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Why does being a former British colony matter?

Much of the comparative literature has focused upon democratic transition and consolidation. Lipset has linked economic development (Lipset 31) and Przeworski per capita income (Przeworski and Limongi 160) to democratic durability. Lijphart and Gunther, among others, have argued elite actions can counteract instability-inducing situations (Lijphart 211; Burton *et al.* 4). For Almond and Verba, mass-level beliefs were critical (Almond and Verba 31). Below is a suggestion, based upon a subset of the cases, which links previous regime-type, and more broadly the practices of that regime, to the choice of democratic successor regimes. This is broadly a path-dependent argument but there are a variety of paths   the variation between which is beyond the scope of this essay   which may share characteristics outlined here. A greater degree of specificity than the derivable assertion History matters! is sought.

Among the numerous factors identified as contributing to democratic implementation and consolidation, Lipset, Seong and Torres suggest that post-colonial states[1] which experienced British rule were more likely to be democracies after independence than other post-colonial states (Lipset *et al.* 168). The specific characteristics of ex-British colonies which predispose them to democratic governance need to be explored. Furthermore, the mechanisms linking the two and relative importance of the various explanatory factors must be evaluated. Below will be no conclusive answers, empirically verified, but informed speculation drawing upon a number of relevant cases.

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[1] Post-colonial states are those which were granted independence in the years following WWII and during the Cold War. These states were previously ruled *directly and formally* by the United States, Australia, South Africa, Japan or one of the European metropolitan powers. Independence may have been achieved by any means.

First of all, is Lipset *et al.,* s assertion correct and does their data support the hypothesis? Lipset *et al.* s assertion is ambiguous: more likely to be democratic (Lipset *et al.* 168) could indicate a durable democracy or not. It merely asks whether the state is democratic at the time point of the study, regardless of whether that entity is newly liberated or undergoing institutional consolidation; both transition and durability may be conflated. Both questions will be considered to some degree here: Does a British colonial history produce the establishment of a democratic regime? Does a British colonial history produce democratic stability, or a durable democratic regime?

Lipset *et al.* have created a dummy variable for former British and French colonies[2]. British colonization is associated with democratization while the French experience produced the opposite effect (Lipset *et al.* 159). The authors present the counts and shares of various ex-colonies, grouped by metropole, in three categories (democratic, semi-democratic, authoritarian) of relative freedom in 1989. Half of the ex-British colonies were democratic but none of the French ones were (Lipset *et al.* 169). Bollen and Jackman (1985) and Crenshaw (1995) has also confirmed this in an ecological study using time points from 1960-70 drawn from different data sets. Lipset *et al.* cite an observation of Myron Weiner which bears repeating, *Every country with a population of at least 1 million ... that has emerged from colonial rule since World War II and has had continuous democratic experience is a former British colony* (Lipset *et al.* 168). There is perhaps something particular to British colonialism which facilitates democratization and for Weiner the continuation of that regime-type. For the first case, a simple explanation

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[2] During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Britain and France possessed the largest empires both by territorial extent and population not contiguous to the metropole. Both empires reached their greatest extent in the early interwar period. Fifty-two and 25 countries are identified for Britain and France, respectively. In addition Table 5 lists colonial powers Spain, Portugal, Belgium, the Netherlands, US, Australia and Japan (Lipset *et al.* 169).

could be offered, based upon the German and Japanese experiences following WWII, that the departing administrative power setup particular institutions to replace it upon independence. Britain created such democratic institutions in its waning colonial years. If no minimum period of time for the maintenance of the regime-type is specified, the imposition of institutions argument may seem a reasonable suggestion. States in the second wave described by Huntington include examples of this process (Huntington 1991). Yet, as the focus shifts to consolidation and stability after the end of occupation, democracy by edict explanations become untenable.

