ABSTRACT: The concept of empire has undergone a revival in recent years in the context of debates over American power and hegemony in world politics. Authors such as Niall Ferguson and Deepak Lal have used the British Empire as an exemplar to demonstrate that empires can be benign, engendering social and economic development and enabling democracy. In this paper, I argue that British imperialism, far from being benign, in most cases undermined colonial democratisation and development through its focus on maintaining physical order and control and sustaining economic extraction. This is demonstrated by both the budgetary priorities and the political and institutional machinations of British colonial regimes. However, different colonies experienced distinct post-independence trajectories, depending upon the character of indigenous social cleavages, elite strategies, the formation of political parties and movements, and the ability of indigenous leaders to manipulate limited opportunity structures. India’s distinctive pathway to democracy would not have been possible had partition not fixed a potentially serious demography problem by making government institutions inherited from the British suitable to India’s social structure. Pakistan’s transition to democracy was impeded by partition, which deprived Pakistan of both its central state apparatus and its integrative national party. Transitions to democracy in Nigeria, Kenya and Tanzania were blocked by an entrenched history of autocracy, inappropriate government structures and a lack of well-trained political elites. Had British officials done more, earlier on, in these countries to modernise government structures and develop political capacities, they too may have successfully democratised.

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Introduction

Why was India able to successfully maintain and consolidate a democratic system of government following independence, while Pakistan and many of Britain’s former colonies in Africa were not? Why have ethnic tensions threatened much of sub-Saharan Africa and Pakistan, but not destabilised democracy in India? Why have countries formed under the same empire-state\(^1\) umbrella had such divergent post-independence histories? This paper provides insight into these questions by examining political developments in five former British colonies, both during and after colonialism. Recent literature on political path dependence and democratisation suggest instructive avenues of analysis and explanation.

‘Path dependence’ is a fairly new term in political science. The concept originated in economics, especially in the increasing returns literature, in 1915.\(^2\) The central idea is that ‘history matters’: the development of a particular industry or economy may be affected by the decision to invest in one form of technology over another. This initial choice constrains future choices, so that later costs of exit – that is, shifting to some previously plausible alternative – become prohibitively high. The course of industrial development is thus ‘locked-in’, and historical events, rather than superior technologies, largely determine future economic trajectories (Arthur, 1989). These explanations, adjusted for a political science audience, gained currency in the 1990s (Pierson, 2000). Applied to politics, path dependence means ‘that once a country or region has started down a track, the costs of reversal are very high. There will be other choice points, but the entrenchments of certain institutional arrangements obstruct an easy reversal of the initial choice’ (Levi, 1997: 28).

Applied to the new states formed from former colonial dependencies, path dependent ideas have only recently extended to the analysis of government institutions and practices. Before that, two main areas of study linked countries’ colonial (or pre-colonial) histories with their post-independence arrangements: the literature on ‘post-colonialism’ and that on
‘underdevelopment’ or ‘world systems’. The former area deals with political concepts and developments in cultural or literary terms, while the latter tends to focus on economic or class-based, rather than political, relationships. Only in the 1990s, as the ‘post-colonial’ label was purported to be in decline, was there a growth in scholarship on the political continuities between the colonial and post-independence periods. Even then, many authors offering useful overviews of the legacies of colonial rule did not provide explanations for individual countries’ post-independence trajectories; instead their analyses aggregated across large areas and time frames. But recent studies of ‘Third World’ democratisation have examined and compared specific countries’ colonial pasts to gain insight into why one country developed differently to another following independence.

This paper analyses the colonial inheritance and its contribution to post-independence political trajectories in five former British dependencies – India, Pakistan, Nigeria, Kenya and Tanganyika. It differs from existing democratisation studies in two important ways. First, the key analytical variable in existing studies is the nature of political parties – how they developed and their capacity to represent or accommodate broad divisions within society. This paper also pays close attention to the nature of political parties, but does so by situating their development within two key contextual variables: the constitutional framework within which political activity occurred and the functional priorities of the state as expressed through public expenditure allocations. These two additional variables are vital to understanding the organising logic of British rule. They capture otherwise neglected dynamics – for example, that during the colonial period, indigenous elites could gain political experience outside the party system, through incorporation by imperial elites into central government councils. The second way in which this paper deviates from conventional analytical approaches concerns the time scale used: whereas some democratisation studies confine their analyses of the colonial era to the ‘obvious critical juncture’ of decolonisation (Adeney and Wyatt, 2004: 7), this paper covers the entire period of Crown administration.
The countries selected for analysis reflect this paper’s main aim: to determine why India was able to successfully maintain and consolidate a democratic system of government following independence, while other large, non-white, former British colonies were not. Pakistan shared much of India’s colonial past and yet failed to democratise following independence. Nigeria, Kenya and Tanganyika, Britain’s three largest dependencies in sub-Saharan Africa, possessed many features of the Indian system – indirect rule (all three colonies), federal institutions (Nigeria and Kenya), strong nationalist movements (Tanganyika and Kenya) and traditional rulers (Northern Nigeria and Zanzibar). Yet these countries were unsuccessful in making the transition to democracy. Studying the similarities and differences between the five cases sheds light on factors that enable (or inhibit) democratic possibilities in new states.

This paper suggests some of the ways in which British colonial government institutions, policies and practices constrained post-independence political developments. It demonstrates that countries with an entrenched history of autocracy tended to adopt undemocratic institutional arrangements, particularly when deep social cleavages restricted groups’ abilities to achieve democratic compromises and elites were untrained in democratic processes. Using quantitative data, it argues that the purpose of British rule was not to prepare colonial inhabitants for self-government and independence, nor to develop their social, economic or political capacities. Rather, it was to maintain British territorial control and facilitate economic extraction for the benefit of the metropole. My findings run counter to the arguments of recent apologists of empire, such as Niall Ferguson (2004; 2003) and Deepak Lal (2004), both of whom emphasise the progressive, democratising qualities of British colonial administration.

The paper contains five sections. The first tracks the pace of constitutional progression in each colony. It shows that the basis of Crown rule was autocracy, rather than representative government. British officials were unwilling to cede power to colonial
inhabitants until just prior to independence, which meant that groups in the colonies, particularly in Africa, lacked substantive political training. The second section contains a functional analysis of colonial public expenditures. It indicates that other forms of social development did not compensate for the lack of political training in the colonies. The third section examines the pattern of social cleavages in the colonies and analyses how social tensions were manufactured and politicised by British administrative practices. It shows that, in Africa, the largest social groups were underdeveloped – politically, economically and socially. This resulted from a conscious effort by colonial authorities to contain incipient nationalism. In India, religion was politicised to fracture an otherwise pluralistic population. The fourth section explores strategies adopted by the British to deal with real and potential threats to their authority. It demonstrates that, to overcome nationalist demands for self-government and independence, British officials fuelled social tensions and restricted civil liberties. They used ‘divide and rule’ strategies not only to curtail colonial nationalism, but also to justify British autocracy as necessary for maintaining social stability and effective control. The final section aggregates these factors to form a clearer picture of how colonial institutions and practices became entrenched in the current politics of these countries. It demonstrates that the principal British legacy to the colonies examined here, apart from India, was an autocratic path from which the new states could not easily diverge.

