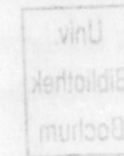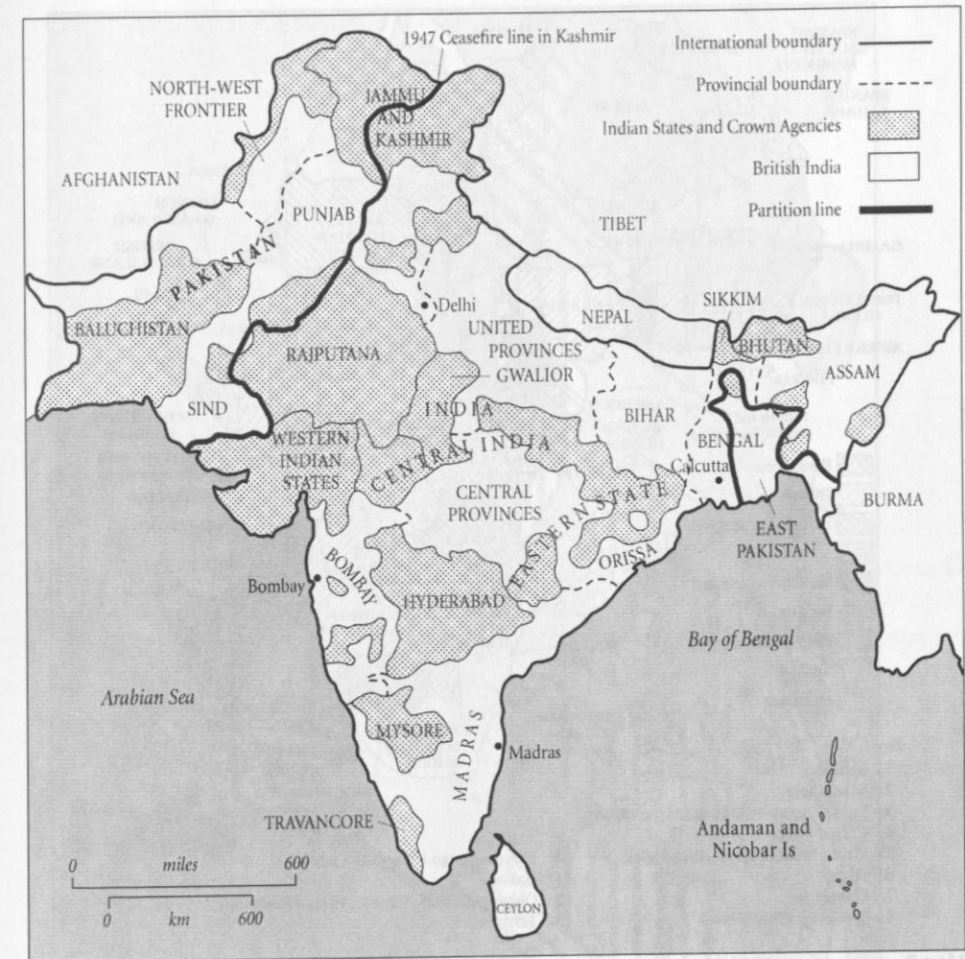# Decolonization and its Impact

A Comparative Approach to the End of the Colonial Empires

Martin Shipway

Maps

Map 1 India and Pakistan: princely states and 1947 line of partition

Introduction: Decolonization in Comparative Perspective

It is now more than half a century since the first irrevocable steps were taken towards the dissolution of the European colonial empires, and barely more than forty years since all but the most insignificant or obdurate colonial regimes were consigned to some virtual historical junkyard or museum. Revolutions in Vietnam and Indonesia in August 1945, which blocked French and Dutch efforts to recover their colonial possessions from Japanese occupation, were followed in 1946 by the American grant of independence to the Philippines (promised ten years previously), by Transfers of Power in India and a newly created Pakistan in 1947, and in Burma and Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) in 1948. After protracted insurgent campaigns, Indonesia became independent in 1949, Vietnam finally defeated the French colonial power in 1954, and Malaya (subsequently Malaysia) gained its independence in 1957. Between 1954 and 1965, most of the continent of Africa was freed from colonial rule, though the more recalcitrant colonial or settler armies continued to fight on into the 1970s. South Africa alone, which had undergone decolonization of a kind in 1910, maintained quasi-colonial (or perhaps ultra-colonial) structures of rule based on racial segregation until the last decade of the century. A slightly later wave of decolonizations brought independence to a scattered galaxy of smaller nations in the Caribbean and Mediterranean Seas, and in the Indian and Pacific Oceans. For many British commentators, the final, symbolic act of decolonization was the transfer of Hong Kong from British to Chinese rule in 1997, leaving only a few 'confetti' of colonial empire to survive into the new century. But in the main it took only about twenty years for most of the formal structures and institutions of colonialism (though not nearly so comprehensively of their associated mentalities) to be swept away. It is this brief, often violent and intermittently intense period of crisis which forms the subject of this book.

Explaining an international phenomenon as complex as decolonization raises a general problem associated with the shape and purpose of historical narratives, particularly when those narratives have relevance for the contemporary world. Cooper (1996: 6) has summed up this problem: we know the end of the story. Or perhaps, rather, we *think* we do. As with that other global structuring event of the post-1945

world, the Cold War, it is virtually impossible *not* to see decolonization as part of some bigger picture, as the enactment of secular, perhaps even millennial, historical processes, or perhaps as a step towards the abyss. Just as there were those who, however tentatively, saw the 'End of History' in the vertiginous culminating in the fall of the Berlin Wall (Fukuyama 1989),[1] so too the precipitate withdrawal of colonial administrations from Asia, Africa and other parts of the world was seen typically at the time as marking the end of a centuries-long process of European imperial expansion, or more positively (and fleetingly) as the dawning of a new era of relations between the developed and the under-developed worlds. The problem is not simply that such a grandiose version of History-with-an-H may mask the deeper continuities of historical process – and few would dispute that the fundamental structure of North–South relations survived the decolonization process largely intact. It also glosses over the contingency and sheer complexity of major historical crises, and the extent to which the impact of crisis led the actors involved to recast their actions retrospectively in terms of the 'wider' historical picture. Historians have also tended to shape their narratives in such a way as to explain the outcome of national independence and imperial dissolution almost as givens, although the cruder forms of determinism have usually been discounted. Certainly, independence was neither simply wrested by force from the colonizers by triumphant and united new nations, nor was it generously bestowed by wise western statesmen, acting as it were *in loco parentis*, when their charges attained their majority. Nor, whatever else it may have been, was decolonization inevitable in the forms it took. At the very least, it is axiomatic that the precise outcomes of decolonization were rarely ones which anyone had intended, not least because they were brought about according to a timetable that no one had imagined possible.

A further conceptual problem which arises with decolonization more acutely than is the case for the Cold War is that, while the emerging history of the Cold War would tend to support the dictum that history is written by the victors, writing about colonialism and decolonization tends to mirror the structure of the former empires. Thus, working from first principles, decolonization may be seen *either* as a composite of the individual national narratives of each of the hundred or so ex-colonies' paths to independent statehood, *or* as the 'bigger' story of the breakdown of a number of imperial systems against the backdrop of a major structural shift in the international system. The trouble is that neither of these narratives taken on its own is necessarily reliable or complete.

Much of the recent historiography of decolonization has tended to reflect the second of these narratives and thus to favour a top-down or imperial approach, especially when the imperial system under consideration is the British empire. Thus Darwin (1991: 116) rejects the possibility that the decolonization of the British empire might be considered as 'a story of fifty separate chapters'. Similarly, extending this broad approach to a comparative survey of all the European colonial systems, Holland (1985: 1) proposes that decolonization 'happened because colonialism as a set of nationally orchestrated systems (by the British, French, Dutch, Belgians and Portuguese) ceased to possess the self-sustaining virtue of internal equilibrium'. The fact that decolonization took place in such diverse places, and yet over 'so compressed a timescale', suggests to Howe (1993: 11–12) that 'however powerfully determinant

local conditions may have been, the procedures of, and pressures on, metropolitan policy making were decisive in the end of Empire'. This argument may be extended to the other colonial empires, particularly to the French, but the concept of a 'Scramble out of Africa' mirroring the process of colonial conquests at the end of the nineteenth century is persuasive. Even the relatively substantial time-lag involved in the Portuguese empire's ragged decolonization, seen throughout the twentieth century as 'marching to a different drummer' (Young 1988: 52), shrinks to insignificance according to all but the most 'in your face' perspectives.

The corollary of this approach is a concern with the overall 'pattern and timing' of decolonization, and with the identification of developments which occurred as part of a clearly identifiable process of imperial dissolution, as opposed to factors which might have had an impact on imperial policy, but which were contained, absorbed or defeated by colonial rulers. This approach tends to discount local factors, such as the rise of anti-colonial nationalist movements or, more generally, the impact of 'colonial politics'. As Holland (1985) puts it, 'ramshackle political coalitions in the underdeveloped world were only one element – and not the most vital – in determining the end to twentieth-century empires'. Although it originated as a way of shifting the perspective of imperial history from the metropolitan centre to the colonial periphery, Robinson and Gallagher's now classic, so-called 'peripheral' or 'excentric' approach to imperialism still attributes much, if not all, of the dynamism and initiative for colonial policy to the imperial power.

The generally accepted landmark according to this approach to decolonization is the Second World War, whose 'corrosive effects . . . at every level of the imperial connection', according to Darwin (1991: 118f.), set off the chain of crises which culminated in the liquidation of the colonial empires. This is not to say, however, that decolonization somehow became inevitable at war's end, because one has to take into account the intense but short-lived reinvigoration of colonial purpose after 1945, the 'revival' of the colonial empires identified by Gallagher (1982), often described as a 'second colonial occupation'. Certainly, Gallagher's preferred metaphors for colonial interaction suggest a wily, resourceful and endlessly energetic colonial power, even to the last:

> Every colonial power sustained itself by shifting the basis of its rule from time to time, dropping one set of imperial collaborators and taking up another. In principle, this process could have continued endlessly. The imperial croupier never found any shortage of colonial subjects ready to place bets with him at the table, although they usually staggered up from the table in some disarray. Certainly in India in 1947, and in Africa in the late nineteen-fifties, there were still plenty of groups ready to try a flutter.
> (ibid.: 153)

Gallagher's thesis as a whole, in his final, definitive statement of the peripheral approach, is that colonialism was normally a distraction from, or a drain upon, the more serious enterprise of British imperial expansion: in the long view, the British empire in the colonial period may be seen to shift from a world system where influence predominated through a system of informal empire, the preferred mode of British imperialism, to one of direct rule, and to fail in its attempt, in the 1950s and 1960s, to

shift back to a system of influence, 'more than British and less than an *imperium*', through collaboration with the new imperial power on the block, the United States (Louis & Robinson [1994]2003).

It should be emphasized that this imperial approach is more a question of geopolitical perspective than of ideology. An account of decolonization may be critical or dismissive of the imperial role in the process, but still consider the question from a top-down perspective. Such is by and large the case for a long tradition of anti-imperial literature, as represented by a chapter in Hobsbawm's magisterial survey of the 'short' twentieth century (1994: 344–71). Certainly the historian of French decolonization would find it difficult to maintain that French policy makers maintained more than nominal control over the process of decolonization in wide parts of the French empire at various moments in the 1940s and 1950s, and there is little to admire in French handling of this process, and yet writing about the French empire in this period, including that by the present author, has tended to mirror the centralizing structure of that empire. More generally, the very phrase 'End of Empire', even when divorced from any sense of nostalgia or apologia, would tend to suggest that global causes must be found for such a strikingly global phenomenon as decolonization or, more tendentiously, that the imperial hand cannot simply have been forced (at least, not by 'ramshackle political coalitions') into something so momentous as imperial dissolution.

Nonetheless, for the most part, one writer's imperial grand narrative looks very like another's imperial apology, and it is a short step from saying that the initiative for imperial change and dissolution was located at the metropolitan centre, to claiming that imperial policy makers decided the manner of their parting, or even that they planned it all along. There is a time-honoured British imperial tradition of accommodating even unwelcome change within an appeal to secular trends, or a 'belief in contingency as a form of destiny – in short, providence – [which] reaches far back into English history' (Boyce 1999: 1). Thus, British 'decolonization' can be dated back to the disastrous loss of the 13 American colonies, taking in the gradual extension of self-government to the settler colonies of Canada, Australia and New Zealand, and the troubled process which led to South African independence (albeit within the imperial system) in 1910, and is reflected even in the shifting and divided constitutional status of Ireland after 1919. British policy makers could thus lay claim to a long tradition of devolving power, which in the mid-twentieth century found expression in the reluctant and ultimately irrelevant promise to accord Dominion status to India and other dependencies, and in the attention paid to the niceties of Commonwealth membership and to the 'invented traditions' of royal protocol in the 1950s.

British claims to foresight and generous paternal wisdom became something of a cottage industry for politicians and officials alike. While Britain's decolonizing prime minister, Harold Macmillan, patented his own brand in such rhetoric, the Colonial Office turned it into a policy, as constitution after Westminster-style constitution was churned out on a rough-and-ready production line. Such 'Whiggish' rationalizations of the end of empire have been reflected more or less uncontroversially in what Twaddle has called the 'Old Commonwealth paradigm' of British decolonization (Twaddle 1986). The corollary of this view is a sense that, somewhere along the way, British policy makers 'lost the plot' and that, just as the British empire could

be seen to have been won, as Seeley famously noted, 'in a fit of absence of mind', so also was it lost in an albeit well-intentioned muddle in the corridors of Whitehall (Howe 1993: 11ff.).

It is worth noting that the French counterpart to the British 'Whig' tradition was not simply conjured up by that genius in self-serving rationalizations, President Charles de Gaulle, but constituted a recurrent, if secondary theme in French colonial doctrine, as expressed, for example, by veteran Socialist Prime Minister Léon Blum, reluctantly talking down the *fait accompli* of Franco-Vietnamese hostilities in December 1946:

> According to our republican doctrine, colonial possession only reaches its final goal and is justified the day it ceases, that is, the day when a colonized people has been given the capacity to live emancipated and to govern itself. The colonizer's reward is then to have earned the colonized people's gratitude and affection, to have brought about interpenetration and solidarity in thought, culture and interests, thus allowing colonizer and colonized to unite freely. (in Shipway 1996b: 94)

However, such claims rang hollow against the dominant unison of appeals to a Republican unity which precluded self-government, but more particularly against the cacophony of almost continuous colonial violence through to Algerian independence in 1962. Indeed, in response to this traumatic mismatch between French national purpose and the catastrophe of Algerian decolonization, it is small wonder that the French nation long chose to remain silent, so that it is only recently that debate over the memories and legacy of decolonization has erupted in France (Beaugé 2005). Even so, French parliamentarians have attempted to steer the debate towards the proposition, bizarrely enshrined in law in February 2005 (and subsequently repealed by President Jacques Chirac), that French colonization had a 'positive role', especially in North Africa (Liauzu & Manceron 2006).

What, then, if decolonization is viewed, *pace* the imperial historians, according to our alternative narrative, as the combined history of individual national struggles for freedom. Here, in at least a hundred 'different chapters', decolonization may more readily be conceived as the culmination of a history of interaction and conflict between colonizer and colonized, externally influenced but nonetheless determined at least in part by internal structures. The imperial historian's concern with 'pattern and timing' gives way to the more complex idea of decolonization as the culmination of a dialectic between colonizer and colonized, or between the various social and political groups within the emerging polity, whether European or indigenous, ruling or ruled, consenting or resistant, traditional or modernizing. Thus there is often a striking difference in emphasis between studies of 'decolonization' which are mostly about the end of empire, and individual national or regional studies presenting a more seamless process of political and social development under colonial rule and beyond. Paradoxically, decolonization as such may be de-emphasized by this approach, either because, as Lonsdale has put it, 'colonialism was a social process which decolonization continued' (in Killingray & Rathbone 1986: 135), or because independence brought an all too brief moment of triumph followed by disenchantment, or accompanied by the awareness that decolonization was merely a stage along the way towards the fulfilment of greater, more satisfying national and international goals.

An implied teleology is perhaps more plausible here, that independence from colonial rule was won by individual colonized peoples united in struggle under their own Nationalist leadership. Few historical processes can have apparently fulfilled the promises of their protagonists so rapidly and completely. But it would be more accurate to say that the scholarly literature is haunted by the ghost of the Nationalist Struggle, rather than possessed by it. Thus, a first generation of writing on decolonization consisted of the manifestos, autobiographies or hagiographies of nationalist politicians themselves, alongside the writings of a self-constituted 'Committee of Concerned Scholars for a Free Africa', as one historian sees the work of western academics in the 1950s and 1960s (Lonsdale, in Cooper [1994]2003: 25). This approach has also been characterized as following a 'Romantic Nationalist paradigm', where the epithet 'Romantic' might be understood as in the 'Wrong but Wromantic' Cavaliers of *1066 and All That* (as opposed to the 'Right but Repulsive' Roundheads in the English Civil War) (Twaddle 1986: 132; Sellar & Yeatman 1930: 63). Indeed, the thesis of fulfilled national promise is one which is almost universally taken as an 'Aunt Sally' to be ritually knocked down by sophisticated professional historians.

It was perhaps to be expected that, from the lofty perspective of imperial decline and fall, little would be made of the role of successor nationalist movements in bringing about the end of empire. Thus Gallagher (1982: 148) argued that in Africa in the 1950s, 'just as in India before it', British policy created the conditions in which mass political parties emerged to generate the 'apparent expression of nationalist demands', thus denying the very possibility that British imperialists, though they might miscalculate, could ever surrender the initiative to their colonized antagonists and collaborators. Darwin (1991: 109) is more generous in allowing that nationalism contributed to decolonization partly through the 'skill and energy with which colonial politicians seized the opportunities for political action which opened up before them'; but even this concession is made within an imperial framework. Such a perspective is less plausibly maintained by historians of French, Dutch or Portuguese decolonization, and even Gallagher concedes that Algerians fought for their freedom.

More surprisingly, the record of colonial nationalists has for long been subjected to extensive critical revision from ostensibly more sympathetic perspectives. The lead was given by the Martiniquan psychiatrist and activist for the Algerian cause, Frantz Fanon, in his posthumously published polemic, *The Damned of the Earth* ([1961]2002) Fanon's coruscating attack on a moribund but still resourceful colonialism reserved a special measure of venom for a collaborating 'national bourgeoisie' taking over the structures of state power from cynically retreating colonial powers which, at the end, 'decolonize so quickly that they impose independence on Houphouët-Boigny' (ibid.: 69).[2] Fanon's at times almost-messianic vision of a decolonization that never was, a violent and cleansing revolution which would establish a post-colonial *tabula rasa*, where formerly colonized 'new men' would enter for the first time into their historical birthright, overlapped with an emerging pessimistic and recriminatory analysis of decolonization as a disguised reinvigoration of imperial purpose. Part of the argument of what came to be known as 'dependency theory', was that formal colonialism had merely shape-shifted into a less costly neo-colonialism, in which the imperialist powers (Americans as well as British and French) now collaborated with a class of 'comprador' capitalists, drawn precisely from that class which had most obviously

championed, and in turn benefited from, anti-colonial nationalism, which is to say 'bourgeois' nationalist elites recruited by former colonial rulers. Aside from its function as a comforting explanation, or alibi, for some early national leaders seeking to understand why their own hopes had not been realized (for example, Nkrumah 1965), and notwithstanding the identification of an undoubted structural problem in North–South relations, dependency theory replaced the notion of heroic nationalist agency by a sorrier picture of the former colonized as either dupes or victims of an implausibly efficient conspiracy between prescient colonizers and their new collaborators (Bayart 1993).

The critique of triumphant bourgeois nationalism has become increasingly explicit in more recent debates, so that little now remains untouched of the 'Romantic Nationalist' paradigm. Thus, in the early volumes of the *Subaltern Studies* journal, radical Indian historians focused their attention on the ways in which the Indian National CongressParty, dominated by professional and capitalist elites and fearful of popular revolution, sought to subordinate class struggle to national struggle. The often acute material grievances of Indian peasants and workers, whose perspective was characterized via the Italian revolutionary Antonio Gramsci's notion of the 'subaltern', were thus suppressed, hitched to the bandwagon of Gandhian populism, or glossed over in the interests of national mobilization, while the diverse but misunderstood histories of peasant protest and insurrection under the Raj were appropriated as the prehistory of a determinist 'official version' of inevitable nationalist triumph over the British (Guha & Spivak 1988: 35–6, 37–44).

