-oil statehood, oil creates new distributive demands which, in the context of the transnational Arab nationalist mobilization of the 1950s and 1960s, morph into subversive political threats. Rulers are acutely concerned by these and react with a rapid expansion of welfare that often is explicitly (if not publicly) framed as counter-revolutionary strategy. This happens sometimes after ruling families remove a stingy or incompetent incumbent who is seen as threatening dynastic survival. And in all cases bar Bahrain, broad-based welfare does indeed take the sting out of anti-systemic opposition. This appendix provides a brief overview of these processes.

All five remaining monarchies experienced significant nationalist unrest: Bahrain in 1938, 1956 and 1965; Kuwait in 1938 and the late 1950s; Qatar in 1963; Saudi Arabia in the mid-1950s; and Dubai and Abu Dhabi (who would later become part of the United Arab Emirates) in the mid-1950s and mid-1960s respectively (Al-Mdairis 1987; Maky 2012b, 2012a). All protests were inspired by Arab nationalism, first of the bourgeois variety and later increasingly the Arab socialist one. At the same time, clandestine nationalist and leftist movements were active across the Gulf throughout the 1950s and 1960s. Socioeconomic grievances and demands were central drivers of mobilization across all cases (On Bahrain, see Foreign Office 1935, 1938c; on Qatar, see Foreign Office 1963f; on the UAE, see Davidson 2007; Foreign Office 1963b, 1964b; See also Azoulay 2016; Crystal 1995, 47, 153; Halliday 1974, 443; Al-Mdairis 1987).

Popular mobilization and political threats reached levels that are unimaginable in most of today's GCC monarchies: In Bahrain in 1956, the National Unity Committee created its own popular militia and started acting as parallel government (Khuri 1981, 78, 83). Nationalist leader Abdulaziz Al-Shamlan told the British that if they stood aside, he could overthrow the government within 12 hours (Foreign Office 1956). In Kuwait, the Arab Nationalist Movement organized a rally for the Egyptian-Syrian union in 1958 that attracted a reported 20,000 school students in a country of barely 200,000 inhabitants (Al-Mdairis 1987, 205).

In Qatar, the ruler felt that he could not rely on his own police to control public mobilization ([Foreign Office 1955b](#)). Demonstrators in 1963 carried photos of Nasser through the streets and encouraged bystanders to kiss them ([Foreign Office 1963c](#)). The British view of Qatar in the late 1950s was that the unequal distribution of wealth in the country would potentially lead to revolution ([Foreign Office 1961](#)). Nasser's visit to the Saudi capital Riyadh in 1957 triggered what probably still is the largest non-religious public gathering in Saudi history, during which Saudis sang nationalist songs they had picked up on Egypt's Sawt al-'Arab radio station (Maky [2012a](#), 674). Saudi Arabia witnessed at least two abortive attempts at nationalist military coups in 1955 and 1969 and defections of Saudi military officers to Egypt from 1962 on (Lacey [1981](#), 312; Al-Rasheed [2002](#), 112; Maky [2012a](#), 675). In Dubai, the 1950s saw Nasserist-inspired student demonstrations while students joined underground liberation movements; British diplomats privately doubted the ruler's ability to survive (Davidson [2007](#)). In Abu Dhabi, British diplomats in 1964 predicted that the reluctance of ruler Shaikh Shakhbout to spend new-found oil-wealth would sooner or later spell revolution ([Foreign Office 1964a](#)).

In all cases, rulers who previously often had limited concern for the provision of public goods reacted to the political subversion with stepped-up welfare. Shaykh Hamad of Bahrain reacted to the 1938 unrest not with political reforms, but the creation of an advisory council on education ([Foreign Office 1938a](#)). His successor Salman's main reaction to the mid-1950s unrest similarly was the creation of semi-elected education and health councils ([Foreign Office 1955a](#)), followed in the 1960s by housing provision and the creation of government jobs under Shaykh Isa ([Foreign Office 1962a](#)). By 1964, more than half of the Bahraini government's expenditure was devoted to health and education ([Foreign Office 1964d](#)). While the British were concerned with the costs of mass free schooling, the ruler stuck with it ([Foreign Office 1964c](#)).

The 1938 majlis movement in Kuwait similarly resulted in some expansion of public services (Crystal [1995](#), 58). Kuwait's ruler Ahmad bin Jaber – previously described as indifferent to public opinion ([Foreign Office 1939](#)) – explicitly mentioned plans to improve education and health provision in a 1938 discussion about the ongoing political unrest with



British Political Resident Gerald de Gaury ([Foreign Office 1938b](#)). The nationalist protests in the late 1950s motivated welfare expansion on a much larger scale.<sup>3</sup> The main difference to other Gulf states is that along with welfare, the Kuwaiti ruling family also conceded significant political participation to Kuwaiti citizens (Yom [2011](#)) – probably not because of essential differences in domestic political bargaining, but due to the need for international legitimacy and support in the face of existential threats from the powerful northern neighbor Iraq (Herb [2014](#)).<sup>4</sup>

In a declaration reacting to the 1963 protests in Qatar, Shaykh Ahmad focused mostly on material grievances and promises ([Foreign Office 1963e](#)). The British did in fact detect a “new found concern for the poorer sections of society” ([Foreign Office 1963d](#)) after the disturbances, and public services expanded rapidly for the rest of the 1960s. Ahmad was deposed by his cousin Khalifa in 1972 following worries about Ahmad’s profligacy, excessive spending on the Al Thani ruling family and incompetence ([Foreign Office 1971](#)).