Colonial Constitutions and Democratisation

The pace of constitutional advancement in British India and Africa may be measured using a template provided by Martin Wight (1952: 17), who noted that a colony’s progress towards independence could be charted through changes in the composition of its central legislature:

- Crown colony government is built on two great principles of subordination:
  1. the legislature is subordinate to the executive;
  2. the colonial government
is subordinate to the imperial government…. The relation between the imperial government and the colonial government depends upon the relation within the colonial government between the executive and the legislature. And the relation between the executive and the legislature depends upon the relation between the legislature and the dependency as a whole. The executive can control the legislature so long as the legislature does not represent, or is not answerable to, an electorate. The imperial government can control the colonial government so long as the colonial government has not become the organ of a fully integrated and self-conscious colonial nation.

According to Wight (1946; 1952), there were nine progressive stages to independence:

(1) Governor as sole legislature (concentration of power in a single individual);
(2) Governor-in-council as legislature (wholly official composition);
(3) Legislative council with an official majority and a wholly nominated unofficial minority;
(4) Mixed council (official majority and a partly elected unofficial minority);
(5) Semi-representative legislature (unofficial majority but an elected minority);
(6) Representative legislature (unofficial and elected majority);
(7) Semi-responsible government (self-government within defined limits);
(8) Responsible government (full internal self-government); and
(9) Independence.

In the earliest stages, the legislature was indistinguishable from the executive, since both functions were concentrated in the governor, or at least controlled by him. As a colony progressed towards independence, the proportion of officials in its legislature decreased, and its membership became increasingly constituted through (often indirect) election rather than nomination. As the legislature opened up and became more representative, unofficial
members of the legislature would gain entry to the executive council. As the colony
developed further, unofficial members of the legislative council would be given
administrative responsibility in the territory, until eventually they controlled the government
machinery.

Let us examine Wight’s model in more detail. Up to the representative legislature
stage, colonial rule represented the whims of British officials rather than the wishes of
inhabitants. Where a colony was not furnished with a legislature, the governor or governor-
in-council would rule the territory autocratically (or oligarchically). After a legislative
council was constituted, the governor could still control lawmaking in the colony through his
use of the official majority, ‘the very kernel and essence of Crown Colony Government’
(Bertram, 1930: 168). Here, unofficial members (whether nominated or elected) comprised a
minority. Hence it could be said that ‘the official majority does not replace the governor’s
autocracy but only makes it plural’ (Wight, 1952: 22). Only when the legislature became
semi-representative could unofficial members exercise some power independent of the
government. However, the governor could still revert to the official majority system or
replace uncooperative unofficial members with amenable ones. Moreover, because the
governor initiated legislation, set the agenda and held a casting vote, most decisions required
his assent. Popular opinion could prevail only after the legislature was mainly constituted by
election. In a representative legislature, a speaker would take over the governor’s role in
proceedings, and the legislature would be renamed a house of representatives. Normally this
would signal the advent of semi-responsible government, and the executive council would be
converted into a council of ministers. The next stage, responsible government, would be
achieved when the imperial government relinquished internal control of the territory to a
cabinet accountable to the electorate through the national assembly and exercised power only
in relation to the colony’s external affairs. The final stage would be independence.
Wight’s template is useful, in that it may be applied across the four colonies, regardless of demographic, locational and size differences. Hence, governing arrangements in British India (Britain’s largest non-white colony) may be compared with those of Kenya (the largest East African colony), Nigeria (the largest West African colony) and Tanganyika (Britain’s largest mandated territory, subject to international scrutiny and control). However, Wight’s model does not apply to the Indian princely states and Zanzibar, which were not Crown colonies, but protectorates supervised by British ‘residents’.

Table 1 displays the speed of constitutional progression in British India, Nigeria, Kenya and Tanganyika from 1858 to 1963. It shows that, especially in British Africa, the basis of Crown administration was autocracy rather than representative government. An official majority prevailed in the central legislature in India until 1919, Nigeria until 1946, Tanganyika until 1959 and Kenya until 1961. British officials maintained tight executive control of the territories until after the Second World War, and unofficial members were not vested with portfolio responsibilities until 1919 in India, 1951 in Nigeria, 1954 in Kenya and 1959 in Tanganyika. Autocratic rule was justified on the grounds that Indians and Africans, who made up the largest populations in these territories, were not politically advanced enough to represent their own interests. As Governor Clifford said in his opening address to the Nigerian Legislative Council in 1923: ‘In a country such as Nigeria, which in too many areas has not yet emerged from barbarism, a strong, and within limits, an autocratic government is essential’ (Wheare, 1950: 42).

(Table 1 about here)

In Africa, when democratisation came, it occurred rapidly and the colonies were more or less catapulted towards independence. The speed of constitutional progression in Nigeria may be summarised thus: eighty-four years of autocratic rule with only limited elective
participation, followed by eleven to thirteen years of democratisation, culminating in one to three years of responsible government before independence. In Kenya and Tanganyika, the sequence was more dramatic. Kenya experienced sixty-six years of autocracy tempered by limited elections, followed by two years of democratisation, ending with six months of responsible government prior to independence. In Tanganyika, thirty-nine years of autocratic rule – during most of which elections were not allowed – were followed by one year of democratisation and less than one year of responsible government prior to independence.

In India, the pace of change was more gradual: sixty-one years of autocratic rule with some elections, followed by twenty-eight years of democratisation. However, India did not progress beyond the semi-responsible stage until independence, and Indians never enjoyed full internal self-government, even at provincial level, under British rule. Additionally, some Indian provinces were autocratically ruled by chief commissioners up to independence.

That British officials were unwilling to cede power to colonial populations becomes evident by observing the stages which colonies skipped en route to independence. India was held at Stage 4 until after the First World War, then rushed to Stage 7, where it remained until after the Second World War, before quickly being granted independence. The African colonies also advanced rapidly from Stages 4 to 7 following the Second World War. However, Tanganyika was held at Stage 3 much longer than Nigeria and Kenya, and it also skipped Stage 5.

Electoral privileges did not extend to the bulk of the populations in the four colonies until close to independence, if at all. In British India, the vote was granted at provincial level in 1909, but the franchise was restricted first to land-owners and then to literate sections of the population. Less than a third of the Indian adult population was able to vote in the 1946 elections (Austin, 1966: 10). Up to 1951, Nigerian elections were limited to two municipalities (Lagos and Calabar), with the franchise qualified by stringent income
requirements. Hence, most of the population, even in those municipalities, was ineligible to vote. The two elections that took place in Tanganyika after 1957 were restricted by education, occupation and income. Voting in Kenya was also subject to occupation, wealth and literacy bars until June 1963, when the franchise opened up to all adults in the territory. Universal adult suffrage was not a feature at any level in colonial Nigeria, Tanganyika or India.