The final few nails in the coffin of nationalism's reputation have been hammered in by the exponents of a rich and densely argued body of post-colonial theory. A large measure of inspiration for this came from Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978), which explored the ways in which British and French imperialists and scholars over two centuries had systematically misrepresented the cultures of the Middle East, a secular habit of mind which was then taken over enthusiastically by a new wave of late twentieth-century American imperialists, whose grip on the foreign policy of the world's first 'hyper-power' seems to be showing signs of hubristic abatement as the first decade of the twenty-first century proceeds. Both *Orientalism* and its 'sequel', *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), are presented as histories of, and from within, western culture, but the wider implications of Said's work were rapidly realized. Thus Chatterjee writes of the epiphany which accompanied his first encounter with Said's work:

> I was struck by the way Orientalism was implicated in the construction not only of the ideology of British colonialism which had dominated India for two centuries, but also of the nationalism which was my own heritage. Orientalist constructions of Indian civilization had been avidly seized upon by the ideologues of Indian nationalism in order to assert the glory and antiquity of a national past. So Indian nationalists had implicitly accepted the colonialist critique of the Indian present: a society fallen into barbarism and stagnation, incapable of progress or modernity. (in Sprinker 1992: 194–5)

Chatterjee's (1986) study of Indian nationalism thus charted the ways in which successive generations of Indian nationalists had been constrained to articulate

their struggle against British imperialism within the bounds of 'derived discourses' of western-inspired nationalism. Central to this line of argument was the concept of 'power/knowledge', derived from a reading of Michel Foucault. The pessimism of Foucault's studies, examining the processes by which an all-embracing post-Enlightenment state came to exercise control over even the most private and intimate practices and discourses of the individual, seemed to apply all the more forcefully to the cultures enthralled (in both senses: enslaved *and* entranced) by post-Enlightenment western imperialism. The enthusiasm with which Saidian and Foucauldian approaches have been adopted has not gone unchallenged by historians and anthropologists, although this has led to some interesting efforts to establish a new research agenda (Sprinker 1992; Cooper & Stoler 1997). Amongst others, Sumit Sarkar, whose own history of modern India rehearsed many of the arguments of *Subaltern Studies*, has since warned of the political dangers inherent in attempting to wipe clean the historical slate and to return to a state of pre-colonial 'innocence', dangers which are especially pertinent in a wider national or international context of rising religious and cultural fundamentalism (Sarkar 1989, 1997; & in Chaturvedi 2000).

Locating Decolonization in Space and Time

The edifice which awaits inspection by the historian of decolonization thus has an apparently M.C. Escher-like tendency to turn into an optical illusion. In so far as decolonization is written about extensively as a distinct phenomenon, it has often been synonymous with the End of Empire, and the end of the British empire in particular. Conversely, decolonization seen from below has been subsumed into a far wider field of colonial and post-colonial historical study, which tends to elide the moment of decolonization itself, and discounts any suggestion that this moment was more than fleetingly positive. This study attempts to reconcile 'imperial' explanations of decolonization with a comparative approach based on an understanding of the political and social processes of colonialism and colonial rule, and the ways in which those processes culminated in decolonization. Where, then, do we look in order to seek to understand the processes of decolonization? And over what timeframe?

The answer to the first question, or at least the answer that is given in this study, is simple: by triangulating between 'top-down' and 'grass roots' perspectives, and by comparing the various colonial empires, we arrive at that curious entity known in the literature as the 'colonial state'. Since the evolution, structure and composition of colonial states form the subject of Chapter 1, here we consider only how this focus may help to understand decolonization. First, the colonial state is a logical unit of may help to understand decolonization. First, the colonial state is a logical unit of comparison, since the empires themselves were so dissimilar in size and purpose, and since, arguably, only British imperialism was so overwhelming as to be more than the sum of its parts. Secondly, as it turned out, colonial states were in some sense the prize over which colonial governments and nationalist political forces were fighting, competing or negotiating during decolonization; this is suggested not least by the correlation between colonial and post-colonial state boundaries. Thirdly, at this level we may appreciate the complexity of the interaction between colonizer and colonized, between colonial administrations and their chosen or self-selected collaborators

and opponents, whom we meet for the first time in Chapter 2. Conversely, reversing the imperial polarities of 'centre' and 'periphery' does not preclude a proper appreciation of metropolitan decision making, for which the colonial state acted as a kind of 'gatekeeper'. Moreover, when it comes to international influences, including the building of an effective international ideological consensus against colonialism, which Darwin (1991: 109) concedes as a further achievement of nationalism, clearly this consensus could not be mediated either by colonial governments or by the metropolitan capitals.

A key reason for focusing on the colonial state is that this may help us with our second question, concerning the timeframe of decolonization. The problem here has been posed with some acuity by Howe, commenting on the 'poverty of historiography' of decolonization:

> . . . whilst the acquisition of colonial empires has generally been understood as constituting, or at least reflecting, structural changes – shifts in the *longue durée* – in the world system, most of the literature on decolonization has seen the process purely in the short view of particular events; or in Braudelian terms at best as conjunctural. (Howe 1993: 3)[3]

Where this study risks further disappointing Howe's expectations, however, is in that it locates decolonization precisely at the level of event, or more precisely in a 'twenty years crisis' (to borrow E.H. Carr's label for the interwar period) from 1945. However, neither the *longue durée* nor, particularly, 'conjuncture' can be disregarded. To return to an earlier comparison, whereas the Cold War may be understood as an admittedly large-scale event, the more so because it is now safely over, the grand abstraction contained in the notion of decolonization, or End of Empire, seems to imply some structural shift lasting several lifetimes. Thus Gallagher (1982) traces British imperial decline, revival and fall, along with the workings of a steadily rational British 'official mind', over more than a century from the mid-nineteenth century. Chatterjee (1993) too is prepared to concede the political sphere to the Westernized elites of the Indian National Congress, in favour of a purer Indian national identity located in the private sphere of family and religion.

Interestingly enough, these secular perspectives reflect the imperialist view of change, according to the long vistas and evolutionary timescales of the so-called 'prerequisites' model for imperial development. As Moore puts it parodistically: 'Before India secured self-government it must pass through the stages of evolution that Britain had experienced since the Middle Ages' (1977: 399). Suggesting an even longer timescale, Churchill accused the British government that introduced the 1935 Government of India Act of running 'counter to nature', and of 'trying to put the clock forward without regard to the true march of solar events' (in ibid.). Such perspectives still found utterance in the opposition mounted by British Governors to official proposals for African political development in the 1940s. Until the late 1950s, Belgian administrators sought to apply a Belgian model of building Congolese government up from a strong local base, reproducing the slow evolution of Walloon and Flemish civic government (Young 1965). The French 'official mind' was more straightforward: when, in early 1944, an improvised conference of African governors assembled

at Brazzaville under the aegis of General de Gaulle's Free French movement, they ruled out 'the eventual establishment of self governments [sic] in the colonies, even in a distant future' (in Shipway 1996a: 35; and see Chapter 5). Even in the 1960s, the empire's *longue durée* remained fixed in the British 'official mind' like an image burned on the retina. Thus, British prime ministers, Harold Macmillan (Conservative, 1957–63) and Harold Wilson (Labour, 1964–70, 1974–6), both came to power resolved to maintain the Empire-Commonwealth or, in Wilson's case, an improbable British frontier on the Himalayas.

The problem with understanding decolonization in terms of the *longue durée* is that, if the Braudelian method may be compared to the use of time-lapse photography to capture the life-cycle of an ancient baobab, then decolonization was the removal of several boughs by a logger with a chain-saw, operating between the exposure of individual frames: now you see them, now you don't. If the camera is speeded up somewhat, however, we move into the Braudel's intermediate stage of conjuncture, at which level we may at least start to pick out some detail in the shorter life-span of the colonial state, if not yet of decolonization itself. In other words, although metropolitan politicians, colonial officials and nationalist leaders alike may have perceived the stakes of decolonization in terms of imperial decline and fall, in fact what was immediately at stake was the survival of formal colonial rule within the boundaries of the colonial state, and that, as it turned out, could be liquidated very quickly indeed: now you see it, now you don't.

The colonial state's essential modernity may be understood in three ways. First, as Hobsbawm (1994: 7) points out, the 'entire history of modern imperialism' may be encompassed within a long lifetime, and though the lifetime he chose was Winston Churchill's (1874–1965), it could have been Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869–1948), Ho Chi Minh (1890–1967), born Nguyen Tat Thanh, the son of an Annamese mandarin, or Joseph Ravoahangy (1893–1970), Malagasy nationalist and scion of the Merina royal dynasty. Official careers also stretched from the early days of conquest in Africa and Southeast Asia to the struggles with anti-colonial nationalism; while many younger officials went on to enjoy 'second careers' after independence, including Pierre Messmer, High-Commissioner in Dakar in 1959, then de Gaulle's Minister of Armies and subsequently Prime Minister (Messmer 1992). A fair degree of continuity may be supposed in the 'official mind' and in colonial officials' efforts to contain and manage colonial disaggregation after 1945; some of these continuities will become apparent in the course of this study.

But, secondly, colonialism may be understood also as modern in a stronger sense, as an integral part of twentieth-century European cultural and political modernism. Thus, Mazower (1998: ix) argues that Europe too was 'in many respects very new, inventing and reinventing itself over this century through often convulsive political transformation'. Whereas we have tended to see European history culminating in the triumph of democracy at the end of the Cold War, for Mazower it is rather to be understood as a 'story of narrow squeaks and unexpected twists, not inevitable victories and forward marches', where the principal drama resided in the near-defeat of democratic values by those of fascism and its authoritarian near-relations (ibid.: xii). By viewing the history of colonialism from such a perspective (although Mazower's canvas is already broad enough, and stretches only fractionally wider in the teasing

implications of his title), we may better understand some of the characteristics of colonial rule, and by extension the reasons for its demise.

To return to solar imagery, it would be a truism to state that the zenith of imperial splendour was also the first moment of decline. But given that the colonial empires reached their greatest extent in 1919–20, with the transfer in the Versailles and Sèvres Treaties of former German and Ottoman territories in Africa and the Near East to British, French, Belgian and South African rule, we may observe that placing transferred territories under League of Nations Mandate, while implying that some nations (i.e. Germany) were 'unfit' for colonial rule, introduced an element of international accountability to colonial rule.[4] More generally, the Paris peace process was guided by President Woodrow Wilson's doctrine of national self-determination, which ostensibly applied more widely than to the multi-national empires of Europe. As Füredi argues:

> Since the declaration of the Wilsonian principle of self-determination, nationalism has been accepted as a legitimate vehicle for asserting autonomy. This has presented a problem for the defenders of empire. Since 1919, it has not been possible to mount an intellectual case against the right of nations to self-determination. (1994a: 10)

The Bolshevik Revolution, too, directly challenged the imperial powers as bastions of the 'last stage of capitalism', and in 1919 established the Third International with the aim of actively bringing down those bastions. Moreover, as if on cue, the Paris Peace Conference coincided with the Indian National Congress's first prolonged, if as yet inchoate, challenge to British rule in India, in the 1919–22 campaigns of disobedience. At the same time, Japanese delegates to the Paris Peace Conference failed to secure a Racial Equality Clause in the League of Nations covenant, with far-reaching implications over the next quarter-century (Shimazu 1998). Thus, the modern era of 'institutionalized' colonial rule was accompanied from the outset by the ideological challenge characterized as the 'Moral Disarmament' of the British empire (Robinson 1979).

This is not to argue simply that the colonial states contained the seeds of their own ineluctable dissolution. Rather, colonial rulers were all the more sensitive to the need to legitimate their rule, and were constrained to couch their policy in recognizably modern terms, whether in the domains of administrative structures, revenue generation, labour policy, agriculture, health and welfare, town planning, internal security, external relations or trade. In other words, colonial states were implicitly accepted as normal parts of the modern world, and indeed, they served as 'laboratories of modernity' in many areas of state practice (Wright 1997; Martin 1996).

However, following Mazower, 'modern' does not mean as modern as all that, and the modernity envisaged in the interwar period might have taken a quite different direction – or indeed simply maintained the direction in which it was apparently headed. Thus the interwar European experience tended to reinforce arguments that democracy was 'not for export' outside of Northern and Western Europe, and was probably decadent even there. National self-determination could be equated with the harsh and often violent treatment of ethnic minorities across Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe; while nationhood was to British imperial eyes at best a paltry

thing, which once acquired, would place, say, the grandeurs of Indian civilization on the same level as, say, 'Guatemala or Belgium'. Turning then to the overseas empires, not only did the ideological sea change of 1919 leave intact the 'civilizing missions' and presumptions of racial inequality implicit in colonial rule, but it was still generally held that 'Civilization', whatever that meant, had to be learnt over 'solar' timescales, and colonial states were instruments for that learning.

Thirdly, however, the colonial state was probably never intended to bear the burden of modern statehood that was thrust upon it. These were, after all, conquest states, their external boundaries defined by international rivalry, their often rickety internal structures and forms of government developed in the aftermath of military occupation, their legitimacy based on technological supremacy. Thus Darwin (1999: 73) describes the colonial state as a 'bundle of districts cellotaped together by colonialism into a dependency', while for Lonsdale:

> The colonial state was, and remained to the end, a conquest state . . . However successful the management of the colonial order was, and however placid the colonial order may have appeared to be, colonial rule always was predicated on the overt or hidden recourse to violence. (Lonsdale 1986a: 235)

The argument here is thus that colonial states were largely cobbled together from other entities with a quite different purpose, some derived from pre-colonial polities, others merely the by-products of imperial convenience, but which retained, as it were, a palimpsest of their origins in conquest. This is not to deny the seriousness of efforts by colonial governments to rule justly or rationally according to their lights, and, as we will see, those efforts intensified in the wake of the Second World War. Rather these efforts might be likened to the process of 'bricolage' described by Lévi-Strauss, for whom mythical thinking is comparable to the work of a handyman (bricoleur) who improvises with pre-existing 'second hand' materials, as opposed to the engineer, who designs everything for the purpose in hand (1962: 30–6). Like Lévi-Strauss's myths, colonial states were in a sense found objects constructed from the 'residues of human works', pressed into service according to a new and rapidly evolving purpose. Looking ahead to later chapters, by 1945 at the latest the colonial state was being subjected to ever more complex iterations of the handyman's craft, and that was even before the question was raised of passing on this improvised creation to new ownership. Indeed, at their most ambitious, the efforts of colonial reformers after 1945 often seemed like an attempt to remake the colonial state from bottom up, to make the shift, in Lévi-Strauss's terms, from bricolage to engineering. The corollary of this, of course, was that colonial rulers wanted to be around for long enough to see their work completed.

Decolonization and the Late Colonial Shift

How then do we articulate the critical shift from 'conjuncture' to 'event', that is, to the short-term political timescales of decolonization? This study does not diverge from the general consensus that this crisis was precipitated by the Second World War, the direct impact of which will be explored more fully in Chapter 3. But it is argued

more generally that the War effected a profound shift in the perceptions of both colonizers and colonized concerning the purpose and future of empire. This will be referred to, in shorthand, as the *late colonial shift*, by association with the 'late colonial state', whose 'lateness' derived from its proximity to decolonization (Darwin 1999). This was experienced quite differently by the colonized and by the colonizing 'official mind', but for both it might broadly be characterised as a shift from a view of colonial rule as 'normal' and a stable fixture in the foreseeable future, to one predicated on rapid, possibly violent or radical political change, even if that change was not always immediately conceived in terms of national independence. What therefore chiefly characterized the late colonial state was an unprecedented degree of uncertainty, where the securities of colonial rule – administrative and military control, metropolitan confidence in imperial continuity, but also inaction, stagnation, repression – were superseded by flux, unpredictable change and fresh opportunities to seize the initiative. This is in fact what we mean by 'crisis' – a term which does out seem out of place when the whole colonial scene is surveyed after 1945, notwithstanding some relatively 'trouble-free' decolonizations.

The concept of a late colonial shift has two immediate analytical advantages for understanding decolonization. First, it allows us to cut across the question of whether colonial empire in 1939 was 'still remarkably resilient' (Darwin), or whether the colonial powers had already, like a latter-day court of Belshazzar, been weighed in the balance and found wanting. On the one hand, the 'steel frame' of colonial rule, as described by David Lloyd George in 1922, held firm, and the colonial 'pax' was maintained. Thus, even the Indian National Congress 'had been forced by 1937 to accept a federal constitution of whose long-term effects its leaders were rightly fearful' (Darwin 1991). The Indian case, and also the contrasting cases of interwar nationalism in Vietnam and Algeria, will be examined in Chapter 2. On the other hand, even before the cataclysm of the Second World War, the colonial powers were already having to work harder at colonialism's 'self-sustaining virtue of equilibrium' (Holland 1985: 1), as they confronted the deeper continuities of imperial instability, or of resistance or challenge to colonial rule, or contemplated the sort of policy reforms which were to become commonplace after 1945. Nationalist revolt or more general disorder in the interwar colonial state heralded the beginnings of progress towards independence from colonial rule, as nationalists in India, Vietnam, or the Dutch East Indies flexed their political muscle, while officials in the Central African Copperbelt, the West Indies, French North and West Africa and elsewhere sought to contain increasingly modern-looking social unrest. In other words, although the Second World War precipitated a crisis of far greater magnitude, colonial rule was coming up against its own internal contradictions. Berque's elegant formulation of this idea suggests both impending decolonization, and its inherent unpredictability: '. . . seen as a whole, the Maghreb in 1920 has moved beyond the opening Act. The drama has reached Act Two. But it would not be theatre if it did not leave some surprises for the denouement' (1969: 83).

Secondly, since all parties were now finding their way in an intrinsically open-ended process, the agency for decolonization need not be ascribed solely to the colonial powers or to nationalism. On the colonial side, the late colonial shift replaced the *'bricolage'* of the pre-1939 colonial state with a new sense of deliberate ambition in

post-war imperial and colonial planning. Not that this planning was necessarily well-founded. On the contrary, it was typically based on persistent myths of colonial purpose, illusions of imperial strength or metropolitan political will, and on 'fantasy' visions of the colonized and their imagined futures (Cooper 1988; Lonsdale 1990). Nonetheless, it would be anachronistic to apply a simple ideological framework, whereby 'liberals' promoted or acquiesced in 'inevitable' decolonization, while a conservative 'old guard' sought to preserve colonial empire against the odds. According to this view, there probably *were* no liberals in the colonial administrations, since officials to a man (and they were almost all men) in London, Paris, Brussels and The Hague sought to preserve empire in some shape or form, or at the least to manage the process of colonial change over the medium to long term, and in that timescale, as John Maynard Keynes used to say, 'we are all dead' (or in the case of the British 'official mind', safely retired to Bath or Tunbridge Wells).

For political actors on the side of the colonized, encouraged by the outcomes of the Second World War, the late colonial shift was of a quite different order. No hard-and-fast distinction need be made between those who actively 'fought for freedom' against colonial rule, and those who accepted the invitation to the gaming table of Gallagher's putative 'imperial croupier'. Certainly, in a number of instances around 1945, anti-colonial nationalists seized the initiative from a hard-pressed, drastically weakened or temporarily eclipsed colonial regime: India, Vietnam and Indonesia spring to mind. 'Freedom fighters' of divers ideological varieties, and with varying strength of arms and of purpose, figure prominently in several cases. However, the Vietnamese defeat of French forces at Dien Bien Phu in 1954 was the great exception proving the general rule that colonial armies, even after 1945, inflicted military defeat more readily than they sustained it. On the other hand, the translation of military superiority into political triumph proved more elusive to colonial powers after 1945 than it had in earlier periods. More usually, and although many ostensibly 'peaceful' colonial states teetered on the brink of all-out disorder and violence, the colonial 'struggle' after 1945 was primarily a political one that stayed within official bounds, as colonial politicians responded to the challenge of official initiatives for reform or the limited devolution of political representation and responsibility. Moreover, as Cooper observes, the politics of decolonization 'appears less as a linear progression than as a conjuncture' and African political success was 'less a question of a singular mobilization in the name of the nation than of coalition building, the forging of clientage networks, and of machine politics' ([1994]2003: 36). In other words, we will often find ourselves dealing with 'politics as normal', although the 'normality' of late colonial politics proved to be short-lived as colonial states moved towards the endgame of the later 1950s.

After two introductory and complementary chapters, Chapter 1 addressing the pre-1939 colonial state, and Chapter 2 the character and outlook of indigenous political actors within that state, much of the remainder of this study is taken up with a series of case studies, which have been chosen to exemplify, and in part to synthesize, various aspects of decolonization. Faced with a historical process which touched a plurality of the member states of today's international community over the greater part of the twentieth century, the book's scope has been limited in a number of practical ways. First, it has seemed worthwhile to concentrate on depth rather than

breadth of coverage. The cases chosen are relatively few in number, and may be seen as paradigmatic in various ways; or their interest may be attributed in part to their relative neglect in the literature of decolonization. These cases will mostly be examined in some detail, and many are covered across several chapters. Secondly, almost all cases are taken from the Asian and African formal empires of the four major European colonial powers: Britain, France, the Netherlands and Belgium. Of those regions excluded from study, the Middle East largely conformed to a different pattern of imperial over-rule and its demission after 1945, while smaller colonial dependencies in the West Indies, Pacific Ocean and elsewhere largely followed the Asian and African empires, in the timing if not in the manner of their decolonization. Thirdly, the timeframe is largely that of the 'twenty years crisis' after 1945, which may be seen as the 'classic' period of decolonization; this excludes 'late' decolonizations such as the Portuguese cases from consideration, but also more recent quasi-decolonization such as the South African transition to democracy or the handover of Hong Kong. On the whole, the 'end of the affair' in each case is the moment of independence, again for reasons of practicality, but also because it was arguably at this point that the bases for comparison began to diverge, as ex-colonial states embarked on their singular national histories. 'Impact', in the title of this book, should therefore not be taken to embrace the whole post-colonial history of the countries studied, but rather the recognition of how the often-convoluted and compressed processes of decolonization contributed to the sometimes surprising manner and suddenness with which formal empire came to an end.