The democratic regime of a post-colonial state in this example has been imposed by the colonizer. The imposed institutions may be of a relatively new regime-type or of one with a deeper local history. Regardless, the imposed regime is not an indigenous construction and may be seen, along with the *lingua franca* and foreign-owned property, as a left-over trapping of metropolitan dominance. Why should the newly-liberated population not sweep away democracy and replace it with their own institutions? As was seen in post-communist Eastern Europe, institutions forcibly imposed by an external power have a short life when that power removes its support. However, indigenously-spawned communism in Cuba and China have survived the fall of the Soviet Union. Similarly, new postcolonial states may wish to shake off the shackles of imposed democracy (democracy self-determination). So, the real question becomes: Why does democracy endure in some post-colonial states but not others?

Lipset *et al.* offer several ideas rooted in what are described as cultural factors. For Britain s settler colonies (US and the White Dominions), prior to independence there had been considerable experience with elections, self-government and a judiciary[3]. These were absent in

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[3] The judiciary is an area of institutions which deserves more attention than it is receiving currently. The institutions literature focuses primarily on legislative and executive-legislative behavior while largely neglecting the judiciary.

other settler colonies (which incidentally were attached to non-democratic metropoles in this early period). The pre-independence democratic practice gradually extended to more local affairs is suggested as the key explanation (Lipset *et al.* 168) as it socializes indigenous elites within such institutions. The UK tried this again a century later with the Government of India Act of 1935 which provided for self governance at the provincial level while expanding the franchise from 3% to 18% of the population (including women). This was real autonomy and the Indian National Congress resolved to work within the system. In the 1937 elections under this act Indian National Congress did well in Hindu areas (formed government in seven of eleven provinces) but in Muslim separate elections the Muslim League did horribly and local parties won in Muslim majority areas (Sundaram 11). However, this time the franchise was relatively more restricted and certain discretionary powers over even local matters were invested in the Governor General (who was responsible only to Westminster). Nehru called this a slave constitution. As a symbol of continued oppression, one may expect associated institutions to be eliminated but not only did India retain the fundamental democratic regime-type but certain sections of the Government of India Act of 1935 (250 of the 395 articles) were left in the new Constitution (which went into effect in 1950; India was independent for three years under British-authorized statute). In this way institutional interruption was limited (Sundaram 30). At first glance, socialization appears to be a critical factor but these colonial democratic institutions and practices were used in states which became democratic failures as well. Hence, there may be a number of other attributes which underlie the British colonial experience of the second empire[4] period which may facilitate

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[4]Britain has two imperial periods during its time as a Great Power. The first began with England s victory (naval superiority) in the Anglo-Dutch wars (1684) and ended with the loss of its American seaboard colonies from defeat by France, Holland and Spain. White settler colonies were established in what would become the US, South Africa, Australia and Canada along slavery-based possessions and a number of other trading posts. The second began after the end of the Napoleonic

democratic consolidation.

An non-exhaustive set of attributes to explain the role, or effect, of British colonialism include: peaceful decolonization; democratic values indoctrination (education); practicing democracy (elections) prior to independence; civil service institutional continuity; nature of the civil service; a specific development of a particular economic relationship to the metropole. Each of these have not been present in particular colonies.

India, Sri Lanka, Tanzania and Ghana, amongst others, were peacefully decolonized by the British. Alternatively, Zimbabwe/Rhodesia gained sovereignty through violent struggle. In the British decolonization model peaceful departure is postulated rather than mass *political* violence, which Powell argues is an indicator of a failed political order (Powell 21), as the French experienced in Algeria and Vietnam. This suggests several hypotheses:

(1) A violent national liberation struggle requires a military/paramilitary organizational form to be successful. This form is inherently hierarchical and authoritarian and suspicious of competitors. This produces a paranoid one-party state (the liberators are unwilling to recognize an opposition as legitimate; they cling to power based upon a revolutionary role) or an authoritarian state which includes no pretense of parties. The system is not competitive and leaves no room for the entry of other political parties into the system. There is no recognition of the opposition as legitimate by those governing.