The evidence here suggests that British officials did not successfully prepare colonial inhabitants for self-government and independence. None of the colonies surveyed here achieved any viable form of self-rule under British control. Particularly in East Africa, British rule represented a stifling of genuine political self-development through a succession of official majorities and tokenist forms of representation. The future executives of these countries were untrained in the realities of running a ‘national’ government, and their populations were inexperienced in political processes, such as voting.

Moreover, other forms of social development did not compensate for the lack of indigenous political training, as the public expenditure analysis in the next section demonstrates. The main goal of British colonial policy was not to advance the ‘moral and material capacities’ of colonial inhabitants, but rather to maintain the convenience of British rule and enable the economic extraction of colonial resources.

Functional Analysis of Public Expenditures

One way of determining the key priorities of British administrators in India and Africa is to examine the composition of public expenditures. The proportion of funds allocated to various functional areas reveals much about the character of the colonial state. As far back as 1918, Joseph Schumpeter proclaimed budgets as fundamental to determining the true nature of a regime: “The budget is the skeleton of the state stripped of all misleading ideologies” – a collection of hard naked facts which yet remain to be drawn into the realm of sociology. The
fiscal history of a people is above all an essential part of its general history’ (Schumpeter, 1954: 6). Public expenditures may be usefully divided into three functional categories, or programmes of the state: ‘defining concerns’, ‘economic programmes’ and ‘social programmes’ (Rose, 1985). Defining concerns refer to the state’s basic operations, in areas such as military/defence, law and order, general administration, foreign policy and finance. Economic programmes are designed to develop the country’s fiscal potential. In British colonies, externally-oriented programmes (for example, investment in ports and railways) mainly served metropolitan interests, while internally-focused programmes (for example, industrial development schemes) mainly benefited colonial groups. Social programmes cover medical and sanitation services, education, housing and recreational activities.

Table 2 summarises the shares of total spending across the three functional categories in each territory from 1900 to 1960. The data analysis indicates tremendous consistency across India and Africa, revealing that the overwhelming priority of British colonial governments was with their own maintenance and with activities that advanced Britain’s economic interests. Were the Empire as concerned with improving the conditions or developing the capacities of colonial populations as its rhetoric claimed, the composition of public expenditure would have looked very different indeed. Up to the Second World War, public outlays in all four colonies showed very little attention to social programmes, which accounted for only four to ten per cent of the budget everywhere except Tanganyika. After the war, there was growth in social welfare spending in the three African colonies, but not in India prior to independence. Budgets reflected the colonial governments’ preoccupation with defining concerns and economic programmes.
We get a better picture of the priorities of British colonial administration through examining the five leading areas of government spending, displayed in Table 3 for each of the colonies from 1910 to 1960. The table shows that the focus in India was on railways and ports and on the military. These headings alone accounted for half of all Indian government outlays prior to independence. Other prominent expenditure areas included colonial administration, public works and utilities, law and order, and public debt. Clearly, British officials in India were concerned with maintaining territorial control and developing the colony’s externally-focused transport infrastructure. The three African dependencies were similar to India in their expenditure profiles, although they devoted less to military and defence. Throughout the period, their public outlays were concentrated in the export-oriented transportation infrastructure (railways and ports/harbours) and its financing (public debt charges). These areas accounted for between one-third and one-half of all expenditures in Nigeria and Kenya, somewhat less in Tanganyika. ‘Control’ functions (military, police and prisons, and general administration) were another main focus of African public spending. Until the end of the Second World War, the colonies spent little on social welfare, apart from limited medical and sanitation outlays. But after the war, much of the surge in African government spending accrued to social programmes, mainly in education. The analysis indicates that British rule in these territories was not directed towards the ‘moral or material progress’ of the African populace, at least not until the final years of colonial rule. Instead, the main purpose of the British African state was to maintain control in the colonies and to develop external transport links for the benefit of the metropole and its associated international commercial concerns.

(Table 3 about here)
Analysing public expenditure trends confirms that British rule in colonial India and Africa followed no discernible external logic of promoting political ‘responsibility’ or ‘capacity’. Instead, its chief purpose was to maintain the convenience of British rule. It accomplished this by hindering genuine political progress until the final moment when such advancement could no longer be withstood. Efforts to modernise colonial institutions were conducted half-heartedly, and in the end, British administrators quit India and Africa without fully preparing their populations for self-government and independence.

But simply knowing the overall patterns of democratisation does not give us a sense of how power was distributed among different groups – the important ‘who gets what, when, how’ question in politics (Lasswell, 1936). To understand these dynamics, we must examine the patterns of social cleavages in a territory and analyse how these translated into political inequalities and ethnic tensions. The next section addresses these issues.

**Colonial Social Cleavages and Government Representation**

Social tensions in the four colonies were institutionalised at central and local government levels, with some groups gaining access to the structures of power, while others were sidelined. Below I analyse the pattern of social cleavages in each territory and show how group divisions were intensified and politicised by British policies.  

*Social cleavage patterns*

British African societies were deeply divided with cumulative cleavages, while India was characterised by cross-cutting cleavages. Race formed the main division in East Africa, while in West Africa ethnicity was more important. In India, religion was the most politically relevant cleavage, though other divisions – mostly within each of the main religious groups (along the lines of caste or sect, for instance) – were at times salient.
Africans were by far the largest racial group in Kenya, accounting for 98 percent of the population. Indians and Arabs made up two percent of the population, and Europeans (mainly British) less than one percent. From these groups, a racialised three-tier society was constructed, assisted by British colonial legislation, especially with regard to land rights. Africans were at the bottom of the hierarchy and had few civil or legal rights. At the top was a European landholding aristocracy that controlled the bulk of agricultural production in Kenya. As one author put it: ‘In general the races form social classes in and of themselves. The natives form the lower unskilled labouring class; the Indians the artisan and skilled labouring class, and the trading and shop-keeping section; the Europeans the landholding upper class’ (Dilley, 1937: 12).