The hypothesis of a late colonial shift is most easily tested in those cases where the Second World War led more or less immediately to decolonization, in South and Southeast Asia. In South Asia, as we will discuss in Chapter 3, British plans to reconcile Indian self-government with the maintenance of British interests were almost fatally compromised, first by the near-collapse of British rule, and secondly by India's chaotic partition into two separate Dominions. British faith in the ultimately meaningless formula of Dominion status within the British Commonwealth is further illustrated by the divergent cases of Ceylon and Burma. Conversely, even in the Southeast Asian dependencies, following the eclipse of colonial rule under the Japanese onslaught of 1942 (also studied in Chapter 3), it will be shown, in Chapter 4, how the European colonial powers attempted to launch their 'return' on the basis of more rational, 'engineered' state structures, and on the negotiation of new terms of engagement between the colonial state and its clients and antagonists; and how the attempt largely failed, not least because of an underestimation of the forces of nationalism ranged against the new colonial state.

Elsewhere, and particularly in Africa, the policies that emerged from post-war planning had a more decisive impact on the shape of the colonial empires, and thus also on decolonization. Indeed, it has been argued, for sub-Saharan Africa as a whole, that the impact of the Second World War was as momentous as that of eventual decolonization (Cooper 2002). This is a subject to which we will return extensively in Chapters 5 and 7. Clearly, African politics in this period was informed by mounting confidence in the possibility of progress towards self-government. However, it would be a mistake to seek to interpret the motivation of ordinary Africans in 1945 in terms of what had been achieved by, say, 1960.

What happened when the channels of 'normal' late colonial politics were blocked off, or the contradictions of colonial rule became too acute, and the late colonial state was forced to respond to armed challenges? In Chapter 6, we examine a number of key cases – Madagascar, Kenya, Algeria, Cyprus – where decolonization was thus dominated by armed insurgency and by the tactical panoply of colonial counter-insurgency. Here, it will be argued, 'lateness' brought not only a new urgency to anti-colonial resistance but also a newly systematic recourse to violence and repression on the part of the colonial state.

Finally, in Chapter 8 we turn to the concept of colonial 'endgame', and to the acceleration of decolonization as it reached a climax at the end of the 1950s. Here we examine not only the reappraisals on the part of the colonial 'official mind' which allowed metropolitan governments and colonial officials to contemplate rapid withdrawal from formal colonial rule, but also the consequences of these reappraisals for the shape and outcomes of decolonization.

Notes

1 The subsequent debate was premised, as Fukuyama's article was not, on the collapse of communist regimes across Central and Eastern Europe over the autumn of 1989.
2 Félix Houphouët-Boigny (1905–93): Ivorian political leader and member of the French parliament, and French minister in the 1950s, first President of Côte d'Ivoire from 1960 until his death.
3 The reference is to the French historian Fernand Braudel's (1980) subdivision of historical time into 'structure', i.e. over the *longue durée* lasting perhaps centuries, 'conjuncture', i.e. the length of economic cycles lasting up to perhaps a century, and 'event'. This article was written in 'this year of grace 1958' (ibid.: 34), a crowded year indeed for *l'histoire événementielle* in France and Algeria.
4 For the brief over-extension of British imperial responsibilities into Central Asia in this period, see Gallagher 1982. For the Mandate System, see Chamberlain 1998: 13–15; German territories in the Pacific were transferred to Australia, New Zealand and Japan.

1

The Colonial State: Patterns of Rule, Habits of Mind

Whatever the future may hold, the influence of the West upon India is likely to decrease. But it would be absurd to imagine that the British connection will not leave a permanent mark upon Indian life. On the merely material side . . . the largest irrigation system in the world . . . some 60,000 miles of metalled roads; over 42,000 miles of railways . . . 230,000 scholastic institutions . . . a great number of buildings . . . The vast area of India has been completely surveyed, most of its lands assessed, and a regular census taken of its population and its productivity. An effective defensive system has been built up . . . , it has an Indian army with century-old traditions, and a police force which compares favourably with any outside a few Western countries. The postal department . . . the Forestry Department . . . These great State activities are managed by a trained bureaucracy, which is today almost entirely Indian. (Thompson & Barratt 1934: 654, in Chatterjee 1993: 14–15)

REG: All right, but apart from the sanitation, the medicine, education, wine, public order, irrigation, roads, a fresh water system, and public health, what have the Romans ever done for us?
XERXES: Brought peace.
REG: Oh. Peace? Shut up! (Chapman et al. 1979)

. . . oxen taxes, taxes on 'chattering pigs', salt taxes, rice field taxes, ferry boat taxes, bicycle or conveyance taxes, taxes on betel or areca nuts, tea and drug taxes, lamp taxes, housing taxes, temple taxes, bamboo and timber taxes, taxes on peddlers' boats, tallow taxes, lacquer taxes, rice and vegetable taxes, taxes on cotton and silk, iron taxes, fishing taxes, bird taxes, and copper taxes. (The 'Asia Ballad', popular in the Tonkin Free School in 1907, in Scott 1976: 95)

Appointed French Minister of Colonies in 1906, Etienne Clémentel is said to have exclaimed: 'Ah, the colonies, I didn't know there were so many!' Aside from what this may tell us about colonial expertise amongst the French Third Republic's legions of parish-pump politicians, Clémentel's professed ignorance also reflected the novelty of the map's message. At the time, although the Algerian agricultural lands

and mountains had been divided into *départements* on the metropolitan model in 1848, the huge southern wedge of the Algerian Sahara had only been formally annexed in 1902; the federation of French West Africa (*Afrique Occidentale Française*, AOF), centred on the Government-General at Dakar, was barely more than ten years old, and a second Federation of French Equatorial Africa (*Afrique Equatoriale Française*, AEF) was not established until 1910. The French Republic had only annexed Madagascar in 1896. Laos, the final part of the constitutional jigsaw of French Indochina, was fitted into place in 1897. In 1905, France headed off the German Kaiser's efforts to assert control of Morocco; the Treaty of Fez establishing France's protectorate of Morocco was signed in 1912. King Leopold's personal fiefdom of the Congo was granted to the Belgian state's care on his death in 1908. British, German and Portuguese territories in Africa too were at a skeletal stage of development: one District Officer (DO) in German East Africa (subsequently British Tanganyika) learnt of the Declaration of War in 1914 from his British colleague in Uganda, as there was no telegraph to his command from Dar es Salaam (Iliffe 1979: 119). The Dutch empire was still expanding from its Javanese and Sumatran core to embrace the 'Great East' of the East Indian archipelago. Japan and the United States had recently been admitted to the hitherto European club of colonial powers. The Russian empire, too, had its colonial components, although the Tsar had taken the precaution of selling Alaska, the only part of his empire to be separated from Russia by 'blue water'.

The map's core message lay in the bright and uniform colours of the rival empires. Arguably, Republican concepts of Overseas France or Greater France relied on the impression left by the map of territorial contiguity, stretching from the *Manche* (otherwise known as the English Channel), across the Mediterranean to the Congo or, as General de Gaulle had it in the late 1950s, from Dunkirk to Tamanrasset (in southern Algeria). Portuguese aspirations to a *mapa côr de rosa* (rose-coloured map) in Southern Africa had been foiled by British imperial enterprise (MacQueen 1997: 4). The British thought more in longitudinal terms of an empire 'where the sun never set'. This perpetual sunshine bathed the settler colonies of Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa, although by this time these were self-governing (South Africa definitively so in 1910). Imperial light also reflected upon areas of informal empire, notably in China and South America, where British influence was determined by trade and investment, or of indirect rule (for example, Egypt); these were more decisive to British power than duly coloured territories in, say, East Africa. But the light burned brightest on the vast Indian empire, which embraced Burma and controlled East Africa, and which exerted a determinant influence on British control of Egypt.

If the pre-1914 imperial map thus reflected the near-culmination of a period of rapid imperial consolidation, its gaudy homogeneity glossed over the reality of colonial state-building, mostly still in its infancy; this forms the focus of this chapter. The European colonial presence was much more fully established in, say, British India or French Algeria, but even here the modern forms of colonial rule in these dependencies only came into being after 1858 in India, when imperial rule was first organized under a Viceroy following the Sepoy Rebellion, and after 1871 for Algeria, where the establishment of the Third Republic triggered widespread revolt by Algerian Berbers; this led as in India to a tightening of administrative structures and to the crushing of further resistance.

Although much of this chapter necessarily relates to the pre-1945 period, we are less concerned here with 'what happened before decolonization', than with identifying approaches and reflexes which still operated, not always fully consciously or deliberately, in the period of the 'late' colonial state. We return first to the colonial map and to the ways in which it shaped colonial rule. Two corollaries of this structure of rule need to be examined in two reciprocal sections, in this and the following chapter: first, the significance of what imperial historians have come to call the 'collaborator system'; and secondly, the issue of control and repression, where the question of that which was to be controlled or repressed forms a large part of the next chapter's focus. We then examine aspects of colonial administrative structure, and in particular the implications of a 'Prefectural' system of rule characterized by a low ratio of rulers to ruled across the colonial empires. Finally, the colonial state may be considered an 'open polity', which is to say open to metropolitan and, increasingly, international influence, whether that process was managed deliberately by a 'gatekeeper' state, or outside the control of the state.

Of particular concern is the outlook of colonialism's 'official mind', a term first used by Robinson and Gallagher (1961), but which also finds an analogy in Lévi-Strauss's near-contemporary work, *The Savage Mind* (*La Pensée sauvage*, 1962). Although the term is often taken as a given, such an approach becomes impossible in a comparative work in which there are many such 'minds' at work. We will therefore address ways in which 'official minds' were formed and reproduced, as well as the doctrines which underpinned their rule, and the ways in which colonial officials adjusted to the demands of modern state practice. But if the metaphor is to be applied fully, it must be assumed that the collective or institutional 'mind' was structured with no less complexity than that of the individual: it functioned partly on the basis of habit and memory, it was sometimes self-contradictory, and frequently irrational. Moreover, this official consciousness was often introverted, that is, although it responded to external stimuli, it was quite capable of planning and debating with a largely theoretical frame of reference to the outside world. Conversely, although its internal equivocations may be of great interest, it was by its actions that it would be judged by the outside world.

Mapping the Colonial State

Seeking to understand colonial rule in terms of lines and colours on the imperial map is like using a space telescope in place of a pair of binoculars: the realities of rule are to be found much closer to the ground than the map allows. Nonetheless, the map is important, not least because of its durability: Clémentel's surprise would have been still greater had he known that, barely two generations later, the map's outlines would survive largely unchanged into the post-colonial world, with only the bitterly contested partition-lines of India, Palestine and Cyprus, and perhaps the 'balkanization' of French sub-Saharan Africa, to mark the transition from administrative boundaries to national frontiers. Following Anderson (1991: 163ff.), the colonial map was one of three institutions, along with the museum and the census, with which the 'imaginings of the colonial state' unwittingly but indelibly marked the formation of the 'imagined communities' of post-colonial nationhood.

The map of Africa reflected perhaps most dramatically the arbitrariness of colonial rule. Straight lines on the map cut across pre-colonial political and ethnic boundaries, usually in favour of far larger entities: African 'partition' was in reality 'a ruthless act of political amalgamation, whereby something of the order of 10,000 units was reduced to a mere 40' (Oliver 1991: 184, in Wilson 1994: 20). Partition created barriers in the mind where none existed in reality: the mapping of the Sahara, especially the massive wedge of the Algerian Southern Territories, tells us more about the French army's influence in Paris (outweighing that of the 'junior' colonial ministry responsible for neighbouring French Soudan, Niger and Chad), than it does about Saharan political geography. Newly created territories were named after geographical features (Niger, Oubangui-Chari, Haute-Volta), much as were French *départements*, and with not dissimilar intent, imposing a new identity rather than admitting pre-existing local identities. Alternatively, they commemorated matters of European significance (Côte d'Ivoire, Gold Coast, Rhodesia), or otherwise reflected the European imperial illusion of creating *ex nihilo*.[1] In 1920, most of German East Africa became the British Tanganyika Territory under League of Nations Mandate; this name, meaning 'muddy village' in Swahili (after the lake), was chosen in preference to Smutsland, Eburnea, Azania, New Maryland, Windsorland, Victoria, Kilimanjaro and Tabora (Iliffe 1979: 247).

Partition typically preceded both the occupation of the territories concerned and the precise determination of boundaries. In the Algerian case, the 1909 Niamey Convention settled the boundaries between Algeria and the two sub-Saharan federations, but even then, these were delimited, rather than demarcated, frontiers: in other words, they were literally drawn onto the map, but left no physical trace on the Saharan landscape, and indeed nothing changed after independence (Brownlie 1979: 26–88). Boundaries between the colonial powers were far more significant than internal ones, and became hostile frontiers in both world wars; this was also the case for the two federations of French West and Equatorial Africa, which came under Vichyste and Gaullist authority respectively from 1940 to 1943 (Chapter 3). Even before that, the French had established an informal system of 'watertight bulkheads' reflecting rivalries between the Interior Ministry and the Army in Algeria, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, responsible for the Moroccan and Tunisian protectorates, and the Ministry of Colonies (AOF, AEF) (Young 1988: 32–3; Shipway 2002). The colonial powers continued to reorder the African map. German Kamerun and German East Africa were both re-partitioned, with the former divided into French and British Mandated territories, and Belgian Mandated Ruanda-Urundi carved from German-held territory on Lake Tanganyika's western shore. Haute-Volta was absorbed into Côte d'Ivoire in 1931, in order to regulate labour migration from the interior to the coastal plantations; in 1948, Haute-Volta was recreated, largely to suit Parisian party rivalries, rather than administrative rationality (Chapter 5).

These moves set precedents for colonial efforts to make the later colonial state more obviously 'state-like', or eventually to establish units which, when self-government came, might promote the interests of the (ex-)colonial power in the region. Thus the cumbersome and ill-fated Central African Federation embraced the very differently composed territories of Southern and Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland. Conversely, the French African Federations, which lasted until the late 1950s as late

colonial 'super-states', were split into territorial units by Gaston Defferre's Framework Law of 1956. This law reinforced the powers of elected 'national' assemblies and set francophone Africa on the path to a 'balkanized' decolonization (Chapters 7 & 8).

Imperial cartography in Asia was typically based on pre-existing states and empires and on a more widely established imperial presence, but it similarly reflected imperial *raison d'état* and continuity more than local political realities. Here too, spatial boundaries were a European innovation, defining statehood in terms of territorial sovereignty, but also of imperial spheres of influence. This was true even for a state, Thailand, that was allowed to resist imperial encroachment, but whose national boundaries were imposed by surrounding British and French imperialism (Anderson 1991: 170–4). The Dutch imperial presence dated back several centuries in Java and Sumatra, but the Dutch East Indies were extended to carve out a sphere of influence, in response to perceived international pressure in the early twentieth century (van den Doel 2001). French Indochina, so named by French geographers, similarly agglomerated a decades-long process of conquest and annexation (Aldrich 1996: 73–82). The boundaries of both these colonial states subsequently acquired a degree of solidity in nationalist eyes. While Indochina eventually lost the status of 'map-as-logo', in the face of stronger claims to Vietnamese identity (Goscha 1995), Indonesian President Ahmed Sukarno continued after independence to lay claim to a Greater Indonesia embracing Western New Guinea (*Irian Jaya*), until the Dutch relinquished even that vestige of empire in 1963; conversely, expansionism rather than 'irredentism' may better explain Indonesia's thirty-year occupation of the former Portuguese colony of East Timor (Anderson 1991).

The European empires in Asia ostensibly respected at least the outward form of pre-existing sovereignties, but this respect was heavily tempered by *realpolitik*. Thus, the map of the British Raj in India, the most powerful colonial state of all, was inscribed with a long history of imperial conquest, the realization of strategic necessities, for instance the guarding of the North-West Frontier against Afghan and possible Russian attack, and the persistence of rival imperial interests in the form of French and Portuguese enclaves (Pondichéry and the other French Indian Establishments; Portuguese India, now Goa). It also reflected unequal treaties signed with the rulers of the nearly six hundred Princely States, acquiescing to British rule following the 1857 Sepoy Rebellion. Ranging from tiny principalities to the vast domains of Kashmir and Hyderabad, these states constituted some two-fifths of Indian territory where British rule was exercised indirectly by a Resident or political agent. In Malaya, too, British rule was mediated through a complex system of Federated and Unfederated Malay States, established between 1893 and 1909, whose rulers' independence was recognized by the British. Only Singapore and the Straits Settlements, representing the core of British power in Malaya, came under direct British rule. In practice, the Sultans did not enjoy the freedom of political manoeuvre allowed even to the Indian princes, although the British were able to 'pay lip service to the Malay concept of sovereignty', particularly the Sultans' status as religious leaders (Smith 1995). Indochina's five administrative units, Laos, Cambodia, Cochinchina, Annam and Tonkin, concealed a patchwork of protectorates, concessions and only one actual colony, Cochinchina, which thus elected a settler to the French National Assembly. Although the Emperor of Annam retained his throne until 1945, his nominal rule

extended only to 'Annam', the central portion of Vietnam: Cochinchina had been ceded to France, which also ruled Tonkin 'on behalf of' the Emperor. Dutch practice with regard to local rulers across the Indonesian archipelago broadly followed that of the French: local sovereigns were treated essentially as agents of the colonial state, although the panoply of courtly and religious ceremony was retained (van den Doel 2001).

The colonial map contradicted any idea of nationhood corresponding to established colonial boundaries, and not only those of rectilinear African cartography. 'India' was claimed as an imperial creation, and emphatically not the domain of a pre-existing nation. By the same token, 'Indians' were portrayed as ineluctably divided against themselves by race, caste or religious community. As the Secretary of State for India, Lord Birkenhead, put it in 1925, it was absurd to speak of an Indian nation: 'There never has been such a nation . . . If we withdraw from India tomorrow, the immediate consequences would be a struggle à outrance between the Muslim and the Hindu population' (in Sarkar 1989: 228). As will be argued, this was in part a self-fulfilling prophecy, since the effect of British policy, if not its intention, was to deepen such communal divisions. The official non-existence of an Algerian nation was all the more forcefully argued because of Algeria's unique status as an assimilated extension of metropolitan territory, according to which 'Algeria is France'. The term 'Algerian' was thus applied generally to all inhabitants of Algeria, and perhaps preferentially to European settlers (to whom we return below), while the indigenous population was labelled variously 'Muslim', 'Algerian Muslim' or 'French Muslim'; indeed as French 'subjects', they did not even appear in French immigration statistics, although large-scale Algerian immigration to the French mainland began in the 1920s (Stora 1993).

Colonial 'divide and rule' policies and attitudes recur in various guises, but it was the map-makers' 'ruling' which initially determined the dividing. The colonial state excluded defeated national or proto-national polities, often for the duration of the colonial period. French officials even in 1945 deployed the historical record of conquest to deny Vietnam's existence, claiming that all five Indochinese 'countries' were geographically, historically and ethnically distinct (Chapter 4). The conqueror of Madagascar, General Gallieni, promoted a powerful narrative of Malagasy history, which cast the French as protectors of the 'coastal peoples' from the dominant Merina people, whose kingdom had been destroyed by the French; fifty years after the annexation, this 'official version' was still being used to explain Malagasy politics, and in particular the 1947 insurrection (Shipway 1996a; Tronchon 1974/1986). As this example also shows, the colonial state embraced and 'protected' favoured minority groups. Thus, Algerians were subdivided into 'Arabs' and 'Berbers', including particularly the Kabyles of the mountainous Algerian hinterland, around whom powerful stereotypes were elaborated (Lorcin 1995). Where the colonial map overlaid pre-existing states, minorities were corralled into quasi-states within the state, such as the Hill States in Burma, or the more informally recognized ethnic minority groups of Indochina, to be protected from more central 'nationalisms' (Christie 1996; Salemink 1995). Berbers and Indochinese so-called 'montagnards' are also examples of minority 'martial races' favoured for recruitment into colonial armies, and typically selected from 'backward' or otherwise peripheral groups, alongside Punjabi Muslims (as opposed to, say, 'effeminate' Bengalis), Nigerian Tiv, Kenyan Masai or the Christian Ambonese islanders of the Royal Dutch Indies Army.