(2) Negotiated liberation through normal channels involves the gradual integration and socialization of new elites through a pre-systemic change of institutions, i.e., institutions are altered prior to independence, predicting to competitive democracy. Independence struggles

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Wars (naval supremacy) and ended in the post-WWII decolonization. One-fourth of the globe was directly and formally colonized with limited transmigration. This was a different type of colonialism and the one considered for the proposed study.

which are achieved through negotiations are relatively gradual and consist of a series of delegations of power from the metropole to indigenous political actors. Indigenous elites from the liberation movement are brought into the halfway institutions to *participate* in colonial governance. These institutions provide a framework under which the indigenous populations can acquire administrative skills which can be put to use in successor regimes. Most importantly the elites are conditioned, or socialized, to operate under agreed-to rules and to respect them as binding. Furthermore, institutions of governance can select elites from multiple indigenous organizations and if permitted choose to elevate organization members under rules differing from that organization. Depending upon the specific rules, this may provide an opportunity for competition to be practiced. Contrasting with (para)military organizations which are very hierarchical and do not provide opportunities for dissent, this can be a source of divergence for regime-selection and stability outcomes.

(3) Liberation of a mix of violence and negotiation generates both types of factions which compete over systemic issues (regime-type). This produces an unstable system which oscillates between democracy and one-party rule. This is not just a category for movements whose tactics are difficult to define in the above categories but a grouping for movements which employ both tactics in a mix such that neither one dominates, or employ both tactics each against a different metropolitan opposition. A mix of movement tactics generates both of the institutions and interests such that they exist in the successor society. In one sense, both types of institutions compete but this is not the competition of the advanced liberal democracies. Rather, the two factions are mutually deemed illegitimate, subversive and anti-system by the other. When in power supporters of the other regime-type cannot be considered a loyal opposition but an internal enemy to be eradicated. Yet, as the faction has support in society and claims sole legitimacy

for liberation   the governing regime is unable to crush it. This allows oscillation amongst

regime-types to take place as long as no equilibrium has been reached.

(4) While the previous three hypotheses have as their starting point movement tactics,

institutional continuity is more focused on what successful movements do to the colonial

institutions. There are three aspects to this: continuity of rules, continuity of management and

continuity of staff. Institutional continuity will correlate with system stability. Continuity exists

in cases where the change of regime makes few changes to or minor reforms of institutions rather

than wholesale restructuring of these institutions. Transitions which retain administrative

institutions from the previous period with a trained experienced staff will, ceteris paribus, have a

more stable experience. The administrative apparatus also forms an important building block of

the new state upon which to build instrumental legitimacy for the regime. For the typical citizen

most contact with governing institutions comes by interaction with various parts of the

administrative apparatus, the bureaucracy. In the past the villages were little affected by the

changes of governmental authority. For the villager it did matter who ruled in Delhi: Mughal

Maratha or Englishman. His concern was with his crops, the next monsoon and with the annual

visit of the collecting officer. The last his only contact with the state. Even the most sophisticated

administrative system as that employed by the Mughals penetrated the village for almost wholly

extractive purposes (Sundaram 4). This is also where comparison amongst regimes for the

individual occurs. Has independence been worth it? The individual may make that evaluation on

the basis of government services. The destruction of the administrative apparatus may well

impair successor regime s ability to competently provide government services. This failure

provides a basis of opposition to governing elites and undermines support for and identification

with the regime. Even if sovereignty is considered by the public opinion to be a good thing,

instrumental legitimacy may be determinative. In Russia, citizens may well be asking these questions as government services have collapsed in many areas due to institutional discontinuity. Under this hypothesis one would expect regime system instability.