There were fewer social tensions in Tanganyika than in Kenya, although the racial mix was similar. Africans made up 99 percent of the population, Indians and Arabs around one percent, and Europeans (mainly British) less than one-third of one percent. Races were not geographically concentrated, as in Kenya, but were dispersed throughout the territory. The terms of the mandate under which Tanganyika was administered (first by the League of Nations and then the United Nations) stipulated that racial groups be treated equally and that discriminatory land policies, which had legal standing in Kenya, be disallowed. However, mandate guidelines did not prevent discrimination. For example, commercially profitable lands were reserved for white settlers, as ‘a wholesale handing over to the natives of land formerly owned by German planters would have been equivalent to the destruction of the results of many years of spade work, and of considerable investments’ (Leubuscher, 1944: 29). Therefore, as in Kenya, a racialised economy was created in Tanganyika: ‘The people of Tanganyika comprise not one society but three. In economic and social development the paths of the African, Asian, and European are widely separated.’ (1954 United Nations Visiting Mission Report, p. 68)
Nigeria’s population was almost wholly African. By drawing boundaries, British administrators created three major ethnic groups from around 250 linguistic-ethnic groups. The Muslim Hausa-Fulani dominated the north (the Northern Region), the pagan Igbo the southeast (the Eastern Region), and the Christianised Yoruba the southwest and Colony of Lagos (the Western Region). Northern Nigerians had the lowest literacy rates (about one percent), owing to an agreement the British government made with the Caliph of Sokoto not to interfere in Islamic education in the region. In the southeast, especially in Calabar, literacy was high, given the population’s lengthy contact with European traders (Wheare, 1950: 14). The Yoruba in the southwest were the most literate, and the Colony of Lagos the most advanced region – ‘an outpost of European, occidental, Atlantic culture, already of several decades standing’ (Nicolson, 1969: 36). Around one-third of children in the Colony attended schools, compared with five percent in the rest of the southern provinces (Wheare, 1950: 16).

Societies in British India were heterogeneous and complex. Nevertheless, British officials tended to prioritise religion (and caste) when demarcating groups: ‘In colonial India the British administration…assumed that primordial groupings based on caste and, especially, religion were the appropriate bases of the political community. Hence, colonial counting processes endowed religious identities with greater substance and clearer outlines than they had had in the past’ (Kaviraj, 1997: 325). The main religious groups were Hindus, accounting for 70 percent of the population, and Muslims, who constituted a quarter (HMSO, 1915). Cutting across the Hindu-Muslim divide were identities expressed in terms of region, ethnicity, class, caste and education.

**Representation of groups in central government**

Having manufactured, or at least encouraged, social tensions, British officials exacerbated them by allowing certain groups to exercise political power while excluding others. Table 4 displays the sequence in which groups were granted representation on central government
councils in British India, Nigeria, Kenya and Tanganyika between 1858 to 1963. It shows that, in Africa, the largest social groups were the last to gain representation. In India, there were multiple forms of group representation.

Table 4 (and Table 1) indicates that Northern Nigeria progressed at a slower constitutional pace than other parts of Nigeria. Northern Nigerians did not benefit from a legislative council until 1946, gain executive council membership until 1951, enjoy electoral privileges until 1952 or exercise full responsible government until 1959 – much later than Lagos or the southern provinces. The north was the largest region of Nigeria, accounting for over fifty percent of the population and three-quarters of the land area (Wheare, 1950: 5), and its underdevelopment vis-à-vis the other regions precipitated later ethnic conflicts in Nigeria.

(Table 4 about here)

In East Africa, communal representation formed the basis of legislative council selection, and Africans achieved political representation later than other racial groups (see Table 4). It was not until 1945 that Africans in both Kenya and Tanganyika were nominated to the central legislature, not until 1951 in Tanganyika that they were appointed to the executive council (1952 in Kenya), and not until 1957 in Kenya that they enjoyed elective representation on the legislature (1958 in Tanganyika). Legislative council seats continued to be racially allocated until 1958 in Tanganyika and 1961 in Kenya, after which a common roll was instituted and Africans in both colonies occupied a majority of seats, in keeping with their population proportion.

In India, group representation on central councils reflected not only a growing emphasis on religion, but also the cross-cutting nature of social cleavages (see Table 4). In the late nineteenth century, powerful elites, generally ‘Indian princes, their Dewans or big land-holders’ (Pylee, 1960: 65), were nominated to the central legislature without religious
consideration. After 1909, when British officials prioritised religion in allocating council seats, religion was not the only basis for representation. There were quotas, not only for Muslims (and after 1919 Sikhs), but also for landholders, Indian and European commercial interests and other groups.

**Differentiation of groups at local government level**

Group inequalities were intensified through the differential application of the native authority (or indirect rule) system. Native authority structures encouraged groups to retain traditional institutions and practices, hence stunting their modernisation. It restricted groups’ political aspirations to the local level, shifting their focus away from central government and limiting propensities for nationalism (Hailey, 1957). By contrast, direct rule systems facilitated the integration of groups into higher-level government. The duality in local institutions in the colonies widened the gap between ‘backward’ groups ruled by native authority structures and ‘advanced’ groups enjoying direct rule.

In Nigeria indirect rule was regionally applied. The native authority system was installed in Northern Nigeria and in minor areas of the south. Meanwhile, Lagos Town and key townships in the southeast were directly run, which explains why Lagos became the hotbed of nationalist activity. After 1950, elective local government bodies modelled on the British system replaced native authorities in the south. But in the north the native authority system was maintained (Hailey, 1957: 205).

In Kenya and Tanganyika up to the end of the Second World War, local government arrangements were racially determined. African areas were governed by native authority structures, while non-African areas were directly ruled. This policy promoted the differential development of Africans and non-Africans: Africans were tribally focused, while non-native political ambitions concentrated on the central legislature. After the war, local government was modernised in both colonies. In Tanganyika, racial divisions were diminished by the
creation of elected multiracial local councils, on which Africans were represented according to their population proportion. But in Kenya, racial inequalities persisted: in African areas, native authorities were replaced by district councils whose members were appointed by the provincial commissioner; while in non-African areas, elected county councils with powers analogous to those in Britain were installed (Hailey, 1957: 448).

In India, indirect rule applied mainly to the native princely states, which made up one-third of the Indian subcontinent but were administered separately from British India. These principalities were (to varying degrees) internally self-governing but subject to British paramountcy in their external affairs. Popular representation was not a feature of government in these states, and British protection insulated princes from accountability to their subjects (Chudgar, 1929: 101-5). So it was only the directly-ruled British Indian provinces that underwent administrative modernisation over time, beginning at local and provincial levels and eventually extending to central government level.

Summary

In Africa, the largest social groups were sidelined from substantive political participation and underdeveloped economically and socially to contain their nationalism. In India, religion was politicised to fracture an otherwise pluralistic population. The social conflicts the British manufactured in India, Kenya and Nigeria spilled over into factional violence in the run-up to independence. Tanganyika entered independence peacefully mainly because of its ethos of non-discrimination, however loosely practiced.

Unwilling to cede power to indigenous populations, British officials manufactured a myth that groups were untrained in government and inexperienced in democratic processes, not through British administrative design, but because of ‘their own unreadiness to take up such complex responsibilities’ (Perham, 1950: xiii). But, as the next section shows, when
nationalist groups mobilised for political advancement and independence, threatening to destabilise the colonial regime, British administrators worked hard to suppress them.