The colonial map also formalized patterns of imperial *bricolage* in its accommodation of migrant communities. These derived from multiple origins, whether resulting from trading patterns located in a regional *longue durée*, or more directly from European imperialism. At its most brutally coercive, 'migration' included the transportation of slaves to the plantation islands of the Caribbean and the Indian Ocean. Even after slavery was abolished by the British in the 1830s, and by the French Second Republic in 1848, its social and economic legacy remained 'the central fact of colonial times' (Young 1988: 39), while a plantation economy ensured that the colonial state remained minimal and problematic. The French so-called 'Old Colonies' were assimilated into the Republic, with voting rights for emancipated slaves; after the Second World War they were more fully assimilated, and thus in some respects decolonized, as '*Départements d'Outre-Mer*' (Overseas Departments) (Chapter 5). But these plantation societies remained vestiges of an older-style colonialism, 'holding operations' (Young, 1988) which the late colonial state would fail to modernize satisfactorily. Emancipation also necessitated a diversified labour pool, leading to further migration, this time of indentured labourers, creating far-flung diasporas, mostly Indian and Chinese in origin. Migrant communities of labourers and traders were a distinctive feature of colonial societies, not only in the plantation colonies, but also in British East Africa, in Fiji and in Malaya. The more 'state-like' the colonial state became, the more these groups were accommodated within the political order. In Malaya, the abortive Malayan Union Policy of 1945–6 attempted to integrate the Indian and Chinese communities within a colonial state which had hitherto favoured the indigenous Malays, whom together they outnumbered (Chapter 4). Colonial censuses played a crucial role in assigning both communal identities within the colonial state and quasi-national identities between states, so that, however artificially, the Chinese subject of, say, the Dutch East Indies could readily be distinguished not only from a Javanese Malay, but also from a Chinese subject of the British Straits Settlements (Anderson 1991). This too could turn into a way of imagining national communities, even if it primarily served to emphasize specific colonial jurisdictions.

The final group of migrants accommodated by the colonial state were European settlers, but here the problems were of a different order. European settlement was a large part of the rationale for colonial expansion, and from the perspective of the British empire, represented something like the imperial norm. Moreover, to the extent that colonial rule was still considered normal across much of Africa after 1945, the concept of white-settled Africa was an important component of that normality, even if South Africa is left out of account. Settlers numbers grew substantially after 1945, much more rapidly than stagnant birth rates allowed, as new waves of emigrants bolstered the already substantial political clout of settler communities in Morocco and Tunisia, Southern Rhodesia and Kenya, Angola and Mozambique: in each of these six countries, settler numbers increased by more than half in the period between 1945 and independence, although only in Portuguese Africa was this a matter of government policy.[2] Even where settler numbers were stable, as in Algeria, or remained a tiny minority, as in French sub-Saharan Africa or the Belgian Congo, they wielded political influence out of all proportion to their number, and British, French and Belgian officials and politicians exercised considerable ingenuity to ensure their continued representation in late colonial constitutional arrangements. Moreover,

much as liberal officials or politicians might loath the racial attitudes of settlers, the thrust of late colonial reform favoured them, not necessarily *as* settlers, but as dynamic agents for economic growth. Settlerdom was also supported by British sentimental ties of 'kith and kin' or by myths of a 'Greater France' or a luso-tropical greater Portugal, or Eurafrica, or by the idea of pioneers settling a new 'Far West'. Amongst settler populations, the Europeans of Algeria came closest to white South Africans in their demographic weight and social cohesion (to say nothing of their politics), numbering almost a million in the late 1940s alongside an Algerian popula-tion of some eight million. The so-called *pieds noirs* were – not entirely implausibly – coming to regard themselves as possessed of roots, culture and other attributes of a proto-national 'Mediterranean' identity, distinct not only from Algerians but also from the French metropole. They had also established the prerogative to block attempts at even the most cautious of political or constitutional reforms.

Patterns of Rule: the Collaborator System, the 'Thin White Line' and the 'Official Mind'

Colonial rule comes most clearly into focus when viewed at the local scale, and, just as Thomas Hobbes's Leviathan state was a composite of its individual citizens, so too patterns of colonial rule were created from the bottom up, starting at the interaction between the individual colonial administrator and local groups and 'big men', mov-ing up to the level of the colonial state. The discussion here will centre on two inter-related concepts. The first of these is the 'collaborator system', whereby the functioning of the colonial state depended on the collaboration of indigenous groups or local rulers, thus enabling colonial rulers to maintain the benefits of empire while exercis-ing the minimum degree of power consistent with the maintenance of imperial authority. The theme of 'collaboration', its implications for political actors on the side of the colonized, and the objections which may be raised to the term itself, is an important one to which we will return extensively in the following chapter. For the moment, however, it is the colonial side of this equation which chiefly interests us. We therefore consider a further essential principle of colonial rule, encapsulated in the image of a 'thin white line' of European colonial administration (Kirk-Greene 1980). This then leads us to explore the training, outlook and worldview of colonial field officers.

Concepts of collaboration (and, by extension, of resistance) are central to the 'per-ipheral' or 'excentric' theory of imperialism, and have been deployed to help explain every stage of colonial rule, from conquest to decolonization. Thus, modern colonial-ism developed from patterns of collaboration on which depended pre-colonial free trade imperialism and the still-preferred British system of informal empire. Formal colonial rule was established where collaborating rulers had ceased to become reli-able, perhaps as a result of internal crisis, typically resulting from increased demands by the imperial powers, as in the case of the British occupation of Egypt in 1882, which in turn inspired 'much of the subsequent rivalry impelling the partition of Africa' (Robinson 1972). However, imperial reliance on collaboration soon tran-scended its origins in the diplomatic expedient of imperial protection. Rather, the

designated function of collaborating rulers, landlords and other 'big men' was as agents for imperial interests, for example tax collection, labour recruitment and main-taining local law and order. In essence, as in India, collaboration necessitated a polit-ical bargain, according to which revenue was collected without too many questions asked about who paid, while public order was taken for granted by the British with-out them taking too obtrusive a part in it (Seal 1973: 13). At times of public disorder, or widespread crisis such as the Indian Non-Cooperation movement of 1919–22, the British could persuade themselves that peasant unrest was not primarily directed at British rule, but at the inequities of Indian land rents (for which the Raj could disclaim all responsibility) (Pandey 1988). This was a dynamic system develop-ing over time, as the Raj increased its demands and hence its need for wider systems of collaboration. The links between this system and the development of Indian nationalist politics will be explored more fully in the following chapter.

A parallel argument can be made for British Africa, where collaboration was elevated to a formal doctrine, but here the pattern of change was more imperceptible. The principles of Indirect Rule, which found their most complete expression in Lord Lugard's 1922 treatise, *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa*, were inher-ently conservative. Drawing on Lugard's experience of conquest and pacification in Uganda and Northern Nigeria, and on wider European perceptions of 'traditional' patterns of rule, these were widely applied in Africa. Lugard noted the vigorous resist-ance of the Muslim Fulani emirates in Northern Nigeria, and their well-developed systems of taxation and justice, and argued that traditional rulers should be incor-porated into the colonial system rather than rejected by it. Although dressed in the admirable rhetoric of modernizing colonial liberalism, Indirect Rule tended to shield the Northern emirates from change, whether that change came from the more inten-sively colonized South or from within. By the 1920s, Lugard was old-fashioned enough to see his policy as a safeguard against the growing influence of the so-called 'trousered African' of popular imperial prejudice, that is, the mission-educated and 'detribal-ized' Africans from whose ranks later nationalist cadres would indeed be recruited (Cell 1999).

The orthodoxy of Indirect Rule had been largely superseded well before the Second World War, but even its more liberal successor doctrine of Indirect Administration was arguably founded on a series of 'working misunderstandings' (Dorward 1974). Thus, although British administrative practice was based on extensive ethnographical research, the relationship between colonial ethnography and administration was largely circular and mutually supportive. British efforts to apply Indirect Administration in Tanganyika 'owed much to the Old Testament, to Tacitus and Caesar', but most to modern academic conceptions of African tribes as cultural units 'possessing a com-mon language, a single social system, and an established common law'. The problem in Tanganyika was that these criteria rarely obtained, and that even where they applied, this was largely the result of Tanganyikans' creative efforts to elaborate or invent tribal histories (Iliffe 1979: 322–4; Spear 2003).

The myth of the 'thin white line' certainly suggests the extent to which 'the system worked', relying as it did on an elaborate network of indigenous 'collaborators' in the guise of chiefs and other 'big men', but also subordinate officials, clerks and trans-lators, policemen and troops. Although the very sparseness of an official European

presence across colonial territories was commonly taken as evidence of the extent of colonial 'pax' and as an eloquent demonstration of the consent of colonial subjects, the frequency with which the theme recurs suggests an underlying anxiety. The mantra was often uttered at moments of tension, as in the 'somewhat smugly' worded report of the 1935 Commission of Enquiry into labour riots on the Northern Rhodesian Copperbelt: 'To set down two or three British officials at an outstation to rule 100,000 natives, with a handful of police to keep order, is a customary British risk which many years of colonial development has proved to be successful' (in Hargreaves 1996: 10). A similar pattern of revolt and its suppression in 'police actions' which barely register in the records of colonial military action may be found across many parts of an over-extended interwar British Empire in, for example, Mesopotamia and the Southern Sudan. Thus, the Royal Air Force weathered the storm of post-1918 disarmament in large measure because of the capacity it offered for exercising low-level control at long distance (Omissi 1990).

Colonial rule was always a small-scale enterprise, constructed from the base upwards, and with its roots in arbitrary, sometimes brutal, but often fleeting personal contact between individual European officials and the communities they nominally commanded. It was also fundamentally parsimonious: until the last decade or two of development funding from a grudging metropolitan centre, colonies were self-sufficient, reliant on the revenues and labour which the administrators were called upon to extract. Thus, a French law passed in 1900, mirroring British practice, forbade any colonial budgetary drain on the French state, to the extent that French colonial officer cadets were trained at the expense of the Federation to which they were to be assigned; this was only effectively superseded by the introduction of the Investment Fund for Social and Economic Development (FIDES) after 1946 which channelled development funds from the imperial centre for the first time.

At the heart of the myth is the lone District Officer (or *commandant de cercle*, or his Portuguese, Dutch or Belgian equivalent) posted to a remote field station with poor communications to his superiors, whence he toured his district, probably on horseback or by other preferably unmotorized means,[3] and variously commanded, judged, counted and taxed hugely disproportionate numbers of loyal, or at least quiescent, subjects. Practice varied widely between the colonial powers, but field officers were deployed in spectacularly small numbers. Thus, the young Robert Delavignette found himself posted in the early 1920s to the *Cercle* of Zinder, in Niger:

> The *Cercle* ruled over the ten thousand souls in the town and the 135,000 who lived in outlying cantons. There were seven *Cercles* in the territory of Niger, the cultivable area of which was more than half the size of France and had a population of a million souls. Seven *Cercles*, with twenty-one administrators and thirty-nine agents of the Native Affairs bureau: sixty officers in all. And in French West Africa, which was eight times bigger than France and had a population of fifteen million, there were 118 *Cercles*. (Delavignette 1940: 21)

The interwar colonial service in British Africa numbered slightly more than 1,200 men, spread over a dozen colonies with populations of some 43 million spread over more than two million square miles. The Indian Civil Service was staffed by a maximum of

1,250 British officers, for a population (in the 1930s) of 353 million (Gallagher 1982; Cell 1999: 232). These numbers conceal essential differences between areas of direct and indirect rule, nor do they allow for the proportion of indigenous administrators, or for the larger numbers of administrators and ancillary staff at lower levels, both European and local: the 1931 Indian census recorded as many as a million government workers.

Accounts of the 'golden age' of colonial rule almost invariably make a virtuous principle of this arithmetic necessity, and the stock image of the DO out and about with only a walking stick formed an indelible part of colonial mythology. The evidence is typically anecdotal, but builds into a picture of a ritualized expression of authority, as in the following vignette, relating the public schoolboy's reflexes of one DO in Southern Tanganyika:

> D was in the habit of going for a long walk every evening, wearing a hat. When, towards sunset, he came to the point of turning for home he would hang his hat on a convenient tree and continue on his way hatless. The first African who passed that way after him and saw the hat was expected to bring it to D's house and hand it over to his servants, even if he was going in the opposite direction. If he ignored the hat he would be haunted by the fear that D's intelligence system would catch up with him. (Lumley 1976, in Ranger 1983: 216)

Although the cultural referents might vary from empire to empire, the underlying reality was the 'routinization of hegemony' (Young 1988: 48). There was nothing specifically colonial about this prefectural system of rule, which has typically been deployed where 'there were perceived to be threats to the survival of the established regime and/or doubts about the compliance with its directives of significant sectors of the society' (Berman & Lonsdale 1992: vol. 2, 231). In the French case, it represented the colonial extension of the Napoleonic system of rule – still in force in modified form in today's French Republic – where the Prefects were uniformed representatives of the might of the state.

Colonial officers were necessarily versatile agents of government. Of the functions recorded by Hubert Deschamps, relating to his first command in southern Madagascar in the 1930s, most would have been recognized by a British DO:

> The administrator in my time was a Jack-of-all-trades of the bush: sub-prefect, gendarme captain, police commissioner, mayor, tax collector, judge, accountant, road engineer, nurseryman, mapmaker, land agent, customs agent, schools inspector . . . and more besides. He was on his own, in charge of everything, responsible for implementing innumerable regulations. (Deschamps 1975: 121)

By the mid-1940s, a further sub-prefectural role could be added, that of returning officer for the elections and referenda which multiplied in the post-1945 empires. Isolation and the heterogeneity of the societies overseen by these 'kings of the bush' placed a premium on improvisation and autonomous action: Deschamps' office volumes of the *Journal Officiel*, the very symbols of Republican legalism, went largely unconsulted, while British field officers were granted similarly large margins of discretion by their immediate superiors in the Provincial Administration. Personal

authority and practical expertise took precedence over specialist administrative skills or close attention to regulations.

Training the Official Mind

The myth of the 'thin white line' invites investigation of the training and outlook of these 'kings of the bush', whose strength of character alone often seemed to hold together their vast, ramshackle domains. Conformity to the job's requirements was ensured via the recruitment process, on the assumption that a shared background and close identification with 'ruling class' values in the mother country would be translated into consistent and effective colonial rule. British colonial officials were overwhelmingly drawn from the propertied middle classes, had fathers who worked in the professions or the service sector (typically the City or senior civil service), probably grew up in the 'Home Counties' of south-eastern England, and followed the traditional privileged path of Public School followed by Oxford or Cambridge. Orthodoxy was further assured by a personalized system of recruitment; thus, one man, Sir Ralph Furse, oversaw recruitment to the colonial service from 1919 until 1948. It is debatable whether the more conventional, and rigorous, British system of Civil Service Selection Boards could have recruited with more consistency than Sir Ralph's 'keen eye for the merits of that admirable class of person whom university examiners consider worthy only of third-class honours' (Furse 1962: 9). Tough, competitive examinations for the ICS, and the more obviously academic criteria for selection to the Colonial Office, as opposed to the 'character' and athletic prowess required in the field, ensured intellectual mettle where it was needed, providing 'a true elite of scholar-official mandarins' (Hyam 1999: 259); the ICS drew on a wider geographic, if not social, catchment area for recruitment, with 'fewer athletes, but more Irish and Scots' (Cell 1999: 232–3).

French officials were recruited with the same aims of shared values and conformity of outlook, even if the methods employed differed substantially. An older generation of colonial officials were recruited rather haphazardly, but by the mid-1920s, the Colonial Corps increasingly consisted of graduates of the National School of Overseas France (ENFOM), which selected via state-run competitions for which students prepared for two years at one of an elite group of *lycées* (state high schools) in Paris and a few other large cities. This placed ENFOM on the same footing as other *grandes écoles* designed to train the state's elite of teachers, engineers, army and naval officers. Significantly, ENFOM was the only *grande école* which specifically trained administrators, before the creation of the *École Nationale d'Administration* (ENA) in 1945, and thus prefigured the 'technocratic' ethos of the present-day Fifth Republic (which often seems to be largely run by ENA graduates, whether politicians or civil servants).

Whereas the more prestigious *grandes écoles* tended to favour the sons (and, far more rarely, daughters) of a social and professional elite, often Parisian, ENFOM cadets in the interwar period (who would reach the highest ranks by the time of independence) were apparently recruited from middle class, less than grand, provincial backgrounds. As one official put it: 'The middle classes . . . have certain virtues which are well known. They make honest, reliable, and generally impartial agents of

the State' (in Cohen 1971: 91).[4] French colonial officialdom's values were those of provincial bourgeois Republicanism, with sympathy for the (usually non-communist) Left, or for an emerging doctrine of Catholic humanism. As for the ICS, competitions favoured the Republic's periphery: in the late 1950s, three Corsicans, all called Colombani (two related), dominated Niger's administration (Colombani 1991: 177). Three years at ENFOM contrasted sharply with the 'generalist' British system: cadets studied for a law degree alongside more specialist courses in accountancy, languages, ethnography and, even, in the early days, fencing and horse-riding. Sanmarco criticizes the 'almost infantile conformism' of ENFOM in the early 1930s, preferring the more informal opportunities offered by the libraries and cafés of Paris (1983: 49–50). Nonetheless, he admits that training at ENFOM translated into a formidable *esprit de corps* amongst its graduates, which was a large part of its purpose. Of the 21 governors and governors-general of French colonial Africa who deliberated at the 1944 Brazzaville Conference, all but three were ENFOM graduates, and of those two were already past retirement age.

What then were the values which colonial officials applied to their work in the field? In the British case, we enter here on ground well trodden by contributors to a rich genre of colonial novels. But nothing in the fiction of Kipling (1900), Forster (1924), Cary (1939), Orwell (1935), Greene (1948), Scott (1966–75) *et alii* outdoes the imaginative myth-making and the 'invention of tradition' documented by Ranger (1983), who demonstrates the extent to which British officers drew not only on the neo-traditional forms and rituals of 'Imperial Monarchy', but also on the hierarchies of army, public school and country house. Thus colonized societies could be imaginatively recast according to familiar models of king and subjects, officers and men, school prefects and junior boys, or lords of the manor and retainers.[5] At its heart the ethos of British field officers was Barrington Moore's 'Catonism': 'the anti-rationalist, anti-urban, anti-materialist and anti-bourgeois response of the traditional landed ruling class to the development of modern industrial society' (Berman & Lonsdale 1992: vol. 2, 234). Having been co-opted as at least honorary members of the ruling class, administrators now applied its values in a very different context. Change might be inevitable, but it was to be jealously controlled, preserving the best of a pre-existing, but idealized, rural society. Moreover, true to the 'Whiggish' instincts of a reforming landlord, the rural 'man in a blanket' was to be protected against 'detribalized' urban upstarts, 'professional politicians' or even settlers, when, as happened in the 'White Highlands' of Kenya or in the even more extensively resettled lands of Southern Rhodesia, those interests ran counter to the DO's attempts to create a kind of 'Merrie Africa' (Pearce 1982: 181).

Many of these attitudes had their counterpart in the French outlook, although derived from very different cultural sources. The major distinction between British and French colonial doctrine lay in the French notion of assimilation, according to which French rule aimed to 'assimilate' colonial subjects to French standards of education, social development and, indeed, civilization. As de Gaulle's Commissioner of Colonies, René Pleven, put it succinctly before the Brazzaville Conference (which he chaired), the aim was 'to transform French Africans into African Frenchmen'. This was a rhetorical offshoot of the classic French republicanism that underpinned French efforts, under the Third Republic after 1870, to bring outlying provinces within

the enveloping fold of the One and Indivisible Republic. This involved the deployment of the conscript army and the state school system to impose French social and educational norms, and in particular the French language, on peasants and peripheral cultures (Bretons, Corsicans, Provençaux and others) and thus to modernize French society by turning 'peasants into Frenchmen' (Weber 1976).

Assimilation was only one pole in a debate conducted throughout the period of French colonial rule. While assimilationists believed that the universal values of French civilization could be shared by all within a 'France of a Hundred Million Souls', this idea was dismissed as impracticable or undesirable by proponents of the less ambitious and superficially less attractive doctrine of Association, with its underlying idea of a racial hierarchy. This doctrine was derived from the experience of French empire builders, including such authorities as General Gallieni, Marshal Lyautey, founder of the French protectorate in Morocco, or Jules Harmand, who drew on a quarter-century's experience in Indochina. Thus, when in 1941 Félix Éboué, Gaullist Governor-General at Brazzaville, drew up a statement of 'The New Native Policy', he sought to apply to French Equatorial Africa the lessons learnt in Morocco by Lyautey 25 years before. Assimilationist doctrine was largely abandoned by 1919, in favour of a more realistic, less interventionist 'Republican' policy in French Africa (Conklin 1997; Le Sueur 2001: 20ff.). However, although pronounced dead by various colonial modernizers, the doctrine of Assimilation refused to lie down, perhaps because it bulked so large in French officials' ideological baggage. Moreover, policies derived from assimilationist ideas and those inspired by association could sit happily side by side: Éboué's 'New Native Policy' also proposed a statute for so-called 'notables évolués', that is, French-educated Africans who were to be allocated a key role in the projected new colonial order.[6] Notwithstanding heated arguments to the contrary, there was no necessary contradiction between 'associationist' policies and the idea of using French as the exclusive medium of education, as was recommended by Brazzaville, or of administration (since French officers were rarely in post for long enough to learn local languages).[7]

Moreover, French administrators saw themselves as members of a technocratic elite, but also as the sons of peasants. Thus Deschamps' rather Rousseauesque memoirs, published some thirty years after he left the service, offer a close approximation to the paternalism and the rural idylls more readily associated with British myth-making:

> Frenchmen, with rural roots in a more or less recent past, knew the intoxication of landownership, the pride in a well-maintained estate and in the progress brought to it . . . I flourished in these village societies close to my own origins. Having escaped from a limited society and from the gloomy prison of industrial urban life, I returned to my ancestors, while at the same time finding what I had long sought: a taste of exoticism, of difference, of a magical journey in time and space. (1975: 125–6)

In short, assimilation provided a self-justifying myth, and thus constituted the functional equivalent of the 'invented traditions' of British colonial practice, and a parallel fantasy of an idealized and 'eternal' society to be protected against the threat of any but the most organic and incremental of changes.