Fear of Nasser’s subversive schemes in Saudi Arabia was a key driver of royal politics in the 1950s (Al-Awwami [2012](#)). The rivalry between King Saud and Crown Prince Faisal took place against the background of various Arab nationalist plots and led to a mutual outbidding in welfare promises (Samore [1983](#), 125; Vasil’ev [1993](#), 359). According to a 1962 UK diplomatic report, Saudis outside of royal circle reportedly liked Nasser’s “Voice of Arab” radio attacks on Saud as they heard that these made the king contemplate the economic development of the country more ([Foreign Office 1962b](#)). Faisal’s 1962 “ten point program” promised education, health and social welfare improvements as well as political reforms. Faisal subsequently cut royal allowances and implemented the welfare pledges, but not his political promises ([Foreign Office 1963g](#); Samore [1983](#), 164; Vasil’ev [1993](#), 434).

A 1963 British assessment reported that “Faisal knows that he must bring about reforms quickly if the regime is to survive” ([Foreign Office 1963a](#)). The discovery of the 1969 military

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3. As Crystal ([1995](#), 81) notes, “one catalyst to the government’s mass distributive policies was its fear of Arab nationalist opposition and its potential to galvanize the street.”

4. Yom ([2016](#)) argues that broad-based political and economic concessions in Kuwait resulted primarily from domestic political mobilization. Whatever the specific circumstances for Kuwait’s relative political openness, it is clear that Kuwait constitutes an anomaly on the Arabian Peninsula, where the typical pattern has been to provide rent-financed material concessions while tightening the political reins.

coup plot seems to have pushed Faisal, king since 1964, to initiate the kingdom's first five-year development plan in 1970 (Hertog 2010, 84f. Samore 1983, 177, 246). In a private meeting in 1967, Dubai's ruler Shaikh Rashid approvingly cited a saying of King Faisal that "revolution comes from poverty. If the smaller [Arabian] States were not developed they would be a source of revolution" (Foreign Office 1967). He explicitly framed the social and economic development he was pursuing as counterrevolutionary measure (Foreign Office 1966b). In Abu Dhabi, finally, when tribal leaders frustrated with Shaikh Shakhbout's stinginess threatened to mobilize against him in 1966, his brother Zayed undertook a British-supported palace coup. Zayed, who privately stated his fear of Communist movements, immediately initiated a rapid social and economic development program (Foreign Office 1966a, 1968; El-Mallakh 1981).

All GCC governments created a generous welfare system by the 1970s, and with the partial exception of Bahrain, opposition did indeed collapse all across the region. A member of the Saudi Communist party complained of sagging revolutionary spirits after the 1960s as a broad-based consumer society emerged in the kingdom (Vasil'ev 1993, 464). Popular co-optation was less successful in Bahrain, the one GCC country with recurrent political unrest also after the 1970s oil boom. The Bahraini exception is an interesting puzzle that we hope to make the subject of future research.

## Summary

All of the Gulf states discussed here had relatively small populations and weak state apparatuses when they found oil. Both their own leaders and foreign observers perceived them as highly vulnerable to local and foreign subversion during the critical years of state-building in the 1950s and 1960s (Foreign Office, no date). Given the size of fiscal surpluses in the Gulf monarchies, wide-ranging wealth sharing was a relatively low-cost political insurance option in a regional environment in which the Arab monarchical model seemed under acute threat of extinction at the hands of republican and revolutionary ideologies. Yet such wealth-sharing was only undertaken when political threats were seen as acute, and sometimes installing new welfare regimes required the removal of an incumbent ruler by his family – mass welfare was

far not automatic. It instead is an outcome of concrete political struggles between opposition and elites. The sequencing of welfare distribution and subsequent declines in political mobilization in all GCC cases bar Bahrain is evidence that distributive policies can indeed undermine political opposition. There are many stories of the individual co-optation of leftist and nationalist dissidents in the UAE, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia in the oil-rich 1970s. But co-optation went far beyond these discretionary measures and in many ways extended to the population at large. It is tempting to attribute the shrinkage of anti-systemic opposition after the 1960s to the declining credibility of Arab nationalist and Marxist ideologies. Yet the placid post-1973 politics in most of the GCC contrasts with the emergence of virulent, revolutionary Islamism in the poorer Arab states (Kepel [2002](#)).

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