**Colonial Nationalism and British Counter-Nationalism**

Despite strong institutional mechanisms for preventing nationalism in the colonies, native political parties did eventually mobilise for self-government and independence. In staving off their demands, British administrators fuelled conflicts between indigenous groups and used their control of colonial law and order functions to restrict the activities of nationalist parties. Colonial ‘divide and rule’ strategies were employed not only to curtail nationalism but also to justify British autocracy as necessary for stabilising social tensions and maintaining effective territorial control.

In general, nationalist political parties mobilised only after legislative council representation had already been extended to non-white groups in the colonies. In Nigeria, elections were the spur for organised political activity. Before 1945, nationalism in that colony was confined to Lagos and, to a lesser degree, Calabar, ‘since there was little scope for political activity in towns which had no seats on the Legislative Council’ (Crowder, 1978: 210). With the democratisation of the legislature after the Second World War, Nigerian political parties proliferated, and two southern parties campaigned for Nigerian self-government and independence – the mainly Igbo National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) and the predominantly Yoruba Action Group. In India and Tanganyika, nationalist parties formed after indigenous groups had been nominated to the legislative council. The Indian National Congress formed in 1885, twenty-four years after an Indian was appointed, while the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU) was established in 1954, nine years after Africans gained unofficial representation. In Kenya alone did a nationalist party, the Kikuyu Central Association, mobilise prior to having gained legislative council
representation (Ghai and McAuslan, 1970: 64). The party formed in 1922, but did not gain a seat on the council until 1945 – a year after the lifting of a four-year ban on its activities under emergency war legislation. The racism inherent in British policies in Kenya caused African frustrations to grow, boiling over into the Mau Mau uprisings of the 1950s. From 1953 through 1960, the colonial government prohibited all African political associations, so it was not until 1961 that the radical Kenya African National Union (KANU) formed.

To combat the growing strength of nationalist movements, British officials identified those groups which nationalist parties failed to represent and encouraged them to form countervailing ‘loyalist’ movements. In India, they capitalised on the failure of Congress to attract Muslims and ignited Muslim fears that, if Congress alone were to represent the people of India, a Hindu majority would deny Muslims political rights. Eager to curry Muslim favour, British administrators rewarded the Muslim League with separate legislative council representation shortly after they formed in 1906. From that time forward, the two groups pursued opposing goals: Congress engaged in civil disobedience to further the nationalist cause, while Muslims pledged loyalty to the Crown in exchange for political rights and representation. In Nigeria, British administrators persuaded the northern emirs to form a group opposed to the southern parties by stirring fears that independence would lead to a government dominated by the south. The emirs formed the Northern People’s Congress (NPC), with the aim of preserving Muslim traditional institutions from outside influence. As nationalist activity intensified in the south, so did northern fears of southern tyranny – a situation that led to political instability and inter-ethnic violence:

[T]he northern leaders attempted to secede from the 1914 Nigerian arrangement. However, the northern leaders were persuaded by the British to remain in Nigeria, with the tacit, at least, understanding that political power would remain in the north. Some leaders of the Action Group, the political
party that dominated much of western Nigeria, visited the north in 1953 to explain the need for self-government to the northern populace. Although they campaigned in the Hausa language in Kano, their daring infiltration of the heart of Islam only resulted in a fracas that eventually led to the first mass killings of southerners… (Williams, 1997: 40).

In Kenya, counter-nationalism involved transforming ethnicity into a politically relevant cleavage. Since KANU represented the two largest tribes in Kenya (Kikuyu and Luo), British officials persuaded the smaller, more rural, less educated, conservative tribes to form a rival party, the Kenya African Democratic Union (KADU). In Tanganyika, TANU’s progressiveness was combated by encouraging the acquiescent African nominated members of the legislative council to form an opposing party, the United Tanganyika Party (UTP). The UTP supported the official view that the three races should each be allocated an equal number of seats on central government councils, while TANU championed the idea that Africans, as the largest race in Tanganyika, should receive representation in line with their population proportion. The two groups formed opposing sides in the run-up to independence.

The social conflicts manufactured through the promotion of countervailing movements were deepened through the differential application of colonial legislation and the use of force. In any case, Western-style liberal values were not a feature in most British (or European) colonies:

[T]he colonial states imposed upon Africa and other areas of the Third World at that time differed from those imposed upon the Caribbean and India during the earlier mercantilist era of European imperialism in a number of ways...

[T]he colonial state imposed there “embodied only select… truncated features of their historic progenitor” with the “state-limiting doctrines of constitutionalism, civil liberties and liberalism... selectively excluded from the
ideological baggage invoked to rationalise colonial hegemony.” In their place were substituted the notions of trusteeship, good government and mise en valeur (Twaddle, 1992: 13-14).

In India, Nigeria and Kenya, anti-sedition acts were targeted mainly at nationalist groups. The 1919 Rowlatt Acts – which gave British officials in India emergency powers to censor the press, detain political activists without trial and arrest suspects without a warrant – applied primarily to Congress. Demonstrations against the Acts culminated in the 1919 Amritsar massacre. Congress’s 1930 salt march resulted in the arrest of 60,000 people. Its protests during the Second World War caused Congress to be outlawed and its leaders arrested. In Nigeria and Kenya, nationalist groups producing newspapers were often charged with sedition. The Kikuyu in Kenya published a newspaper hostile to British official policy, while newspapers in Lagos and Calabar maintained an intensely critical attitude towards the Government and even towards the majority of African members of the Legislative Council’ (Wheare, 1950: 57). Only in Tanganyika were illiberal colonial policies not easily implemented, owing to the constraints of international supervision and scrutiny: Trusteeship allowed a forum for free expression, and TANU used the medium of the Trusteeship Council to force change in colonial government policies.

British counter-nationalism was not simply illiberal; it was also anti-democratic. The groups behind which the British rallied were the most politically underdeveloped in the colonies and therefore understandably worried by the prospect of ‘fending for themselves’ in an unprotected environment. But rather than preparing these groups for self-government and independence, British officials encouraged their ‘backwardness’ and dependence on British rule by fuelling fears that independence would result in their ‘losing everything’ to their more politically experienced opponents. In doing so, British administrators portrayed
representative government as a ‘zero-sum’ game where, without British protection, inexperienced factions would fall to the mercy of more progressive elements in society.

However, in certain colonies – notably India and Tanganyika – political parties were able to subvert British counter-nationalism by forming ‘inclusive’ associations. In Tanganyika, TANU’s moderate approach enabled it to gain countrywide inter-ethnic support; it incorporated masses as well as elites into the party structure and maintained branches in every district and in most villages. In India during the 1920s, Mahatma Gandhi’s leadership helped to transform Congress from an elite to a mass party. Congress’s reorganisation of provincial units along linguistic lines allowed it to incorporate politicians speaking vernacular languages, thus becoming truly ‘national’ (Adeney and Wyatt, 2004: 9). The Muslim League also became more mass-based and in the 1930s gained support from regional Islamic organisations as well as groups in Punjab and Bengal. Moreover, because of its cross-cutting cleavage structure, India produced political parties that were not merely religiously aligned: some were ideological, such as the Swaraj Party, the Maha Sabha Party, the Communist Party and the Unionist Party, while others were built around regionally specific ethnic identities – for instance, Sikhs in Punjab, non-Brahmans in Madras and Mahars in Maharashtra. This complexity allowed India to escape the ‘zero-sum’ political mentality that plagued most other former British colonies following independence.