For decolonizing entities:

[Sub-National Identities]

Strong   Weak

Stateness Remains a Problem   [Colonial Institutions]

Security a Major Concern   Democratic   Authoritarian   Metropole-Only Power

Authoritarian Regime Likely   [Liberation Movement]   Violent Rev

Sub-National Identity   National Identity

Civil War   Movt   Org

Auth   Democratic   Authoritarian

Dem Regime   Auth Regime

Education of the indigenous population is thought to be important. An educated native elite, trained in British schools, offers a democratic-leaning governing class engendered apart from traditional methods of obtaining that status. As these educational policies and expenditures were needed long before independence, it raises the question of why the metropole would allocate the resources for it. The reason is an administrative imperative. Lord Macaulay s famous Minute of 1835 argued an English-oriented indigenous elite should be created to staff the civil bureaucracy to reduce payroll and transmigrational requirements for colonial governance. Schools were built for this purpose with many of their excellent students completing their studies

at Cambridge, Oxford or the LSE. These ~~native Englishmen~~ English-educated individuals of colonial origins ironically[5] would eventually form the core of the pro-democratic liberation leaders (people like Nehru, Nyerere, and Nkrumah). These individuals were trained to govern and interact with western states. For this administrative imperative, there was a need to create a comprehensive set of educational institutions in the English medium to create a common civic culture, a class of Indians who embraced British political culture. Within two decades the Presidencies (areas of direct British rule) created Ministries of Education, five universities, 60 arts, 130 technical, 14 medical and 50 teacher s schools enrolling 2.7 million students. Along with this, the commitment to the freedom of the press (like in the UK) was extended to both Brits and Indians. By the late 19th century, there were 600 vernacular papers operating along with major English medium papers in the presidency towns. The British also built a road and rail system, telegraph and penny-post which provided social communication. (These are the sorts of steps Karl Deutsch indicates are involved in state building.) The British had broken down many of the traditional barriers to collective action - inadvertently one would assume. This gave rise to associational life with organizations which were voluntary (do something to become a member), contractual (written constitutions, defined aims) and institutionalized (regular meetings, standing committees) but were local, elitist and largely Hindu (Hindus were more likely to study in English medium schools.) Nonetheless, the organizational foundations of an alternative center of power had been laid. At the same time, Indians had little to say about how they were being governed whether in either of the two Indias the Presidencies (where the British ruled) or Princely States (which were not democratic at all). Decision-making was limited to the *panchyat*

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[5]Ironically, because the UK policy sought to build the means of supporting colonial administration and governance. Rather than reinforce the regime, these graduates would overturn it.

-style village level if at all. As the elite now could communicate (transport, organization, literacy and a lingua franca of English having been provided) the ability to contest institutions became a real possibility (Sundaram 7-8). Demand was made possible and stimulated, but not supplied.

Elections may have occurred to determine the selection of a subset of governing elites with severely restricted portfolios during the colonial period as Lipset *et al.* suggest. The metropole typically retained a veto over even these decisions, as under the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms of 1919. These portfolios concerned matters of relatively lower importance than those reserved to the metropolitan trustees. When the powers involved are more than mere symbolism, this democratic practice can be useful for building procedures and norms (the most important one being embodied in the concept of the Loyal Opposition, viz., the opposition is deemed legitimate and deems the system legitimate (Weil 81, 83)). Where authority falls short, democratic governance may be associated with a lack of efficacy. At this point legitimacy grows out of results not procedure and tradition alone (Muller and Seligson 640).

The use of a Civil Service as a form of institutional continuity may support regime stability. There are three aspects to this institutional continuity: continuity of rules, continuity of management and continuity of staff. Institutional continuity will correlate with system stability. Continuity exists in cases where the change of regime makes few changes to or minor reforms of institutions rather than wholesale restructuring of these institutions. Transitions which retain administrative institutions from the previous period with a trained experienced staff will, ceteris paribus, lead to a more durable outcome. The administrative apparatus also forms an important building block of the new state upon which to build instrumental legitimacy for the regime. For the typical citizen most contact with governing institutions comes by interaction with various parts of the administrative apparatus, the bureaucracy. This is also where comparison amongst

regimes for the individual occurs. Has independence been worth it? The individual may make that evaluation on the basis of government services. The destruction of the administrative apparatus may well impair the successor regime s ability to competently provide government services. This failure provides a basis of opposition to governing elites and undermines support for and identification with the regime. Even if sovereignty is considered by the public opinion to be a good thing, instrumental legitimacy may be determinative. In Russia, citizens may well be asking these questions as government services have collapsed in many areas due to institutional discontinuity. Under this hypothesis, one would expect regime system instability.