The District Officer, commandant de cercle and equivalents thus constituted the front line of colonial administration, their role legitimated by a tradition with its roots in conquest, their training and ethos grounded in key aspects of metropolitan political culture, their versatility justified by administrative necessity but in turn serving to illustrate the extent, and the benefits, of the colonial 'pax'. Colonial hierarchy was thus built from the base upwards, and policy had also to be mediated through field officers. The almost inevitable consequence was an inbuilt tendency to immobilism: while policy was important both at the establishment of colonial rule, and as it drew to a close, 'In between, the landscape was dominated by a system, not a policy' (Heussler 1971: 576; Berman & Lonsdale 1992: vol. 2, 233).

The Colonial State: an Open Polity?

The concept of the colonial state is a familiar one from the literature but not unproblematic, since in one obvious sense colonies were not states at all, but subordinate units in an imperial hierarchy. While in terms of colonial practice and tradition, colonial governors acted very much as 'proconsuls', and for most practical purposes the colony was the effective unit of government, colonial states might be called open polities (by analogy with open economies), in that they depended ultimately not only on policy directives from the metropolitan capitals, but also on the approval or acquiescence of domestic electorates. The ambivalence to which this gave rise was reflected in various ways, including the structures whereby colonial states were incorporated into imperial systems, but also the way in which a metropolitan political elite and its electoral clientele regarded (and quite often disregarded) the empire.

This ambivalence was reflected in the contrasting imperial frameworks within which a colonial dependency's legal status was established. The British colonial governor's relative freedom of action was assured by the system of 'crown colonies', derived from long experience of dealing with the Dominions of Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. This system vested law-making powers in a nominated Legislative Council composed of representatives of settler and commercial interests, and chaired by the governor, thus ensuring that each colony retained its legislative identity; in practice, this meant that the last word almost inevitably fell to the 'man on the spot', the governor. In this way the governor was given considerable powers to resist a proposed policy, and Whitehall was obliged to engage in prolonged consultation and, often, revision of its policy proposals. There were also profound differences in administrative culture or mission, so that it was difficult to consider implementing, say, West African policy in East Africa, and vice versa. This particularism was to have profound consequences for the pattern of British decolonization, as individual colonies each entered the process of devolving power according to its own timetable and its own tailor-made constitutional arrangements.

At its most extreme, British particularism found expression in a separate Government of India, answerable directly to the King-Emperor. The Viceroy was the grandest of proconsuls, and it is difficult to articulate meaningful comparisons with a case that was so spectacularly sui generis, since 'All-India' looked very much like an empire

in its own right. There were other separate administrations, too, with their own ethos and traditions, some maintained by ministerial barriers, for example the Sudan, run by a Sudan Service which, for reasons of British Egyptian policy (Chapter 7), was run from the Foreign Office. Others, notably the Cyprus government, maintained autonomy through sheer force of inertia (Holland 1998).

An obvious contrast is suggested with the Republican tradition on which the French based their colonial administration. However, this contrast may be overstated, and substantial differences are sometimes indiscernible in the local impact of the two styles of colonial rule. To be sure, the preferred French administrative model was one of direct rule derived from French conceptions of a strong, centralizing state and the almost sacred doctrine of the 'One and Indivisible Republic', and the impact of principles derived from these was felt at every level. In contrast with British Crown Colonies, the French Republic instituted vast federations in West and Equatorial Africa and in Indochina (and a similar structure was proposed but never implemented in Madagascar), headed by a governor-general who amassed considerable powers, and to whom answered governors of individual territories. Legislative power was exercised not by the governors or governors-general, however, but notionally by the National Assembly in Paris, or more usually by Presidential decree or ordinances enacted by the governor.

In practice, the realities of imperial coordination softened the edges of this pyramidal geometry. Governors-general had a long proconsular tradition to uphold of defying or ignoring Paris, and were still capable in the 1940s and 1950s of presenting the metropole with some alarming *faits accomplis*. Thus although the Governments-General at Hanoi, Dakar, Brazzaville and Tananarive were created in order to coordinate policy between Paris and the colonial periphery, the incumbents were powerful officials who could defy Paris at will. Moreover, there were two significant exceptions to this adapted metropolitan model of the unitary Republic. The first was Algeria, which, since 1848, had been considered an integral part of the 'One and Indivisible Republic'. Although the representative of the state in Algeria was a governor-general, he was appointed by the Ministry of the Interior, and his immediate subordinates were the Prefects of the three *départements* (each subsequently sub-divided into four). Since European needs and interests dominated, the civil administration existed side-by-side with a more properly 'colonial' administration responsible for the majority Muslim non-citizen population. This translated into a corrupt system of indirect rule based on locally recruited '*caïds*' or headmen. The Algerian Southern Territories were governed directly by the Army, and were incorporated as *départements* as late as 1957. The two North African territories of Tunisia and Morocco constituted the second exception, as international protectorates under the treaties of 1881 and 1912, where the Bey of Tunis and the Sultan of Morocco retained notional sovereignty. Since they were governed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Moroccan and Tunisian administrations were protected to a degree, under an informal system of 'watertight bulkheads', from parliamentary scrutiny or from reformist initiatives originating in other ministries, particularly the Ministry of Colonies. By the same, largely fictional, principle of retained sovereignty, the League of Nations Mandates in Syria and Lebanon were also managed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Shipway 2002; Longrigg 1958).

The efforts of colonial ministries to rationalize and coordinate colonial or imperial policy could often be blocked or resisted by appeals to the greater knowledge and experience of the 'man on the spot'. The voluminous correspondence between ranking governors and metropolitan-based officials was informed by an effective gulf between separate administrative cultures. Simply expressed, pith helmets or ostrich plumes (or the less ostentatious *képi* of the French governor) were greatly to be preferred to, say, bowler hats and rolled umbrellas. But the converse perception in both the British and the French services was more commonly expressed, of a metropolitan-based ministerial staff out of touch with the realities of colonial life. Thus Deschamps, appointed in 1936 as private secretary (*chef de cabinet*) to the incoming Socialist Minister of Colonies, Marius Moutet, confronted a 'cult of incompetence' whereby Parisian officials sought to minimize the influence of officers returning from a colonial posting, for fear that their own control over policy would be lessened (1975: 127–8). An informal tradition of 'beachcombing' allowed members of the British Colonial Service to serve a term in Whitehall, and the regular traffic in the opposite direction by which junior Colonial Office officials spent a year or two overseas, usually in a Colonial Secretariat, went some way towards reducing the cultural gap, although this was inevitably an *ad hominem* solution (Parkinson 1947).

Colonial ministries' capacity to coordinate policy was further affected by their low position within the ministerial pecking order. The British Colonial Office in the inter-war period went a long way towards establishing new structures for the modernization of colonial policy through the delivery of technical expertise, establishing functional departments to cover the increasing range of responsibilities in the realms of economic and social policy, a development viewed somewhat wryly by the Permanent Secretary of the period, Sir Cosmo Parkinson (ibid.). In reality, these new departments often merely shadowed the work of separate departments of state or ministries with a different perspective and set of priorities. Paradoxically, as the colonies came to be perceived as more central to British economic prosperity after 1945, the Ministries of Food and Supply would lead the so-called 'second colonial occupation', sometimes against the interests and better judgement of the Colonial Office and Colonial Service, as was the case for the infamous postwar Groundnut Scheme (Iliffe 1979: 442).

One of the paradoxical rules of thumb of colonial administration might thus be expressed as the tendency for the oxygen of influence to become more rarefied nearer the summit of the governmental pyramid. British Colonial Secretaries and French Ministers of Colonies alike tended to be either politicians with little influence within government as a whole, or conversely men for whom the colonial portfolio was a convenient passport to Cabinet rank, but who had little interest in, or knowledge of, colonial affairs. Politicians with a long-term interest in colonial affairs while in opposition, such as Marius Moutet (French Socialist Minister of Colonies, 1936–7, and Minister of Overseas France, 1946–7) or Arthur Creech Jones (British Labour Secretary of State, 1946–50), were a relative rarity. But colonial affairs tended anyway to be the concern of committees, and the major British and French parties each had their contingent of colonial 'experts'. Colonial policy as such thus had relatively little impact on the national political agenda, except, of course, in the event of crisis when the minister or his department could conveniently be blamed.

Notes

1 Slave Coast had disappeared from the map. Except where there are commonly accepted English forms – for example, Algeria, Dutch East Indies, Indochina – colony names are given in the form imposed by the colonizer, especially where there might otherwise be confusion – for example, between German Kamerun, French Cameroun, and the British Cameroons, French Soudan (Mali), vs the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan.

2 Wilson (1994: 125–7) gives the following figures for European settlers in East and Central Africa (to which add the ratio Africans:Europeans): 207,000 in Southern Rhodesia in 1958 (13:1), 72,000 in Northern Rhodesia in 1958 (31:1), 67,700 in Kenya in 1960 (93:1).

3 As Berque (1969: 67) comments, the advent of the motor car severely reduced the contact possible between French officers and their subjects.

4 The 'governor-general of Indochina in the 1940s' is presumably Léon Pignon, High Commissioner in Indochina, 1948–50, a schoolmaster's son from Angoulême. Of the other French officials cited, Delavignette was the son of a Burgundian sawmill manager, Deschamps of a bailiff from Western France; a third ex-colonial memoir-writer, Louis Sanmarco (1983), was the son of an immigrant Italian docker in Marseille. See also Bourdieu 1989.

5 On the British 'public schools' (i.e. private, usually boarding schools), Cell 1999: 233n.; for a subversive post-imperial account, see Lindsay Anderson's 1969 film *If . . .* : the headmaster now sees his charges as future television directors rather than DOs.

6 'Evolués' ('evolved persons') was the unflattering term applied to French- or Belgian-educated Africans; 'notables' were dignitaries or 'big men', originally those to be found in small French towns.

7 On Brazzaville, see Chapter 5. According to one British official in the 1930s, the French aim of 'creating a new race of black Frenchmen' would 'hasten the decline & fall of western civilization', in Ashton & Stockwell 1996: doc. 125 & lxxvii.

2

Colonial Politics Before the Flood: Challenging the State, Imagining the Nation

Hardly ever have I known anybody to cherish such loyalty as I did to the British Constitution. I can see now that my love of truth was at the root of this loyalty. It has never been possible for me to stimulate loyalty or, for that matter, any other virtue. The National Anthem used to be sung at every meeting that I attended in Natal. I then felt that I must also join in the singing. Not that I was unaware of the defects in British rule, but I thought that it was on the whole acceptable. . . .

I therefore vied with Englishmen in loyalty to the throne. With careful perseverance I learnt the tune of the National Anthem and joined in the singing whenever it was sung. (Gandhi 1926: 142–3)[1]

'Down with the English anyhow. That's certain. Clear out, you fellows, double quick, I say. We may hate one another, but we hate you most. If I don't make you go, Ahmed will, Karim will, if it's fifty or five hundred years we shall get rid of you, yes, and we shall drive every blasted Englishman into the sea, and then . . . you and I shall be friends.'

'Why can't we be friends now?' said the other, holding him affectionately. 'It's what I want. It's what you want.' (Forster 1924)

In September 1945, following the August Revolution of the Communist-led Viet Minh (League for the Independence of Vietnam), banners hung in the streets of Hanoi proclaiming, amongst other slogans, 'Independence or Death' (Sainteny 1967). Over the following thirty years, death would indeed be the reward of many hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese in their struggle for national independence and unity. And for Anderson (1991: 7), 'the central problem posed by nationalism' is precisely this, that so many people have apparently been willing to go to their deaths for the sake of the nation's 'limited imaginings'. Gambling on their own mortality in the name of political action, Vietnamese revolutionaries probably felt that the odds were reasonably balanced in their favour; and in late 1945 in Vietnam, as will be discussed in a later chapter, those odds had indeed recently improved immeasurably. A few years earlier, before the Second World War wreaked its havoc in Southeast Asia, the choices open to Vietnamese political activists, which no one would have bothered inscribing

on a banner, might more realistically have been rendered: Collaboration, Prison or, if you insist, Death. And these options would most likely not have been expressed, as in 1945, in English, for an international audience represented by observing American military agents.

This suggests a dramatic variant of the late colonial shift, which, it is argued, operated across the colonial world in the wake of the Second World War. However, nowhere did that war create the conditions for decolonization from nothing, nor did post-war anti-colonial nationalism come simply 'out of the blue'. In this chapter, we explore the immediate pre-history of the post-1945 decolonizing nationalisms, and the basis for indigenous political action within the mature colonial state. Later we examine the pre-war state of colonial politics in a number of key cases. The immediate pre-war period saw the introduction of major reform in the British empire, with the passing of the 1935 Government of India Act, and a more gradual shift towards colonial reformism elsewhere, partly as a consequence of a wave of strikes and disorder starting in 1935. France too experienced a brief period of domestic reformism, led by the doomed governments of the Popular Front from 1936, with considerable implications for colonial policy. These developments have sometimes been seen as offering a foretaste of later reforms within the colonial state, before the colonial situation was transformed by the Second World War. The chapter also identifies potential continuities between pre- and post-war colonial politics, including the potential that in the end was not realized. Rather than retelling the determinist narratives of 'growing national consciousness' or of a colonial political 'infancy' under imperial tutelage, the aim here is to offer a synchronic snapshot of a full range of political possibilities as they existed within the colonial state before the crisis period of the Second World War and beyond.

First, we consider India, the biggest and most advanced colonial state, which had moved substantially towards self-government even before the 1935 Act. Experience of nationalist anti-colonial engagement was one of the principal ways in which 'lateness came early' (Darwin 1999) to the Indian colonial state in India. However, the outcomes or timing of Indian decolonization were not preordained by this time; the still hazy concept of 'Pakistan' was no more yet than the utopian brain-child of Muslim idealists – and Cambridge undergraduates at that. Our second, very different, case is that of Vietnam, within the overarching framework of French Indochina, where the Popular Front briefly and partially cleared the channels of indigenous political activity. Despite, or because of, the degree of official control exercised over colonial politics, the singular combination of Vietnamese cultural renewal and revolutionary political engagement was already in place by this time. As already suggested, this did not ostensibly make the prospects for Vietnamese nationalism any less bleak. Thirdly, in the case of Algeria, not even the Popular Front's goodwill was enough to create significant openings for legitimate political activity, given Algeria's peculiar constitutional status as 'part of France', and the determined opposition by French settlers and their political champions in Paris. Nonetheless, the outline of an Algerian nationalist politics can already be discerned, although this was still necessarily a matter of ideological positioning, rather than of concerted political action.

The Limits of Colonial Politics

Before turning to our case studies, we consider a number of underlying themes running through them, relating to the colonial state's centrality in setting the framework for indigenous political action. How does politics emerge in a system where colonial rule is regarded as the 'normal' (or at least, unavoidable) framework for political change? Following Breuilly's influential comparative model (1993: 218–29), this question may be answered in terms of the evolution of the 'collaborator system', from a set of relationships determined, as we have seen, by the circumstances of colonial conquest and consolidation, but which developed into those of a modern administrative colonial state. A convincing case can be made in this way, up to a point, for the political evolution of British India, which saw the Indian National Congress develop from a 'microscopic minority' of urban professionals to a near-hegemonic national movement poised to 'become' the Raj. The problem with treating India from a comparative perspective is that it was more or less alone in developing a proto-democratic political system based on even limited electoral representation under colonial rule before 1939. Elsewhere, the interaction between colonial rulers and indigenous elites remained at a largely pre-political stage of development, as colonial governments did their best, usually effectively, to prevent the emergence of colonial politics – understood as a 'specialized form of action with distinct organization, objectives and rhetoric' (ibid.: 224). The development of colonial politics thus more usually accompanied or followed the transformation of colonial rule associated with the Second World War.

Until that happened, and in this British India was not so very different from other colonial states, the impact of colonial rule on political development was still felt chiefly in the exercise of the repressive mechanisms of police and military violence, summary justice (such as the *indigénat*, or 'native code' of punishments meted out by administrators), surveillance, censorship and prison. A more broadly inclusive notion is needed of what might constitute 'national' politics within the colonial state. Colonial politics, like any other, was the art of determining, and where possible extending, the limits of the possible. For most of the colonial period, these limits were very narrowly defined. Thus, Breuilly's contention that 'the focus of nationalist movements is upon taking over the state', and that therefore 'not all opposition activity under colonial regimes can be regarded as nationalist', begs the question of how sharply the focus of colonial politics could yet be trained on what seemed, before 1945, a distant prospect (ibid.). Even in India, although Congress adopted national independence as its aim on New Year's Eve 1930, the Raj was still preparing for the long term, having recently instituted targets of 50 per cent Indianization of the Indian Civil Service within 15 years, and of the army and police officer corps within 25 years (by 1952) (Sarkar 1989: 283–4, 227). Arguably, the 1935 Act did little to change that perspective. More generally, the prospects for national independence or self-determination were less than tangible, so that claims to national identity or calls for national independence might be construed as morale-boosting battle cries or the inchoate aspiration to a millennial 'brave new world', rather than as realistic expressions

of a concrete political programme. Even in India, when, in 1919, Gandhi promised 'Swaraj [self-rule] within a year', he offered little sense of the content of that slogan, and Congress was disinclined to exercise the necessary leadership to achieve anything approaching self-rule in this period.

If the national idea was thus still largely utopian, then perhaps other strategies, institutions or ideological bases for political action offered plausible political futures. Three such strategies suggest themselves in the cases under consideration: the stance of 'moderate' politics accepting the terms of colonial rule; reform and restoration of 'traditional' rule; and the possibility of communist-inspired revolt against colonial rule.

Moderate and 'Mendicant' Politics

Political elites and leaders typically expressed their aims, less as a challenge to imperial rule than as an appeal to imperial rulers for fair treatment within the colonial order. Thus, the moderate politics of the early Indian Congress could be denounced as dishonourable 'Mendicancy'. Its petitions were addressed, not even to the 'sun-dried bureaucrats' of British India, but to liberal opinion at the imperial centre, and were concerned with issues such as the government's insistence in Westminster, and were concerned with issues such as the government's insistence on holding entrance examinations for the Indian Civil Service in London – an enduring and symbolic means of discouraging Indian entrants, but hardly of direct concern to more than a handful (Sarkar 1989: 97–8). Colonial governments could easily rebuff such limited political beginnings. When the mild-mannered African Association in Tanganyika (modelled on the older European and Indian Associations) intervened in 1930 to thank the British Colonial Secretary for not implementing an East African federation, it was warned off political affairs by the governor. Even as the Association evolved through to the mid-1940s, it was arguably still not nationalist, as its programme 'was a series of requests and aspirations and not a direct challenge to the regime'; nonetheless, it represented 'an advance in political consciousness which could subsequently be passed on to a nationalist movement' (Iliffe 1979: 418).

The colonial state thus provided an unavoidable frame of reference for the discursive process by which the nation was progressively imagined. As already suggested, it was axiomatic to imperial rulers that there was no correlation between colonial boundaries and the identity of the people that lived within them, and thus that there was 'no such thing' as India, Vietnam, or Algeria (and certainly no such thing as Mali or Ghana or Tanzania). Apart from his striking argument, already discussed, concerning the impact of key colonial institutions – census, map, museum – on the form of the nation imagined by colonial nationalists, Anderson (1991: 114) also laid emphasis on the intelligentsia's role in this imagining, and the ways in which their lives were shaped by the 'pilgrimages' which they were constrained to follow: perhaps to the metropole in the first instance, but thereafter to 'the highest administrative centre to which [they] could be assigned'. Further, it was the very modernity of colonial states which allowed this development: mobility via imperial transport systems, bureaucratic expansion creating a demand for 'native' clerks, interpreters and policemen, and the spread of modern education.