The social divisions created by British counter-nationalist strategies affected post-independence developments in all the colonies. In Kenya and Tanganyika, the grant of independence left ‘loyalist’ groups without an ideology, leading to their demise (UTP) or their merging with their former opponents (KADU), resulting in single-party dominance in both territories. In Nigeria, ‘divide and rule’ strategies intensified ethno-regional conflicts, ruling out later possibilities for lasting inter-group cooperation. The effects of British social machinations were most far-reaching in India, producing civil war and partition. However, the resultant countries (India and Pakistan) were seemingly well-placed to sustain stable
democratic systems of government, since both benefited from well-established, experienced ‘national’ parties commanding cross-ethnic support, and partition gave each a large religious majority population.

How, then, do we account for India having successfully transited to democracy after independence, while Pakistan and Britain’s African colonies failed to do so? How did the colonial legacy act as a constraint on the new states’ progress towards liberal democracy? The next section addresses these issues.

**Path Dependence in British India and Africa**

Britain’s administrative legacy to its former colonies is summarised in Table 5. The table provides an indication of factors that enabled India to sustain a stable democratic system of government following independence but blocked transitions to democracy in Pakistan, Nigeria, Kenya and Tanzania. It shows that, in general, British colonial policies and institutions formed a constraint on countries’ abilities to achieve and maintain democratic structures following independence. However, India was able to make the shift to democracy, because partition reduced religion’s salience as a political issue and because India’s new leaders successfully incorporated diverse groups into the state.

(Table 5 about here)

The top half of Table 5 displays indicators of democratisation, including the political training of indigenous elites, across the five countries. Two trends are evident. First, India (and Pakistan) benefited from a much longer period of non-autocratic rule prior to independence than Britain’s African colonies. India (and Pakistan) experienced 28 years of unofficial dominance in the central legislature before independence – double that of Nigeria
and a quarter-century longer than Kenya and Tanganyika. Not only that, but this quasi-representative institution had applied to the bulk (two-thirds) of the Indian subcontinent; only the native princely states and some chief commissioner provinces were excluded from the internal democratisation drive. By contrast, Northern Nigeria – constituting over half of Nigeria – did not enjoy legislative council representation until 1946. So while Table 5 shows Nigeria as roughly equivalent to India in terms of how long before independence native groups were elected to the central legislature, there were key differences between the two colonies, even on this indicator.

Second, indigenous elites in India received far more practical political training under British rule than native groups in Africa. Indian elites had been vested with executive responsibilities for 28 years prior to independence, compared to nine years in Nigeria and Kenya and only two in Tanganyika. Tanganyika’s political underdevelopment vis-à-vis the other colonies was reinforced by its 1964 amalgamation with Zanzibar, the autocratically ruled protectorate of Kenya.

Other forms of social development did not compensate for the lack of native political development. In this respect, India (and Pakistan) was no different from the African colonies. Table 5 shows that, on average from 1900 to 1938, less than ten percent of public expenditures in India, Nigeria and Kenya was dedicated to social programmes. Only Tanganyika evidenced higher spending in these areas, no doubt a result of its having been under international scrutiny. The picture remains unchanged if we extend the observed period to 1946: in every colony but Tanganyika, less than ten percent of the budget was devoted to social welfare. Education became a spending priority in Africa, particularly in Tanganyika and Nigeria, only after the Second World War (see Table 3).

The timing of legislative reforms to some degree determined the timing of indigenous political mobilisation. Hence, the political parties that led India (and Pakistan) into independence had a longer history than those in Africa and had amassed greater experience in
running political organisations, if not running government, prior to independence (see Table 5). At independence, Congress had been a force in Indian politics for 60 years, while the Muslim League had been in existence 40 years. By contrast, indigenous political organisations in Kenya had lacked continuity until 1961, when they finally encompassed the interests of more than one tribe. And although TANU had successfully gained acceptance across social groups in Tanganyika by independence, the party had formed only in 1954. Nigeria lacked a single ‘national’ party unifying the country, but instead had several regional parties which emerged after 1946. Only in India (and Pakistan) did countrywide parties freely develop before the Second World War.

In the run-up to independence, social divisions in India, Tanganyika and Kenya became more negotiable, while those in Nigeria and Pakistan deepened. Everywhere but Nigeria, social cleavage structures were displaced (see Table 5). The partition of India and Pakistan resulted in religious cleavages becoming subordinated to linguistic divisions (although religious tensions were still a problem in particular regions). In Tanganyika and Kenya, the democratisation of government structures enabled ethnic differences among Africans to supersede (but not eliminate) racial cleavages between Africans and other groups. Meanwhile, Nigeria continued to suffer deep ethno-regional conflicts originating in the colonial period.

Notwithstanding the social diversity of these countries, the British furnished all of them (apart from Pakistan) with majoritarian systems of government, the main institutional variation being whether they had unitary or federal structures attached to them. But the majoritarian systems were not appropriate to the structure of society in any of the countries, apart from post-partition India. This impeded countries’ transitions to democracy following independence.

India’s transition to democracy owed a great deal to its new territorial boundaries and the orientation of its political leadership. Partition gave India a large Hindu majority (83
percent of the population), so that the majoritarian system it inherited from the British became an appropriate form for representing social preferences. India’s centralised federal structure (also a British relic) allowed for linguistic differences to be accommodated, particularly after Congress’s 1956 reorganisation of states along linguistic lines (Adeney and Wyatt, 2004: 10). Congress’s willingness to integrate all sizeable groups into the state, both on a horizontal (cross-ethnic) and vertical (mass) basis, gave the party legitimacy, while its failure to gain Muslim support became less critical after independence. Muslims now comprised only 11 percent of the population, and religious divisions were cross-cut by numerous regional, language and caste cleavages. The multiplicity of group identities reduced the scope for prolonged social conflicts in India, enhancing regime stability (Manor, 1996: 463). The move away from autocracy, begun during the colonial period, was extended by Jawaharlal Nehru, who led India further towards liberal democracy (Varshney, 1998).

India’s 1950 constitution allowed for elections based on universal adult suffrage and included provisions protecting freedoms of speech, assembly, culture, language and religion. Although Congress dominated Indian elections at both national and state levels during the first two decades after independence, ‘with increasing frequency since the mid-1960s, regional parties … successfully challenged Congress’s hold on various states’ (Hardgrave, 1993: 57), and after 1977 Congress was defeated several times at the national level. India’s leaders were able to devise democratic structures, partly because they had undergone some political training during the colonial period. This was not the result of British investment in education, but rather of Indians having participated in their country’s government long before the Crown took over in 1858.