Furthermore, the nature of the civil service may vary. Different social groups could be disproportionately represented in it. Recruitment into the ranks of the civil service can be undertaken on either patronage or meritocractic grounds. A perception of undeserved bias in favor of certain groups could undermine service credibility. Selection by merit formally removes political favoritism from the service. Patronage-based recruitment would not help to support democracy as it legitimates traditional clientilism. In the example of successful democratization, India, the Administrative Service (IAS) recruits are subject to entry examination for which 1 out of 700 passes. Cadres are also posted to places other than their home state to afford greater neutrality and along with rotation amongst ministries combat corruption, a major problem in many developing states.

As far as trade patterns are concerned this is where Britain s second empire distinguishes itself. This was an empire of free trade[6] (much of the subjugation was performed private actors

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[6] Trade with the home islands was relatively free. There were constrains on inter-colony trade and interaction with other metropoles. Nonetheless, in comparison to prior mercantilism (see Jacob Viner for an excellent treatment of this) and protected economies such as the United States, the British Empire would fall on the more-liberalized side.

assisted by local administrative apparatuses). The French empire had a much greater degree of direct property ownership and even plantation production in southern Vietnam. There was dominance by relatively-liquid capital controllers in UK colonies but rural agricultural elites dominated in the French colonies. At independence British extrication (if required) was less of a task). The type of metropole-colony economic intercourse deserves further study as this is the factor most tightly tied to the institutions of a given empire.

While all of these factors are to some degree present in the British colonial model, they could occur in other decolonizing states. A further useful step would be to control for metropolitan affiliation. For Lipset *et al.* s assertion to be accepted, British colonial status must be demonstrated beyond a doubt as not spurious. If these hypotheses are borne out in empirical testing, all that is claimed is that they are contributing elements along with the variety of structural *and agency* approaches.

For the empirical testing to be sufficiently comprehensive testing may need to be conducted on *scores* of cases. Given the scope of this essay, that will not be performed here. While the hypotheses are largely based upon the Indian case, other states can be placed into the operational categories. Here are several[7] of the cases.

Elements	Case
1 Independence Struggle Peaceful	India, S Africa[8]

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[7] This number of states is the limit of modern post-colonial states I can place confidently without studying state histories.

[8] Independence being abolition of apartheid.

2 Independence Struggle Violent   Zimbabwe[9], Algeria, Vietnam, Indonesia

3 Independence Struggle Mixed   Pakistan

4 Elite Education System Created   India, Pakistan, Philippines, South Africa

5 Pre-Independence Elections   India, Pakistan, Philippines

6 Civil Service Continuity   India,

7 Metropolitan Investment - Liquid   India, Pakistan, Malaysia

8 Metropolitan Investment - Fixed   Zimbabwe, Algeria, Vietnam, Indonesia

Combinations of factors will clearly be worthy of consideration in further iterations of the

project. Which characteristics go together? Are any more important than others? For these cases

the combinations are:

India 1, 4, 5, 6, 7 Democracy 1947-

Pakistan 3, 4, 5, 7 Mixed Authoritarian and Democratic History

Zimbabwe 2, 8 Authoritarian

South Africa 1, 4, 8 Democracy

Indonesia 2, 8 Mixed Authoritarian and Democratic History

Algeria 2, 8 Mixed Authoritarian and Democratic[10] History

Vietnam 2, 8 Authoritarian

Philippines 1, 4, 5, 8   Mixed Authoritarian and Democratic History

With this small set of cases   and lack of depth on each   no conclusive findings can be

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[9] Independence   from settler rule.

[10] Democratic   in procedures but certainly not liberal. There are also limitations on
contestation: religious parties have been banned since 1997.

offered. What can be concluded is that there are variations in democratic durability amongst former British colonies and there are variations in the characteristics of British colonialism present in these colonies. Hence, it is useful to deconstruct the form and nature of British colonialism to a less historically-bound and more policy-relevant set of variables for which comprehensive empirical testing is needed.

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