Few colonial politicians went as far in endorsing the imperial view quite so explicitly as the Algerian pharmacist and political moderate, Ferhat Abbas, who in 1936 famously declared:

> If I had found the Algerian nation, I would be a nationalist and that would not make me blush as if at a crime. However, I will not die for an Algerian fatherland which does not exist. I have looked for it in vain. I have searched history, and communed with the living and the dead; I have visited the cemeteries; no-one spoke to me of a fatherland. You cannot build on the wind. For once and all time we have put aside all clouds and illusions to tie our future firmly to that of France's efforts in our country. What people are actually fighting for behind the word 'nationalism' is our political and economic emancipation. Without emancipation for Algerians, no lasting French Algeria can be established. (in Nouschi 1962: 89)

We return to this argument below, in the context of a debate amongst nationalists (a term which arguably attached to Abbas even in 1936) in 1930s Algeria. The general point exemplified by Abbas is that the political engagement of this burgeoning elite was largely conditional upon accepting to work within the imperial order. However, the terms of that acceptance could change rapidly: only a few years after denying his nation's existence, in 1943, Ferhat Abbas – without needing to blush – put his name to a 'Manifesto of the Algerian People', which formed the basis of his politics over the following decade or more. Within 18 months of the launching of insurrection by the Algerian National Liberation Front (FLN), he had been won over to the radical nationalist cause with all that implied in terms of embracing Algerian national identity, and rejecting the colonial state.

Thrones and Dominions: Uses of Tradition in the Colonial State

The primary role of the Indian princes, whose lands comprised two-fifths of Indian territory, was as collaborators essential to the maintenance of the post-1857 imperial order. It was unlikely that these 'British officers in Indian dress', as Gandhi called them (in Smith, 1995: 12), would don Congress caps and shape-shift into modern nationalists, although some did make the attempt, somewhat belatedly, in the late 1930s. Nonetheless, a view of the princes as 'buffoons who frittered away their lives in self-indulgence' may be qualified: some of the more influential rulers were relatively progressive, many were 'fairly upright, cultured and hard-working' in an age when constitutional monarchy was still a relevant formula for modern government in Europe (Copland 1997: 284–5). The Indian princes also had a crucial role to play – which need not mean they played it well – in Indian constitutional developments to 1939.

Traditional rulers, and through them their courtiers and followers, could lay claim to prestige and legitimacy which still eluded modern nationalist movements. Thus the Emperor of Annam was both the rallying point for prolonged resistance during the 'Can Vuong' ('Loyalty to the King') or Black Flags rising against French conquest, in the 1880s–90s, and the focus for subsequent nationalist attempts to assert imperial,

and thus national, autonomy; both Emperor Than Thai in 1907 and the 'boy Emperor' Duy Tan in 1915 were deposed and exiled by the French for this reason. Much depended latterly on the intelligent but irresolute Bao Dai who ascended to the throne in 1932. French official determination to head off the slightest sign of imperial revival was surely a backhanded acknowledgement of the institution's symbolic potency, as was the so-called 'Bao Dai solution' of the 1940s (see Chapter 4). Elsewhere in the French empire the risk was forestalled more brutally. In Madagascar, the *Menalamba* ("Red Shawls") insurrection, following the French conquest of 1896, provided the French commander General Gallieni with the pretext to complete the destruction of the Merina court; Queen Ranavalona was exiled to Réunion, her prime minister executed by the French on trumped-up charges, and the royal tombs ceremonially burnt in a calculated act of sacrilege. Fifty years later, during the 1947 Insurrection, the French administration still feared a Merina revival (Ellis 1986).

British imperial attitudes to kingship were more ambivalent than those of the Republican French, but nonetheless interventionist. Practice varied tremendously between the 'hands-off' approach adopted towards Indian princes and, say, Middle Eastern emirs, and the more formal structures of Indirect Rule in Africa (Smith 1995). Equipped with native treasuries, and with continuing powers to administer justice, the Emirs of Northern Nigeria or the Kabaka of Buganda maintained their power base under Indirect Rule. As recompense for their loss of autonomy, rulers 'strove to gain the title of king, to obtain invitations to British coronations, to dramatize their internal authority with crowns and thrones, British-style coronations and jubilees' (Ranger 1983). British officials sometimes encouraged these aspirations, which joined up with a whole range of 'invented traditions' of monarchy and hierarchical rule imported from British society; often, what now seems inordinate attention was paid to such niceties as the ruler's choice of spouse or the order of precedence at British coronations – both issues over which rulers lost their thrones after 1945 (Smith 1995: 103–4, 195–6).[2] The overarching structures of British rule kept rulers firmly in their place, however, although in post-1945 colonial politics, this too could be a potent source of nationalist discontent. For example, the British high-handed attitude to the Malay Sultans over the short-lived Malayan Union policy was a major factor in the crystallization of post-1945 Malay nationalism centring around the prestige of the Sultans (Chapter 4).

Communists and Nationalists

A plausible alternative to a purely 'national' colonial politics was constituted by the emergence of an international communist movement avowedly promoting colonial liberation. This movement, formally constituted in 1919 as the Third Communist International, or Comintern, offered an ideological framework for analysing the colonial situation, an institutional basis for action, and even a model of how that liberation could work, with the Tsarist empire's transformation into a multi-national Union of supposedly independent Soviet Socialist Republics. The ideological and organizational obstacles to Comintern support for anti-colonial movements came from within. First, the primary focus of Comintern policy was always on the European centre

rather than the colonized periphery. This was true whether the Comintern was fomenting revolution in advanced industrial countries or, from 1922, protecting the Revolution in Russia, according to the doctrine of Socialism in One Country (Hargreaves 1993; McDermott & Agnew 1996). The Comintern's approach to colonial nationalists thus reflected that of colonial governments, in its recognition that power and initiative were located at the imperial centre. A partial exception was 'semi-colonial' China, where the Comintern promoted alliance with the Chinese Nationalist Party, the Guomindang, until the violent split and purges of 1926 set the Chinese Communist Party on its distinctive and independent path. Stalin's increasing grip on power in Moscow, consolidated by the Chinese fiasco, further reduced the Comintern to a blunt instrument of narrowly defined Soviet interests.

If anything, the Comintern's Eurocentrism was even more marked after it adopted the United (or Popular) Front doctrine in 1934, which belatedly identified the threat represented by European fascist movements and urged Communist parties to cooperate with former 'class enemies'. This was of particular significance for the French empire, given the formation of a Popular Front government in Paris in June 1936, supported from outside government ranks by the French Communist Party (PCF). Although the Popular Front government adopted a relatively imaginative and liberal approach to colonial reform, this was predicated on the continuance of French colonial empire. Communist support for this approach was expressed with awkward clarity by the PCF secretary-general, Maurice Thorez, who argued that 'the right to divorce need not imply the necessity to divorce', a formula which signalled the beginning of a long and ambiguous relationship between the PCF and colonial nationalists (Moneta 1971; Cohen 1972).

Another, potentially decisive, obstacle to Comintern support of communists in colonial states stemmed from the analysis of their limited 'historical' role in furthering the anti-imperial cause. The starting point for this analysis was Lenin's perception that, given the 'backwardness' of dependent countries, revolutionary initiative lay with 'bourgeois-nationalist movements', and not with an at best emergent working class. This position was modified at early Comintern Congresses under the influence of the Indian revolutionary, Manabendra Nath Roy, who argued that different action might be required in different countries. As he put it at the Fourth Comintern Congress, in November 1922:

> There were colonies with a fairly strong indigenous bourgeoisie, others where capitalism was only in its initial stages, and others that were still quite primitive. Bourgeois-nationalist movements in the colonies were objectively revolutionary, but if they were directed only against the foreign bourgeoisie and not against native feudalism they represented not a class struggle, but capitalist competition. . . . Leadership would have to be taken over by the communist parties when the bourgeoisie deserted and betrayed the national revolution, as they were bound to do. (Degras 1956–65; Haithcox 1971: 11–13, 32–6)

Roy was arguing primarily for India, where Congress had earlier in the year called off its Non-Cooperation campaign rather than lose control of it in the face of spiralling violence, and thus, in Roy's view, effectively 'deserted and betrayed' the national cause. But the Communist Party of India (CPI), of which M.N. Roy was a founder

member, was never strong enough to challenge Congress hegemony, and Roy moved progressively into a political wilderness, as he failed in his efforts to forge a truly national alliance, whether in the form of a communist-led Workers' and Peasants' Party in the 1920s, or under the banner of socialist internationalism in the late 1930s (Sarkar 1989).

Roy's arguments, never fully accepted by the Comintern, posed a wider question as to what constituted a valid approach for communists under colonial rule. The 1922 Congress's Theses on the Eastern Question urged communists to steer a tortuous course between an opportunist defence of 'independent class interests' and remaining aloof from working class interests 'in the name of "national unity" or of "civil peace"':

> The communist workers' parties of the colonial and semi-colonial countries have a dual task: they fight for the most radical possible solution of the tasks of a bourgeois-democratic revolution, which aims at the conquest of political independence; and they organize the working and peasant masses for the struggle for their special class interests, and in doing so exploit all the contradictions in the nationalist bourgeois-democratic camp. By putting forward social demands they release the revolutionary energy for which the bourgeois-liberal demands provide no outlet, and stimulate it further. (in Degras 1956–65)

In short, communists could remain, however uneasily or provisionally, within the nationalist movement, but were not *of* it. Moreover, this conscious balancing of class interests against longer-term revolutionary aims was a further implied recognition of a temporarily foreclosed colonial future, since communists had yet to build a mass following through the education of colonial workers and the 'semi-proletarian strata'.

This conclusion bypasses a necessary distinction between communists and anti-colonial nationalists: patently, M.N. Roy and his Comintern colleagues, Nguyen Ai Quoc (later Ho Chi Minh) or the Indonesian Tan Malaka, came to communism via the national cause. Arguably, rigorous adherence to communist tenets could be reconciled with belief in national liberation from colonial rule. It may be wrong to 'characterize Ho Chi Minh or any other major Vietnamese Communist leader as a nationalist': Ho, as early as 1922, 'considered nationalism to be a dangerous siren capable of luring colonized peoples away from communism', and subsequently campaigned effectively (and brutally) against nationalist 'collaborators' (Marr 1983: 320). However, communist ideology may be understood primarily as a way of understanding the colonial situation and acting against it. Crucially, and notwithstanding Roy's or Ho's careers as Comintern agents, or the subsequent distorting effects of the Cold War, this need not imply that the strategies of Indian or Vietnamese communist movements were subordinated to the priorities of 'international revolution' set in Moscow.

Conversely, colonial administrations often claimed, and perhaps even at times believed, that this was the case. Indeed, officials used terms such as 'communist', 'subversive' and 'illegal' as near-synonyms, both in the interwar period, and more particularly once the Cold War began to influence colonial discourse after 1945. Thus, when one Indian proconsul claimed in 1918 that Gandhi was 'Honest, but a Bolshevik and for that reason very dangerous', only the last two words carried effective meaning (Governor Willingdon, in Sarkar 1989: 177).

Collaboration and Resistance

It may be worth briefly revisiting the concept of 'collaboration', which, as argued in the previous chapter, was an essential mechanism of colonial rule. 'Collaboration' is an ugly concept, however, carrying with it the implication of a moral choice by those who collaborated – and for Europeans, it carries indelible but misleading associations with the experience of 1940–4. It is not even terribly accurate, since what is meant is usually a '*convergence of interests* between colonial state and individual groups or classes of colonized society' (Osterhammel 1997: 63, emphasis in text). Thus, Bayart's (1993) persuasive paradigm argues for the 'ordinary' functioning of African politics, centring on the concept of 'extraversion'. This is explained as the tendency of African elites to seek support from the outside world, to their own ends, even if typically on highly unequal terms. Although this has obvious kinship with collaboration, in the emphasis that it places on the relationship between colonial ruler and indigenous ruled elites, unlike the 'peripheral' approach, Bayart's model allows for indigenous initiative and agency, both at the moment of conquest and subsequently under colonial rule and beyond. In other words, whereas for Robinson and Gallagher, the colonial empires were, so to speak, sucked into a power vacuum, for Bayart they were drawn in by a political process stretching back over centuries. Bayart's African extraverts thus exploited the political, technological and cultural resources offered by the colonizer, while resigning themselves to the developing realities of imperial domination. Although his primary focus is on the post-colonial sub-Saharan African state, Bayart's argument draws for its significance on a far longer timescale, and may arguably be extended to a broader canvas.

Thus, although the idea of collaboration is straightforward enough from an imperial perspective, it begs the question of political motivation. After all, collaboration might flow from an acknowledgement of defeat, or from the need to maintain what power and influence were allowed by the colonial state. Thus the Prime Minister of Annam expressed the resignation of *anciens régimes* across the colonial world in 1901: 'Since pacification, everyone has understood that all resistance was useless, and that the best was to accommodate oneself to the new state of affairs' (in Brocheux & Hémery 1995: 92). It might be motivated by the desire to fight colonial rule on its own terms, or the ambition to take over the colonial state from within. Over time, collaborators included traditional rulers, appointed and salaried chiefs, urban intellectuals or business leaders, ethnic or religious community elders, elected regional or national deputies, nationalist party bosses or trades union leaders, even the odd Comintern agent. What then occasioned these periodic shifts in collaborative partnerships? Was the imperial hand never forced, and if the colonial power did choose, was this not by some assessment of relative strength or potential? The collaborative model thus effectively collapses one side of the imperial relationship, telling us about the form of colonial politics, while largely ignoring its content (Breuilly 1993: 158–61). Although consistency dictates that the term 'collaboration' is maintained, its use remains problematic.

And what of those who refused collaboration, placing themselves beyond the colonial pale? For imperial historians, resistance is readily consigned to the oblivion of 'primitive' or 'tribal' revolts, reactionary refusals to accept the inevitable course

of history, 'romantic, reactionary struggles against the facts, the passionate protest of societies which were shocked by a new age of change and would not be comforted' (Robinson & Gallagher, in Ranger 1968: 437). Conquest was then followed by peace and order in which the 'thin white line' of the colonial administration was able to rule largely unchallenged.

Resistance to colonial rule should not be dismissed so readily. First, colonial conquest was always part of the background to colonial rule, and the possibility of resistance was often founded in the relatively recent memory of defeat. For example, when Joseph Nyerere toured southern Tanganyika rallying support for Tanganyika African National Union (TANU), he was met with memories of the Hehe people's resistance to German conquest and of the 1905 Maji Maji rebellion:

> The people, and particularly the elders, asked: 'How can we win without guns? How can we make sure that there is not going to be a repetition of the Hehe and Maji-Maji wars?' It was therefore necessary for TANU to start by making the people understand that peaceful methods of struggle for independence were possible and could succeed. (in Iliffe 1979: 519–20)

But *revanche* is a powerful motivating force, and memory of defeat acted as a rallying point for subsequent resistance at the right moment. Thus, the 1896 Menalamba, or 'Red Shawls', insurrection, so called because the insurgents smeared their shawls (*lamba*) with Madagascar's red earth, encapsulated many of the grievances which accompanied colonial occupation for more than sixty years, and inspired the 1947 Insurrection, fought over much the same territory in the eastern forests of Madagascar, and with a similarly hopeless outlook (Ellis 1986; Chapter 6). With a similar regard for historical continuities, when Joshua Nkomo, leader of the Shona-dominated Zimbabwean African Party of Union returned to Southern Rhodesia in 1962, he was greeted by survivors of the Shona and Ndebele revolts of 1896–7 (depicted in Lan 1985). Moreover, it was those who held out longest against colonial control, for example the Balanta people of southern Guiné, who were the 'first and fiercest' to join the wars against the Portuguese in the 1960s (MacQueen 1997: 6, 42).

Secondly, resistance shaped the structures of colonial rule. This was, after all, part of the point of Indirect Rule, not only recognising the power of, say, the North Nigerian emirs, but also allowing the British to step back from early efforts to impose direct taxation, for example, following the Hut Tax rebellion in Sierra Leone. Similarly, the emergence of a French policy of 'association' in West Africa, which followed their efforts to impose direct rule before 1914, owed much to the rebellions which met French recruiting drives to fill the 80,000-strong ranks of *tirailleurs sénégalais* (Black African troops raised in French West Africa, not just in Senegal) who fought on the Western Front (Conklin 1997: 143–51; Michel 1982). In Madagascar, General Gallieni was obliged to modify the so-called *politique des races*, directed against the hitherto dominant Merina ruling caste, because French rule needed their administrative skills more than it needed their complete submission. Right up to decolonization, and especially after crushing the 1947 rebellion (which the French blamed on the Merina), French policy maintained an uneasy balance between accepting Merina collaboration and empowering the other Malagasy peoples (Shipway, 1996a).

The idea of a colonial 'pax' implies a delay occurring between the 'primary' resistance to conquest and the subsequent campaigns of nationalist movements in the late colonial period. But the more closely the colonial 'pax' is examined, the more spatial and temporal patches appear in it: like Balzac's magical wild ass's skin, the *peau de chagrin*, the effective area of colonial control shrank the more demands were made of it. Thus, 'primary' revolts against colonial rule and their 'pacification' continued well into the period of consolidation of colonial rule, and encroached on territory supposedly controlled by the colonial administration. Many parts of Africa escaped effective control right up to 1914, and sometimes much longer. Parts of Cambodia were still in a state of 'primary' rebellion against French colonial penetration into the 1930s (Brocheux & Hémery 1995). In North Africa at the end of the First World War, fully two-thirds of Morocco was in a state of '*sîba*', that is, 'dissidence' or a 'state of flux' (Berque 1967), and the Rif war of 1925–6 looked very like a delayed war of colonial conquest by the French and Spanish colonial armies. Further South, the nomadic Reguiebat clan whose territory lay across the Saharan no man's land of Algeria, Spanish Rio d'Oro, Morocco and Mauritania, submitted to the French *makhzen* (temporal authority) as late as 1934. By the late 1950s, the Reguiebat were preparing to transfer their allegiance to the Moroccan National Army of Liberation, and were only headed off by a timely show of French force (Chaffard 1967: vol.2; Shipway 2002).

Thirdly, the distinction between primary revolt and 'mature' nationalism is difficult to sustain even in areas of relatively advanced colonial penetration. Thus, although colonial rulers saw rebellions such as the 1905 Maji Maji revolt as 'tribal', it was precisely the effort to transcend the purely local political level which offered a model to later nationalists (Iliffe 1979; Ranger 1968). For India, one author lists 77 peasant uprisings in the period from the 1857 Sepoy Rebellion, classified variously as 'restorative, religious, social banditry, terrorist vengeance and armed insurrection'. The period of the rise and eventual triumph of Indian National Congress is thus punctuated by guerrilla movements wresting back peripheral regions from British or princely control, movements such as that of Birsa Munda in the 1890s, or the 'veritable guerrilla war' conducted by Alluri Sitaraa Raju between August 1922 and May 1924, a folk hero who spoke highly of Gandhi while considering violence necessary; or the actions of the Hindustan Socialist Republican Army, formed in 1928, whose key leader Bhagat Singh briefly threatened to supplant Gandhi, before he was captured the following year and executed (Sarkar 1989: 43–8, 240, 269). A basic continuity may also be traced between Indian peasant insurrections before 1900 and the popular consciousness which underpinned, and indeed often subverted, the initiatives of Congress nationalism or of Communism, such as the 1919 campaign of non-cooperation, the Quit India insurrection of 1942, or the communist inspired insurrections of Tebhaga or Telengana which accompanied the Indian 'endgame' in 1946–7 (Guha 1983: 13, 334; Sarkar 1989: 189ff., 388ff., 439–46).

A more nuanced understanding is needed of resistance to colonial rule than the simple distinction between 'primary' rebellion and the threat represented by later nationalisms. Peasant insurrection in India and elsewhere in colonial Asia perhaps had its African counterpart in a variety of millenarian movements, syncretic Christian followings and innovations within African religious traditions such as 'witch eradication' movements; these overlapped with 'primary' revolts, were influenced by them,

and in turn continued into the period of 'mature' nationalist mobilization in the countryside (Ranger 1968). Moreover, the features of earlier revolts, which received wisdom perceived as 'primitive', 'atavistic' or millenarian, were often precisely the elements to which later nationalists found themselves drawn when the time came to mobilize mass support for their campaigns. It is to the origins and outlook of mature nationalism, and to its sometimes ambivalent relationship with the colonized masses, that we now turn.

Indian Nationalist Politics to 1935

The Government of India Act of 1935 represented imperial statecraft at its most complex. This was conceivably the point at which colonial state 'bricolage' was transformed into purpose-built constitutional engineering on a grand scale, intended to retain British control of a gradually evolving Indian polity for the foreseeable future. It was the culmination of almost two decades of often intense political struggle, including sustained periods of violence and 'non-violent' disorder, particularly in 1919–22, which perhaps no colonial state after 1945 could have sustained. With hindsight, it may be seen to represent the penultimate stage of a political process which saw the Indian National Congress poised to 'become' the Raj (Brown 1999a; Seal 1973). Thus after its sweeping successes in the 1937 elections, in which Congress ministries were elected in seven out of 11 provinces (with absolute majorities in five), it could credibly claim near-hegemonic national status and set its sights at the last remaining level of politics to be conquered, that of all-India, which the government had so far jealously guarded to itself. As it turned out, 1935 was only a brief intermediate stage on the way to the Transfer of Power little more than a decade later. It would be futile to speculate as to what might have happened had not the Second World War led to the suspension of the Act's full implementation, providing the Congress 'High Command' with the opportunity to order ministers to withdraw from the straitjacket of provincial executive responsibility (Chapter 3). But since it was taken as considerably more than a mere provisional staging post, the brief period following the Act offers a convenient vantage point from which to undertake a brief *tour d'horizon* of Indian politics, to assay its possible futures and those which had perhaps already been foreclosed.