Pakistan, although sharing a history with India, found that partition meant relinquishing those aspects of its colonial heritage that would have allowed it to make the transition to democracy. Like India, Pakistan benefited from a large majority religious group. But, unlike India, Pakistan lacked a centralised government system with established
provincial links; its state apparatus had remained in India. Political elites in Pakistan were constrained by the need to not only build government institutions ‘from scratch’, but also to create a system serving the east and west wings of the country (Adeney and Wyatt, 2004: 13). The party most capable of devising such a system, the well-trained Muslim League, had lost its organisational structure and social links following partition. Moreover, the League’s ideological foundation – the struggle to overcome Hindu dominance in India – was no longer relevant (Adeney and Wyatt, 2004: 11-12). The League’s support base eroded, it lost legitimacy and split rapidly after independence. Thereafter regional parties replaced a national party uniting Pakistan, reflecting Pakistan’s cumulative social cleavage patterns. Pakistan had fewer major linguistic groups than India (five versus eighteen), but they were more territorially concentrated and more unequal. Bengali speakers (54 percent of the population) were politically and economically underdeveloped compared to Punjabi speakers, who dominated Pakistan’s political and military structures (Jaffrelot, 2002: 256; Adeney and Wyatt, 2004: 13). Democratisation would have meant Punjabis ceding power to Bengalis, a move they resisted in the same way colonial officials had resisted sharing power with groups in British India. Punjabis’ desire to preserve state control from internal challenges and external threats (from India) meant that the army assumed prime importance in post-independence Pakistan (Adeney and Wyatt, 2004: 13).

Nigeria’s transition to democracy was blocked by deep ethno-regional cleavages, its main colonial inheritance, coupled with inappropriate governing structures. The majoritarian system installed by the British did not fit the structure of society in Nigeria and allowed the kinds of ‘zero-sum’ conflicts that British administrators had warned about (while also fostering) to develop: ‘In [deeply divided] societies therefore, majority rule spells majority dictatorship and civil strife rather than democracy’ (Lijphart, 1984: 23). The dominant party in government in post-independence Nigeria – the Northern People’s Congress – did not (as Indians had) alter the centralised federal structure to accommodate regional differences and
integrate groups into the state. This was partly due to a lack of political training, since none of the regional parties had gained experience in running central government during the colonial era; their political participation had been restricted to the regional level. But it was mainly due to colonial-era indoctrination: NPC leaders had been conditioned into thinking that independence would lead to southern tyranny, and they continued to believe this after independence. So while, immediately following independence, the NPC formed coalitions with one (but not both) of the southern parties to win national elections, northern leaders soon realised they did not need southern cooperation to control government. They overthrew democracy for authoritarianism and, from 1966 to 1999, dominated Nigeria’s military and government structures and suspended civil liberties. Southern parties, which had dominated public life during the colonial era, were also aligned against democracy, since the system favoured majority parties. The divisiveness of regional parties and their need to seize state control meant that Nigeria’s post-independence history was characterised by military coups, counter-coups, secessionist movements and civil war. Northern generals rationalised their autocracy as the only way to control social tensions in Nigeria. In doing so, they drew upon British justifications for eighty-four years of autocratic rule.

Kenya’s transition to democracy was impeded by unsuitable constitutional arrangements, poorly trained political leaders and an entrenched history of autocracy. Following independence, its two main political parties merged, demonstrating that ethnic divisions in Kenya were not very pronounced (Carey, 2002: 58). Nevertheless, the majoritarian system the British had installed was inappropriate, because Kenya’s population was heterogeneous with small-sized majority groups. The centralised federal structure, with which Kenya had been furnished six months before independence, could have been adjusted to accommodate group differences (as in India), thereby modifying its majoritarianism and securing regime stability. However, KANU lacked well-trained political leaders capable of devising solutions to prevent social fragmentation. So the party instead discarded the federal
system and reverted to the unitary, centralised, autocratic structure under which it had been ruled by the British for sixty-six years: ‘The default option for any bureaucrat is to continue the policies in place… Unless circumstances provide some sharp rupture, as in the case of countries winning independence after a protracted armed struggle, the subliminal forces tending towards a reproduction of the state are formidable’ (Young, 2004: 29). In 1969 KANU banned all other political parties, making Kenya a de facto one-party state. Certain sizeable ethnic groups were sidelined from political participation. In 1982, President Daniel arap Moi proclaimed himself and his executive supreme over the country’s parliament, judiciary and constitution. Hence, the ‘first great principle’ of crown colony government – the subordination of the legislature to the executive – was restored in Kenya. All power lay with Moi, who became, in effect, the colonial governor-in-council. Moi suspended civil liberties and used preventive detention (a colonial practice) to eliminate political opponents and suppress criticism. He justified his autocracy on the basis that competitive democracy would lead to ethnic fragmentation and violence, a point he strengthened by fostering ethnic clashes in classic ‘divide and rule’ fashion (Carey, 2002: 58).

Tanzania’s transition to democracy was hindered by an entrenched history of autocracy, inappropriate constitutional arrangements and poorly trained political elites. Tanganyika’s population was more heterogeneous than Kenya’s and its ethnic groups more fractionalised. Therefore the majoritarian system left by the British was unsuitable to its society. Tanganyika did not inherit a federal structure, since its groups were territorially dispersed, so it could not modify its majoritarianism. But, like Congress in India, TANU tried to integrate all sizeable groups into the state on a cross-ethnic and mass basis, which gave the party legitimacy. TANU’s leader, Julius Nyerere, enjoyed countrywide support, winning over 90 percent of the vote in elections between 1960 and 1980 (Barkan, 1984). However, TANU lacked the large-majority advantages Congress had, and as the only political party commanding mass support in Tanganyika, TANU sought to maintain unchallenged state
authority, particularly to advance its ujamaa socialist agenda. So the party reverted to the authoritarian structures of the colonial era, justifying them as necessary to maintain social harmony and effective rule. Shortly after taking power, TANU banned all other political parties and established a de facto one-party state, justifying its decision in the 1965 report of the Tanzania Presidential Commission on the Establishment of a Democratic One Party State (Cliffe, 1967: 438-65). Nyerere’s arguments that democratic competition could occur within one party rather than between multiple parties may have signalled his confusion about the nature of democracy – understandable considering that Tanganyika had only begun democratising two years before independence and its elites had received little training in political processes under British rule.21 However, TANU’s democratic defence became less defensible by 1975, when the party proclaimed itself supreme over parliament, the judiciary and the government, thus reinstating the ‘first great principle’ of crown colony government.22 Whereas colonial Tanganyika had enjoyed fairly liberal policies due to its international status, independent Tanzania ran a repressive regime. TANU used preventive detention to eliminate political opponents, including a former cabinet minister, and had a worse record of political repression than Kenya: ‘over several years [Tanzania took] a far greater number of political prisoners, often running into several hundreds, in comparison with Kenya, with mostly less than thirty’ (Berg-Schlosser and Siegler, 1990: 88; 140).