The Indian National Congress had come a long way since its formation in 1885, the loose federation of a 'microscopic minority' of middle-class, mostly English-educated professionals and businessmen – 455 out of 1,200 at the 1888 Allahabad Congress were lawyers – whose careers left little time for politics beyond the annual Congresses, and whose endless articles, speeches and petitions comprised 'a little too much talk about the blessings of British rule'.[3] Alongside this 'Mendicancy', as its critics saw it, a more Extremist politics was emerging, notably around the figure of Bal Gangadhar Tilak of Maharashtra, who declared that 'we will not achieve any success in our labours if we croak once a year like a frog', and seemed already to be moving towards advocating mass passive resistance and civil disobedience (Sarkar 1989: 71).

This still largely parochial Indian politics meshed with the iterations of the imperial collaborator system. As the Raj increased its demands, to pay for the army, for

administration or for railways, so it extended the reach of government downwards from the summit of imperial government to the provinces and localities; so also it required ever wider and more reliable systems of collaboration, eventually embracing elections as the most reliable method of all (Seal 1973: 13). Intensifying collaboration had two far-reaching sets of consequences. First, by setting the representative framework for collaboration, the Raj was in part creating the categories by which Indian elites organized themselves. This was already happening through the ten-yearly Census, which, from 1901, sought to classify castes on the basis of 'social precedence as recognized by native public opinion' (Sarkar 1989: 55). The 1909 Morley–Minto reforms took this one step further by creating separate electorates determined by religious community and social class. Colonial knowledge and the exercise of colonial power were closely intertwined here. Although this was a classic device to 'divide and rule', it constrained an elite to compete for the prize of representing these semi-fictional groups – who, for example, *were* 'the Mohammedan Community in the Presidency of Bengal' or the 'Landholders in the United Provinces', both allocated a seat on the Governor-General's Council? Secondly, the gradual creation of a legislative system, eventually extending from local boards to provincial councils to nominated representation in New Delhi, in turn generated a matching structure of politics: the Raj had, in effect, 'cut the steps' by which would-be petitioners were obliged to climb, but it also drove politics upwards to these higher levels (Seal 1973: 12, 14–17).

The British Raj thus played a major role in the process by which the scale of politics moved from the local level, at which collaborator systems operated at their simplest and most durable, to provincial and, ultimately, national levels; it was also deeply implicated in the ways in which 'communal' divisions found political expression. These developments were formalized in the structures of government set up in the 1919 Government of India Act, completed by the Communal Award of 1932, which recognized the communities of Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and 'Depressed Classes', and in the provisions of the 1935 Act. The principle innovation of the post-1919 system was the introduction of 'dyarchy', by which nominated Indian ministers were responsible to provincial legislatures, elected by a still tiny franchise, for a number of portfolios. As Sarkar (1989: 167) comments:

[Dyarchy] transferred only departments with less political weight and little funds to ministers responsible to provincial legislatures, skilfully drawing Indian politicians into a patronage rat-race which would probably also discredit them, as real improvements in education, health, agriculture, and local bodies required far more money than the British would be prepared to assign to these branches.

'Responsible government' in the provinces after 1935 differed little from this, although the franchise was extended from one-tenth of the adult male population, in 1919, to approximately one-sixth, about 30 million (Brown 1999a: 432n.). Conversely, central powers were enhanced, and the provincial governor retained special powers (exercised after the mass resignations of late 1939). Although conceived in terms of the 1917 promise of 'the gradual development of self-governing institutions', the Act was silent on a 1929 declaration of Dominion status as the eventual aim of British policy. Far from being a staging post to further reforms, much less an act of imperial demission

(although that was how its conservative critics in London saw it), this was intended to draw a line under a limited process of British concessions, and more particularly to 'hold India to the Empire'.

From its largely parochial beginnings can be traced the two broad strategies by which the Congress operated within and against the system created by the British. First, and up to 1920 almost exclusively, it acted as 'a co-ordinating agency within a system of elite politics' (Breuilly 1993: 174), a political home and steering committee for local and provincial politicians working within the structures set in place by the Raj. Outside the great campaigns of non-cooperation in 1919–22 and civil disobedi-ence in 1930–2, and the period of opposition to the war which preceded the Quit India campaign (Chapter 3), these politicians shared the perspectives of their provincial constituencies, as the British surely intended; all-India Congress was an accordingly poorly co-ordinated and poorly financed organization, whose provincial supporters 'stepped nimbly in and out of the all-India organizations, like so many cabs for hire' (Seal 1973: 23). However, notwithstanding the obvious limitations of responsible government after 1935, Congress ministers could demonstrate their executive skills, including management of law and order (Sarkar 1989: 352; Arnold 1992). Electoral success in 1937 seemingly offered an overwhelming endorsement to those on the Right of the party who favoured this constitutionalist strategy.

For the new electorate of 'dominant peasants' (mistakenly selected by the British for their loyalty to the Raj, rather than to an 'elitist' Congress), a vote for Congress in 1937 was not a vote for a safe pair of hands, but rather 'a patriotic duty . . . a vote for Gandhiji' (Sarkar 1989: 347). In other words, electoral success was arguably incon-ceivable without the often-dominant counterpoint of Congress's alternative strategy, that of all-Indian agitation. At the heart of this strategy were the tactics and ideology, but perhaps above all the charismatic example, of Mahatma Gandhi. Initially, Gandhi was literally an outsider, since his return to India in 1917 after more than twenty years, in London and then as a lawyer in South Africa, left him without a local power base, even in his native Gujarat, the greatest if not the first professional politician whose 'very freedom from the webs of local interests gave [him] a role that went beyond the localities' (ibid.: 178; Seal 1973: 19). He brought with him distinctive tactics, practical dedication to the anti-colonial cause and a philosophy of non-violence, none of which quite squared with Congress doctrine. It would be difficult to overestimate the impact, on a nationalist movement which had shied away from the socially disruptive potential of mass action, of the key Gandhian themes of *ahimsa* (non-violence) and *satyagraha* (soul-force or truth-force, Gandhi's own coinage from Gujarati), involving the peaceful violation of specific laws, the mass courting of arrest, and the soon-familiar *hartal* (commercial and labour strikes), marches and proces-sions (Sarkar 1989: 179–80). Conversely, non-violence could be seen as tailor-made to reassure conservative Congress supporters. Thus, Gandhi's insistence on home-produced weave appealed to industrialists competing with Lancashire-made cotton, even though the symbolic handloom, reflecting Gandhi's anti-modern utopian ideals, was less attractive. Even more controversial was Gandhi's life-long dedication to Indian unity, begun with his work with Indian Muslims in South Africa, and continued with his alliance with the Khilafatist movement (campaigning against the abolition of the caliphate), underpinning the first wave of *satyagraha* in 1919. Many

Congress leaders found it increasingly difficult to sympathize with this fundamental aspect of Gandhian politics.

Gandhi both coordinated the elite of Congress politicians and mobilized mass participation in support of the national cause. Within Congress, Gandhi's campaigns built up a network of local 'subcontractors' who benefited from Gandhi's prestige (Brown 1989). Even outside periods of agitation, for example following the collapse of non-cooperation in 1922, Gandhi's disciples pursued policies of non-political constructive work in the villages or amongst the *Harijans* (Untouchables), as an alternative to participation in the rat-race of provincial politics (Sarkar 1989: 227).

However, Gandhi's populism was not simply of instrumental utility to Congress, as part of a single struggle against British rule. *Satyagraha* was a highly effective weapon in the nationalist armoury, to be deployed at will at moments of British repression, for example, the Rowlatt Bill (which proposed the retention of wartime restric-tions), or of British concession such as the 1919 Act which followed – even if, in effect, imperial initiatives thus drove a largely reactive Congress. Thus, Congress's some-what hesitant involvement in agitational politics was yet another aspect of the party becoming the Raj. However, as Sarkar and others have argued, such a view of Indian nationalism as essentially 'elite' politics fails to acknowledge the impact of the popular response to Gandhi, and the often autonomously developed political purpose of peasant insurrection.

What Gandhi's campaigns could inspire was thus not simply a controlled, 'non-violent' protest by an increasingly nationally conscious Indian people, as conven-tional nationalist historiography would have it, far less the primitive rabble of imperial nightmares, but a potentially far more thoroughgoing peasant revolt against the imperial order than Congress was prepared to countenance. Thus, when the Rowlatt *satyagraha* turned to violence, and to General Dyer's brutal counter-insurgency cam-paign initiated by the massacre at Jallianwallabagh, Amritsar, in April 1919, Gandhi called off the movement, admitting to a 'Himalayan blunder'. However, what was the nature of this blunder? To have provoked British repressive violence? Or to have promised *swaraj* (self-rule) within a year, without precisely defining it, thus provok-ing a popular millenarian response? Or to have underestimated peasant resentment of landlord privileges, intensified by wartime restrictions, without the leadership or inclination to follow through the ensuing popular insurrection (ibid.: 190–4)?

By 1921–2, Gandhi's advocacy of non-violence was deployed openly as an instru-ment of control, urging peasants to regard 'as friends' the *zamindars* (landlords) against whom they were revolting. Arguably, this had as much to do with under-mining highly militant *kisan sabhas* (peasant organizations) as with enjoining non-violence (Pandey 1988: 242ff.). However, Congress activists could exert only limited control over the decoding of Gandhi's message by ordinary people, which ranged from rumours of miracles rewarding believers and punishing doubters, which the nationalist press only refuted when the moral of the story in question was a socially radical one; to the reinterpretation of 'that polysemic word Swaraj' as a call to direct action (Amin 1988). On 5 February 1922, rioters, proclaiming '*Gandhi Maharaj ki jai*' ('Victory for Gandhi's reign'), burned alive 22 policemen in their post at Chauri Chaura in Gorakhpur district, leading Gandhi again to call off the Non-Cooperation campaign.

The end of Non-Cooperation in 1922 drew a line under the possibility of an Indian decolonization process entailing radical social change; there would be no further calls to mass uprising on the scale of 1921–2 until the Quit India campaign in the very different context of 1942. Gandhian tactics were nonetheless successfully redeployed in the Civil Disobedience campaigns of 1931–2. But it was clear in this second period of agitation that Congress too was settling in for a long haul. Thus, Gandhi's 11 demands presented to the Viceroy, Lord Irwin, in January 1931 were addressed to specific grievances relating to the workings of the colonial state, including most famously the demand for the abolition of the salt tax, which inspired Gandhi's 200-mile march to the sea (Sarkar 1989: 283–4). Thus, 'late colonial' Indian politics in this period constituted a cyclical process of agitation, repression and reform, where the outcome of this particular seven-year cycle, from the appointment of an all-European Commission under Sir John Simon in 1928 to the passing of the 1935 Act, represented a consolidation of the British position in India.

Two particular aspects of the Indian status quo in the late 1930s necessitate further comment in view of 'what happened next'. First, we may locate the communal split that would eventually result in Indian Freedom without Unity. British policy had helped generate communal divisions in Indian politics, by instituting separate electorates in 1909, reinforced by the Communal Award of 1932. *Prima facie* evidence of the success of a putative British 'divide and rule' policy came in the 1937 elections which, alongside Congress's sweeping victories, also returned Muslim governments in three Muslim-majority provinces, although not in the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP), where Muslims voted for Congress, or in Punjab and Bengal, where communal demography was more finely balanced. In reality, the picture was more inconclusive. The days of the Congress–Khilafatist alliance were long gone, and although Muslim leaders supported the Congress boycott of the Simon Commission in 1928, Muslims stayed aloof from Civil Disobedience in 1931–2, except in NWFP. But the potential for disunity was greater during periods of nationalist governmental responsibility, when the political spoils were more tangible (Moore 1977). After 1937, communalism dominated Congress politics as never before, as provincial politicians played the Hindu card, either to head off Muslim challenges, as happened in Bengal, or to resist the pressure of the Hindu Mahasabha party, whose new president, V.D. Savarjkar, declared in December 1938 that: 'We Hindus are a Nation by ourselves . . . Hindu nationalists should not at all be apologetic to being called Hindu communalists' (in Sarkar 1989: 356–7).

Although the identities were real enough, however, there was little sense of mainstream Muslim or Hindu politicians playing for the high stakes of the post-1945 period, and all-Indian Muslim politics had little overall cohesion. In particular, the Muslim League fared poorly in the elections, and its leader, Mohammed Ali Jinnah, met with a dusty answer from Congress when in March he sought recognition of the League as sole representative of Muslim interests. It would take the radically altered circumstances of wartime to push the Muslim League into adopting the principle of a separate 'Pakistan', and the prospect of a post-imperial endgame to force its realization.

Secondly, in one respect, the 1935 Act contained the prospect of substantial change to the very framework of the Indian colonial state. This was the provision of a new

Indian Federation to include the princely states, which would thus be represented in the proposed all-India legislature. Although this part of the story has often been glossed over, this reflects more the ultimate failure of the scheme for all-India Federation than its intrinsic importance (Copland 1977: 73). Indeed, briefly, for the first and last time, the princes became principal actors in Indian politics, despite Congress's disdain, and despite being kept at arm's length by the Indian Political Department at New Delhi. Had Federation worked, the Indian endgame of 1946–7 might have taken a radically different course, since not least the balance of power between Congress and the Muslim League would have been quite different (ibid.: 284). The case can be argued too strongly. Although the princes made the original offer of federating with British India, in 1930, the Chamber of Princes, a relatively recent innovation dating from 1917, remained split on the issue, and opponents of Federation were backed by an influential minority of conservative 'Diehards' in London, chief amongst whom was Churchill. Senior British officials, including perhaps Irwin's successor as Viceroy, Lord Willingdon, covertly undermined princely support for Federation. Three years passed before his successor, Lord Linlithgow, made his abortive 'final offer' to the princes in August 1939, by which time Britain was on the verge of war. A key factor in this evolution, which scared off many of the princes, was Congress's reversal of a long-standing policy of non-involvement in the states, culminating in the first campaign of *satyagraha* outside British India in early 1938; this led to mass demonstrations of hostility to princely rule lasting into 1939 (ibid.: 163–74). Hostile Congress involvement in princely politics, and lingering mutual mistrust between the British and many princes, created the background to the abandonment of the princes by the last Viceroy, Lord Mountbatten. The upshot of this complex episode in late colonial politics in India was to ensure the paradox that Britain's most loyal collaborators in India would be deprived of any meaningful role in the Transfer of Power.

Vietnam in the 1930s: Whose Missed Opportunity?

The electoral victory of the Popular Front alliance in France in May 1936, which led to the formation of France's first ever Socialist-led government (including a Socialist colonial minister, Marius Moutet), constitutes a rather different vantage point for considering politics in French Indochina – and specifically in the demographically and politically dominant Vietnamese portions of the Union – on the eve of the Second World War. The Popular Front's success had little or nothing to do with colonial affairs, and its colonial policy may readily be treated peripherally, as showing the movement's good intentions but limited achievements (Jackson 1988: 288).[4] At best, in a longer perspective, the Popular Front was a crucible for the reformist policies that would be implemented in the post-war empire. For those engaged in Vietnamese anti-colonial politics, however, the Popular Front meant simply an all-too-brief phase of liberalism in an otherwise unremitting cycle of limited reform, revolt and repression, before such opportunities as existed in the colonial system in Indochina were radically transformed by French defeat in 1940 and Japanese takeover.

The new liberal phase in French policy in Indochina ushered in by the Popular Front was the exception to the rule of a colonial regime that was unprogressive when

relations with the pro-Guomindang warlord of neighbouring Gwangxi province, and nurtured an intelligence-gathering role for the American China Command. Released political prisoners boosted its ranks, and its raids were replacing those of anonymous 'bandits' in official reports (Marr 1995: 362). Profiting from the weakened Japanese grip in northern Vietnam, its popular support mushroomed over the summer of 1945. It was thus neither geographically isolated nor handicapped as was the MPAJA by its ethnic composition, but in other respects it seemed little different, as its leaders, dispersed since the struggles of the 1930s, gathered for a Congress meeting at Tan Trao in early August 1945. Although confident as a guerrilla force, the Viet Minh was completely untried as a potential national government, and understandably cautious about the likelihood of Japanese resistance to an attempted insurrection (Tønnesson 1995).

August 1945 was a moment in history when nothing happened quite as any of the principal sets of actors expected. Even without knowledge of the horror of nuclear bombardment, the shocked incomprehension of Japanese soldiers and officials at the unprecedentedly swift end to their eight-year campaign across Asia was a major factor in creating the vacuum of power. But even the Allies were caught unawares by the devastating success of the American raids on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The French and Dutch governments, indeed, had not even been informed of the proposed American raids.

As news of impending Japanese surrender spread in Vietnam, the Viet Minh prepared to take over the colonial capital of Hanoi, sidestepping the well-armed Japanese forces, who retained responsibility for law and order. After a huge rally in front of the Hanoi Opera House, armed groups moved to take control, without bloodshed, of selected official institutions. That night, air-raid covers were removed from streetlights, symbolically lighting up the city for the first time in many years. The following morning, the electricity, trains and buses, telegraph, telephone, water-pumping services and other amenities of a functioning state apparatus indicated a new order, rather than chaos (Marr 1995: 395–401). The scenes in Hanoi were matched by uprisings in cities across Vietnam, from the Northern port city of Haiphong to Saigon, and, crucially, in the countryside: without such support, the revolution might have fallen to Chinese or French arms (ibid.: 402ff.). From the imperial capital of Hue, on 20 August, Bao Dai ordered the formation of a new cabinet, stating that he would 'prefer to be a citizen of an independent country rather than king of an enslaved one' (in ibid.: 439). Three days later, heeding Louis XVI's fate and yet anxious to ascertain that Ho was indeed 'the famous revolutionary Nguyen Ai Quoc' (and not some upstart), Bao Dai abdicated. Two days later, as citizen Vinh Thuy, he was dismayed to receive an offer from Hanoi, inviting him to act as 'Supreme Adviser' to the provisional government; it was unclear whether Ho wished to draw prestige from the former emperor, or to keep him under control, or both (ibid.: 439–53). On 2 September, wearing his trademark khaki jacket and white rubber sandals, his head symbolically protected by a (modern) pith helmet and an (imperial) umbrella, Ho Chi Minh declared the independence of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (although 'Democratic' may be a later amendment to the official text), with eloquent reference to 1776 and 1791 (Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen), but not 1917. He had an international audience in mind, though only four foreign observers were present, Colonel Archimedes Patti and colleagues from the Office of

Strategic Services (OSS) who had accompanied the Viet Minh down from the mountains; although stern warnings were issued to 'the French colonialists', de Gaulle's envoy, Jean Sainteny, only witnessed the proceedings from the 'gilded cage' of the Governor General's palace, where he was under effective house arrest (ibid.: 532–5; Patti 1980; Sainteny 1967). Tragically, 2 September 1945 marked only the beginning of Vietnam's struggle for independence, rather than its climax.

Endgame of the Raj: From 'Quit India' to Quitting India

What forced the British to quit India as soon as August 1947, and what forced Indian political leaders to accept Freedom without Indian Unity, was the Second World War's impact on the structures and mentalities of British rule in India. War reversed the thrust of British reformist policy in India, and then weakened imperial power and resolve, thereby limiting post-war imperial options. The Transfer of Power, when it came, at bottom suited no one. The war also impacted crucially on ordinary Indians, through the experience of combat and imprisonment, violent insurrection, and the privations of war including famine.

The 1935 Government of India Act represented imperial 'bricolage' at its most impressive. The dyarchical structure of provincial self-government, coupled with overarching British control of 'All-India' concerns including foreign policy and defence, might have offered a prototype for many post-war examples of colonial constitution-making, despite the fact that it was never fully implemented. In the end, however, Partition made it a model to avoid rather than emulate. Conversely, the constitutional framework of the 1935 Act was a most versatile vessel, however flawed or cracked, which could accommodate a variety of British policies after 1935, not only allowing the return to gubernatorial control in 1939 following the resignation of the Congress provincial ministries, but even facilitating a swift Transfer of Power to separate Dominions in 1947. The first cracks were appearing in the framework even before October 1939, but in the event, it was the Viceroy Lord Linlithgow's declaration of war without prior consultation with Indian political leaders, and his feeble October 1939 offer, a repetition of dusty promises of Dominion status in return for wartime cooperation, which provided Congress ministers with the pretext they needed to withdraw from the provincial ministries they controlled.

From an Indian perspective, the Phoney War extended, as it were, until late 1941, as Congress returned to opposition and to its own internal conflicts, while British policy revolved around an effort to 'to take advantage of the war to regain for the white-dominated central government and bureaucracy the ground lost to the Congress from 1937 or earlier' (Sarkar 1989: 376). Even the Muslim League's 'Pakistan' resolution at its Lahore conference in March 1940 can only with hindsight be seen as 'lowering the curtain' on the possibility of Indian unity (Moore 1999: 238).