Countries’ post-independence trajectories were shaped largely by the interaction between the structure of government handed down by the British and the agency of political elites, who variously steered their polities towards or away from democracy. The majoritarian systems the British left in all the countries except Pakistan did not fit the population mix in any of the countries (apart from India, where partition had altered the social structure), and leaders’ abilities to overcome the defects of these structures were constrained by their lack of substantive political training. The centralised federal structures favoured by the British to deal with group differences were also not appropriate for societies with deep divisions, such
as Nigeria and Pakistan, in which inter-group relations were viewed in starkly zero-sum terms. Had these countries instead been furnished with consociational structures (Lijphart, 1977), allowing for power-sharing among disparate groups and checking the authoritarian tendencies of dominant groups, their democratic possibilities would have increased. Federal structures were not useful in countries whose leaders lacked either the experience or incentive to adapt them to incorporate diverse groups. Hence, in countries where populations were very heterogeneous and elites lacked the necessary political training to prevent social fragmentation, the unitary autocratic colonial state was re-instituted to enable social stability and effective control. Even when the system was adjusted to allow for a modicum of ‘democracy’, as in Tanzania, state elites’ tendency to seek unchallenged authority resulted in the institution of illiberal practices.

**Conclusion**

This paper suggests that the British legacy to Pakistan and its former African colonies was a strong inclination towards autocracy. The newly created states were not, as it were, ‘locked in’ to this ‘path’, but several interlinked factors combined to make a detour towards democratic governance extremely unlikely. These included vested interests (parties wishing to maintain state power), a fear of change (groups’ lack of experience operating within even partly democratic institutions) and the perceived costs of change (concerns over potentially declining social stability and/or state effectiveness) (Alexander, 2001: 253). Had partition not taken place in India, thus creating a large Hindu majority, India too may have followed the path of autocratic rule. Even its politically experienced rulers may well have been overcome by the deep Hindu-Muslim divisions that characterised the final phases of colonial rule.

Post-independence developments in Pakistan and Africa might have been different had British officials done more, earlier on, to democratise government structures and develop
the political capacities of colonial populations. British imperial administrators subsequently
defended their actions by arguing that they had not expected decolonisation to occur as
quickly as it did, and that political and social development in the colonies had been planned
for a later date, at a more gradual pace. However, the public expenditure analysis presented in
this paper reveals a rather different picture: British officials running the Indian and African
colonies did very little at the central government level beyond maintaining law and order and
developing the externally-oriented economic infrastructure.

The model developed in this paper shows that an entrenched history of
authoritarianism is difficult for a country to overcome, especially if its society is
characterised by cumulative cleavages and/or its political elites are inexperienced in
democratic processes. In such cases, even when democratic systems have been put in place at
the moment of decolonization, the tendency is for new elites to re-establish autocratic
structures to maintain order and control. Other social values, such as individual liberty or
social development, become subordinated to these goals. If social tensions can be alleviated
by ensuring that government arrangements fit the structure of society, then democracy
becomes possible. However, a pool of politically trained and educated elites willing to
assume the costs of shifting to liberal democracy is still necessary.

A review of this literature is available in Arrow, 2000.

Popular examples include Rodney, 1972; Amin, 1974; Wallerstein, 1974.

For example, Young, 2004; Randall & Theobald, 1998; Abernethy, 2000; Mamdani, 1996; Young, 1994.

For example, Young, 1994; Abernethy, 2000

For example, Adeney & Wyatt, 2004; Carey, 2002.

The colonies accounted for one-third of the land mass and half the population of British Africa (Subrahmanyam, 2003: 192)

Although Kenya’s legislature became semi-representative in 1948, it lapsed back to official majority rule in 1954 as a result of the Mau Mau threat. An unofficial majority was not restored until 1961.

From 1858, India was effectively ruled by the British state before 1858, although not legally so.

British Baluchistan, Delhi, Ajmer-Merwara, Coorg, and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands

Perhaps Tanganyika’s lack of deep social divisions made it a more threatening case for democratisation.


Three basic cleavage structures exist: cumulative, intermediate and cross-cutting. A society with cumulative cleavages is intensely divided, and groups divisions (such as class, race, religion or ethnicity) are mutually reinforcing and ‘run in the same direction and in almost exactly the same place in society’ (Dunleavy and O’Leary, 1987: 60-63). A society with cross-cutting cleavages is more pluralistic, and group divisions form ‘along lines running in every direction… [so that] society is sewn together by its inner conflicts’ (Ross, 1920: 164-5). A society with intermediate divisions falls between the two.

Some members of the Muslim League also joined in these demonstrations.

The UN Charter provided for periodic inspections to be carried out in its trust territories and accepted petitions from displeased factions, British or African.

Muslims constituted around 85 percent of the population.

Kenya had a range of racial and ethnic groups. Its largest group, the Kikuyu, comprised 20 percent of the population.

Jomo Kenyatta sidelined the Luo, while Daniel arap Moi excluded the three largest ethnicities.

Tanganyika had 120 distinct ethnic groups. Its largest group comprised 15 percent of the population.


Zanzibar, which merged with Tanganyika in 1964, was separately administered until 1977. It too was run as a one-party state, with the Afro-Shirazi Party declared the only permitted party (Schönborn, 1978). Zanzibar’s combination of deep racial cleavages and non-democratically aligned groups meant that developments there mirrored those in Nigeria. When the majority African population sidelined Arab and Shirazi groups from political participation, the excluded factions staged coups and secession movements (Berg-Schlosser & Siegler, 1990: 74). After 1977, a single party ruled all of Tanzania.
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### Table 1. Constitutional arrangements in British India, Nigeria, Kenya and Tanganyika, 1858-1963

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Nigeria</th>
<th>Kenya</th>
<th>Tanganyika</th>
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<td>6. Representative government</td>
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**Note:** The table tracks constitutional changes in colonies and regions from the date they came under Crown rule, not the date they came under British influence.
Table 2. Functional distribution of public spending in India, Nigeria, Kenya and Tanganyika, 1900-60
(amounts shown are percentages of total spending)

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Table 3. Five leading areas of public spending in India, Nigeria, Kenya and Tanganyika, 1910-1960
(amounts shown are percentages of total spending)

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**Note:** In Tanganyika, only British subjects could be represented on the central councils.
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<th>Democritisation indicators (years prior to independence)</th>
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<td>Native groups vested with executive responsibilities</td>
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<th>Princely states</th>
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<th>Northern Nigeria till 1946</th>
<th>Zanzibar protectorate</th>
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<td>Cumulative</td>
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