The swift Japanese advance brought a return to negotiation, with the Mission to Delhi of the Labour minister, Sir Stafford Cripps, newly appointed to the Cabinet in March 1942. Although Cripps had little new to offer, the conventional view of the Cripps Mission has been that a missed opportunity for Anglo-Indian understanding was scuppered by the combined efforts of Linlithgow and Churchill. Recent reappraisal

suggests a focus less on the constitutional minutiae than on the more immediate circumstances of wartime policy and opinion in Britain and India (Owen 2002). The Mission was only equivocally supported by the Labour Party, and that backing was based on a mistaken belief, encouraged by Nehru's assurances going back to the late 1930s, that Congress would swing behind an 'anti-fascist' platform of support for the British war effort. The Mission was thus sent on the back of a transitory swing in British public opinion in favour of Indian concessions in the face of the Japanese advance. For their part, Congress negotiators were less concerned by the offer of eventual Dominion status, than by their desire to secure something like Cabinet government for the duration of the war within the proposed Viceroy's Council, in order to exert influence on Indian army deployment, and to negotiate terms in the worst case of Japanese invasion. Quite apart from British distaste for what seemed a treacherous waiting game, this position was unacceptable to the Labour Party leader and foremost Indian expert, Clement Attlee, who had long resisted the idea of Congress gaining power without responsibility to an elected national legislature.

The Cripps Mission failed before a probably already 'unbridgeable chasm' dividing Britons and Indians (Owen 2002: 89). But the last piers of the bridge were kicked away by the All-India Congress Committee session at Bombay on 8 August 1942, which passed a resolution urging the British to 'Quit India', and by Gandhi, whose inflammatory speech on the same day brought him to the brink of renouncing a lifetime's commitment to non-violence (Sarkar 1989: 388–9). At issue, as before, was the relative weight that should be given the Indian cause as against the Allied war effort, but also an estimation of the war's likely outcome; and in late 1942, before the tide of the war turned with the Battle of Stalingrad, it seemed that Congress might soon be treating with the Japanese; this *realpolitik* rather than pro-Axis sympathies, as occasionally alleged by the British, drove the Congress debate. Such high political calculations were outweighed, however, by the 'elemental and largely spontaneous outburst' of insurrection that followed the arrests of 9 August (ibid.: 390). Although Linlithgow informed Churchill that he was confronting 'by far the most serious rebellion since that of 1857' (Mansergh 1970–82: vol. II, 853), many accounts pass rapidly over the 'failed' Insurrection, the containment of which demonstrated by the end of 1942 'that the Raj had not yet lost the will to resort to coercion when necessary' (Butler 2002: 41). That will was not in doubt, and a clampdown had been prepared since September 1939, but the scale of repression and the means employed, including machine-gunning villages from the air, ordered by Linlithgow on 15 August, suggest an almost reckless use of force that was probably unthinkable in peacetime. The insurrection demonstrated the extent of popular anger against aspects of British wartime policy, including economic neglect; the abandonment of Indian immigrants in Southeast Asia after the collapse of Singapore; the blunders of the British retreat before the Japanese, including an apparent 'scorched earth' policy in Assam and East Bengal; and, not least, the ruthless violence of the repression (Sarkar 1989: 391–3). The political range and geographical extent of the insurrection also suggested the potential for a more durable breakdown of British control, as the first wave of urban strikes and unrest gave way to peasant rebellions and a series of short-lived 'National Governments', and to terror campaigns in remoter regions against communications, police and army installations (ibid.: 395). Here surely is a kind of mirror image of

the 'defeatist' contingency plans for staged British withdrawal drawn up in 1946 by Linlithgow's successor as Viceroy, Field Marshall (subsequently Earl) Wavell, appointed in October 1943, whose sober, soldierly analyses helped steer the Labour Government towards a more rapid Transfer of Power.

The 'Quit India' resolution prompted the gaoling of Congress leaders, thus removing them from the political equation for the rest of the war and giving greater prominence to the Muslim League, and to Muslims, whose communities contributed Indian army troops out of all proportion to their number. Conversely, not for the last time, imprisonment conferred the legitimacy of heroism on its principal nationalist interlocutors; it also drew attention away from their unremarkable record in office, and absolved them from implication in political controversies surrounding the prosecution of the war against Japan, not least concerning Subhas Chandra Bose's pro-Japanese Indian National Army (INA). By the time Congress leaders were released in early 1945, the political stakes had risen immeasurably for both Congress and the League, while the fundamental issue had now shifted: how to achieve Unity, now that the long-standing demand for Freedom seemed about to be satisfied.

Given the maze of events that led to the Transfer of Power, it is crucial to resist the urge to read the history backwards from Partition. However, nowhere was the shift to a decolonizing endgame more dramatically illustrated than in India, as the agenda was dominated by the increasing certainty of a swift timetable for British departure. The centrality of negotiations according to this accelerating timetable may justify the concentration in much of the literature on 'high politics', but it is easy to neglect the beliefs, values and identities underpinning the various constitutional formulae discussed in the period, or what was at the time an occasionally overwhelming sense of pressure from below.

Of the four principal actors in the Indian endgame – the Viceroy, the Cabinet, the Muslim League and Congress – it was perhaps the first who traversed the greatest perceptual distance in the two years from the end of the war in Asia to the Transfer of Power. Lord Wavell's credentials were impeccable as an imperialist in the intellectual, old-fashioned liberal mould. Transferred from command of the British Army in the Middle East, as Viceroy he oversaw the turnaround of British India's wartime fortunes and brought to term the magnificent Indian war effort. He arrived in India in time to supervise relief for the Bengali famine over the winter of 1943–4, largely caused by the halt of rice imports from Southeast Asia and by the need to feed an enlarged army (Sarkar 1989: 406). From a position of considerable confidence, therefore, in early 1945, Wavell sought to persuade Churchill to start negotiating the promised Dominion Status for India. Wavell favoured a balanced settlement respecting all interests, safeguarding British interests above all, and probably taking years to achieve according to the usual timescales; the process leading to the 1935 Act, after all, had taken six years from the convocation of the Simon Commission. It was thus a rude shock when the June 1945 Simla Conference stalled in the face of the Muslim League's insistence on equal negotiating status with Congress. Indeed, the election of a Labour government in July proved less of a shock as Wavell, after initially 'shifting from the accelerator to the brake pedal' (ibid.: 417), discovered that the new government's outlook, especially that of the prime minister, Clement Attlee, coincided substantially with his own.

However, over the following months, India came to 'the edge of the volcano' (Moon 1973), while London confronted the danger of imperial over-extension, including the policing and feeding of a populous Occupation Zone in Western Germany, and the deployment of Indian Army troops in what looked like the colonial reconquest of Indonesia and Indochina, against Wavell's opposition and the protests of Congress (see next chapter). Peacetime for the Raj meant confronting the fact that, since Linlithgow's concession of 1939, the Indian Army was a direct drain on the British Exchequer, thus reversing India's Sterling balances substantially in favour of India (Cain & Hopkins 1993: 196). Indians were in the majority in the Indian Civil Service, following a decades-long process of 'Indianization', alongside the demoralized, ageing and shrinking ranks of European administrators, with no new recruits since 1939 and little prospect of post-war recruitment (Potter 1973, 1986).

Against this background, what impacted on British attitudes over the following months was the breakdown in civil order across India, as the apparent stirring of old imperial reflexes provoked popular anger and led to fears of army mutiny. In November 1945, following the unwelcome news of Indian army actions in support of the French and Dutch, Wavell ordered the trial, in the symbolically highly charged setting of the Red Fort in Delhi, of combatants in the Indian National Army. Treating these potential heroes of Indian nationalism simply as traitors was a massive miscalculation. The INA's military effectiveness had been discounted by British and Japanese alike, but the psychological impact of any Indian army fighting for national liberation was immense, let alone one which recruited about one-third of sixty thousand Indian Prisoners of War in the Far East (Kratoska 1998: 103–9), whose commander, the veteran Congress leader Subhas Chandra Bose, emphasizing his loyalty to Gandhi, had formed a Provisional Government of Free India in 1943. Unrest and Army disaffection over the winter of 1945–6 culminated in the short-lived strike by Royal Indian Navy sailors in Bombay in February 1946 (Sarkar 1989: 410–11; Gupta 1987). The lessons Wavell derived from this period – that he might lose control of the Army, and that Congress had the power to provoke mass movement or revolution in India – found expression in the 'breakdown plan' which he presented to the Cabinet Mission in May 1946, envisaging a staged British retreat to strongholds in North-western and North-eastern India ('Note for the Cabinet Delegation', 29 March 1946, Moon 1973: 232). Had such a plan been implemented, it is not difficult to imagine a political tidal wave extending far beyond British India. Wavell's analysis was profoundly distasteful to Cabinet, as was the strong-arm alternative he proposed, involving the despatch of five British divisions to keep order. But if Wavell was marked down thereafter as a 'defeatist', the spectre of withdrawal he evoked coloured subsequent British calculations, against the background of spiralling communal violence which the British were powerless to control. It was Wavell's proposal of setting 30 June 1948 as a deadline for British withdrawal on which his successor Mountbatten insisted as the price, along with 'plenipotentiary' powers, for accepting the last Viceroyalty in February 1947.

It was the newest All-India player, Jinnah's Muslim League, whose challenge, in the March 1940 'Pakistan' resolution, set the broad parameters for post-war negotiations. The demand for a distinct territory for Indian Muslims may be interpreted as a bargaining chip, or as providing the League with a political platform which, as a sympathetic Linlithgow suggested to Jinnah in early 1940, had previously been

wanting. The League, after all, had been trounced in the 1937 elections, most critically in the Muslim-majority provinces of Punjab and Bengal, and Jinnah's subsequent demands for sole representation of Muslims rebuffed by both Congress and the British. The imprisonment of Congress leaders from August 1942 gave Jinnah the opportunity to enhance the League's political credit through full cooperation with the British war effort; this could not simply be wished away at war's end.

Jinnah, the 'London-trained lawyer, secularist and chain-smoker' (Holland 1985: 61), is conventionally depicted as a saturnine, Machiavellian figure disdainful of Muslim politics, who in his unprincipled intransigence 'no longer questioned the wisdom, viability or aftermath impact of partition but had decided by the spring of 1940 that this was the only long-term resolution to India's foremost problem' (Wolpert 1984: 182; Moore 1999: 238). However, the variable geometry of 'Pakistan' from 1940 onwards needs to be considered here: with full or subordinate Dominion status; with or without a central All-India federal authority and/or British control of foreign affairs and defence; with six provinces as in Jinnah's maximalist territorial claim, or shorn of Bengal and the Punjab, as in Gandhi's 1944 offer, or, as in the final June 1947 Partition Plan, with what Jinnah labelled a 'moth-eaten' Pakistan containing the partitioned chunks of West Punjab and East Bengal. According to Jalal's (1985) 'revisionist' account, Jinnah remained committed to Indian unity but aimed from 1940 onwards to secure an equal say for Muslims in an All-India Union. 'Pakistan' was the vehicle for this campaign, and arguably it served its purpose while Jinnah kept talking, and, ironically, while it seemed that the British would be around to guarantee whichever version of Dominion status was implemented. The crucial factor was therefore British determination to oversee the transition, and to protect a settlement imposed upon Congress. After the failure of the 1946 Cabinet Mission (whose proposals for a federal Union, rejected by Nehru, were close to Jinnah's own continuing vision), that British will to remain seemed to be evaporating. The demand for Pakistan would thus 'either have to become the basis of a territorial demand or vanish into history' (Moore 1999: 240–1). This view of Jinnah the master strategist *and* idealist striving for Indian unity on his terms is persuasive, but in concentrating on the route to Partition, it has also invited the criticism that it neglects cultural and religious ideals embedded in the Muslim separatist movement (Talbot 1999: 261; Gilmartin 2003). Indeed, 'Pakistan' was never simply a bargaining tool, in Jinnah's or anyone else's hands, but also represented one of several mutually exclusive utopias with which Indians imagined a post-imperial future.

The dominant utopia, as it were, was nonetheless that offered by the Indian National Congress, but it is a measure of Jinnah's success that the Congress agenda was also headed by the Pakistan question throughout this period. In the end, of the Congress leadership, only Gandhi remained firmly wedded to the principle of Indian unity – a position not inconsistent with his willingness in 1944 to make concessions to Jinnah, since he did not concede the crucial issue of equal representation – but he became increasingly isolated, and his heroic opposition to spiralling communal violence was on a different level from Congress's sharpening focus on the acquisition of concrete state power.

Two broad reasons may be identified why Congress as a whole thus 'came round' to the idea of Partition. First, at the level of high politics, Congress was always the

overwhelmingly likely inheritor of the British Raj, whatever the outcome of negotia-
tions. At first, Nehru dismissed the League as unrepresentative of Muslims, unsustain-
able without British support, while Pakistan was seen as a mere 'fantasy' (Darwin
1988: 91). But the greater threat represented by Pakistan, or by the variously unwieldy
proposals for federation with which Wavell, the Cabinet Mission and Mountbatten,
sought to accommodate Jinnah, was not that India would be split in two but that it
would be 'balkanized', with not only Muslim-majority provinces encouraged to seek
independence but also various Princely states, or such intriguing non-communal
entities as a united Bengal or a Pathan state based on the North-West Frontier prov-
ince, which, though predominantly Muslim, had traditionally supported Congress
(Sarkar 1989: 449). This threat was most acute in Mountbatten's short-lived 'May
Plan', according to which provinces and states would opt for integration into one
or other of two Dominions, or for separate independence. Two Indias were thus
arguably better than several, as in VP Menon's proposal which formed the basis
for Mountbatten's final 'June Plan' (ibid.: 448). But even at this late stage, Congress
leaders thought that Jinnah's 'moth-eaten' Pakistan was unviable, and would soon
seek readmission to a united India. This helps explain why they accepted the break-
neck countdown to independence within two months of the plan's acceptance, and
condoned the fact that the Boundary Commission, chaired by the constitutional
lawyer, Sir Cyril Radcliffe, whose main claim to objectivity was that he had never set
foot in India (Wolpert 2000: 348), had no time to make its findings public until after
the Transfer of Power on 15 August 1947. Though territorial partition was the most
visible aspect of this process, the apparatus and institutions of the state had also to be
divided 'into bundles of 82.5 per cent for India and 17.5 per cent for Pakistan' (ibid.).

The second broad reason why Congress leaders opted in the end for Partition was
that negotiations with the British and debates in the ineffectual interim government
of 1946–7 were accompanied and often overshadowed by the threat of a breakdown
of order. This may be seen either simply as bloody communal violence, or as the
'counterpoint provided by pressure from below' which, as popular action made
British rule untenable, obliged Congress to accept even Partition as the 'necessary
price' for avoiding far-reaching social revolution (Sarkar 1989: 414). India's 'tryst
with destiny', which Nehru proclaimed at midnight on 15 August 1947 – following
Pakistan's declaration of independence the day before – was thus coloured with regret
for parallel destinies that were not achieved, and in any case overshadowed by the
storm clouds of Partition.

A foretaste of Partition was offered in the sometimes apocalyptic waves of
communal violence which from August 1946 swept through Calcutta, Bombay, East
Bengal, Bihar and finally Punjab in March 1947. The eventual partition line cut
Bengal, Bihar and finally Punjab in March 1947. The eventual partition line cut
perhaps most deeply across the latter province, which was only 56 per cent Muslim,
and where Sikh aspirations to a separate 'Sikhistan' were only likely to be realized in
the 'worst case' of balkanization (ibid.: 432; Wolpert 2000: 346). By March 1948
some 180,000 Punjabis had died, two-thirds of them Muslims moving westwards;
6 million Muslims and 4.5 million Hindus and Sikhs were refugees, leaving behind
4.7 million acres of land in East Punjab, 6.7 million acres in the West (Sarkar 1989:
434–45). Although at a steadier rate, the flow of refugees continued in both direc-
tions well into the 1950s. In the short term, tragically, it took Gandhi's assassination

by a Hindu extremist on 30 January 1948 to achieve a respite in the violence, enabling
Nehru to apply the 'leverage of popular indignation' to pull India back from the
brink (Wolpert 2000: 355–6).

Amongst those whose interests were discarded were the Princely states, cajoled
variously by Mountbatten or by Congress leaders V.P. Menon and Vallabhbhai Patel
into accepting an Instrument of Accession. By 15 August, only three states remained
outside the fold of one or other of the two new states. In two of these, Muslim princes
ruled over a Hindu-majority population in states surrounded by Indian territory;
one of these, the Nawab of Junagadh, acceded to Pakistan in August 1947, but was
powerless to avoid absorption into India. The ruler of the second, much larger state,
the Nizam of Hyderabad, was given a year to August 1948 to accept accession. After
the deadline passed, an Indian army 'police action' was launched against Hyderabad,
in September 1948. However, the principal aim of this was to crush the Telengana
rising, a communist-inspired agrarian revolt which arguably worried Congress more
than did the Nizam's intransigence (Sarkar 1989: 445–6). In the third case of
Kashmir, a Hindu Maharajah, Hari Singh, ruled a three-quarters Muslim majority.
As in Hyderabad, a standstill agreement gave Hari Singh the opportunity to decide
between communal and geographic logic (since Kashmir bordered on Pakistan
and controlled the headwaters of Pakistani rivers including the Indus) and his own
inclination to remain an independent 'Switzerland of Asia' (Wolpert 2000: 353).
However, within three months of independence, a de facto partition-within-the-
partition was forming, on one side of which Hari Singh acceded to India, while on
the other a self-declared Azad ('Free') Kashmir acceded to Pakistan. A UN-sponsored
ceasefire line came into effect on 1 January 1949, and remains in place in the early
twenty-first century, when the legacy of Partition has occasionally translated into
nuclear stand-off between the Raj's legatees.

The Rise and Fall of Dominion status: 'More Ceylons and Fewer Burmas'

The greatest of the colonial empires also had the grandest claims made on its behalf,
whether in terms of longevity or freedom. Thus, British politicians contemplated
the perspective of 'a thousand years of English history', while the anglophile South
African Prime Minister, General Jan Christian Smuts, in an interview with *Life* maga-
zine in December 1942, described the British Commonwealth as 'the widest system
of organized freedom which has ever existed in human history' (in Louis 1977: 209–
10). British and Commonwealth leaders did not always express themselves so extrava-
gantly; but even without Smuts's 'spin' for the American media, such a rhetorical
stance was not simply pandering to a sceptical international audience or providing
reassurance for metropolitan political opinion. Central to British imperial self-
perceptions was a long tradition of granting or conceding freedoms to dependent
peoples whilst retaining them within the bounds of what had come to be known,
since the First World War, as the 'British Commonwealth of Nations'.

The key concept was that of 'Dominion' status, but before the Indian Transfer of
Power, it had only been applied to the 'White' Dominions of Canada, Australia, New

Zealand, South Africa and, from 1921, the Irish Free State. Finally formalized in the 1931 Westminster Statute, the definition of Dominions provided in 1926 by an Imperial Committee chaired by the former Prime Minister Lord Balfour demonstrated how far the idea had moved away from the original idea of an imperial federation:

> They are autonomous communities, within the British Empire, equal in status, in no way subordinate one to another in any aspect of their domestic or external affairs, though united by common allegiance to the Crown, and freely associated as members of the British Commonwealth of Nations. (in McIntyre 1998: 17)

But although such a definition is helpful (especially to those used to the French tradition of textual clarity in constitutional matters), the tradition which underpinned it was one of considerable pragmatic flexibility. Indeed, the futility of a more ideologically rigid approach had been extensively illustrated by more than twenty years of diplomatic wrangling following the 1921 Anglo-Irish Treaty establishing the Irish Free State. Ireland's 'Dominion' status turned out to be compatible with a Republican constitution, rendering otiose the conception of allegiance to the Crown. When it came to war, the Irish Free State remained neutral, but this was tempered with sympathy for the British war effort, to which tens of thousands of Irish combatants contributed. However, it was clear that the Irish 'pillar' of the British Empire was no longer load-bearing, well before the Republic formally left the Commonwealth in 1949 (Boyce 1999: 70–88).

British reluctance to concede Dominion status to India crystallized in concerns that the British parliamentary tradition was not applicable to India. Thus, Dr John Simon argued, in the report of the Commission he chaired in 1928–30, that parliamentarianism in India was 'a translation, and in even the best translation the essential meaning is apt to be lost': 'The British Parliamentary system has developed in accordance with the day-to-day needs of the people, and has been fitted like a well-worn garment to the figure of the wearer, but it does not follow that it will suit everybody' (in Boyce 1999: 92).

The party system in India never corresponded to the British ideal, but provincial election results in 1937 and 1945 were crucial in winning British acquiescence in what was essentially the expression of communal majorities. The crude geometry of Partition which could be derived from these expressions of the popular will (albeit on the basis of limited suffrage) was instrumental in leading the British government to ignore its qualms on this subject. Aside from these issues of political principle, however, and at the heart of British efforts to preserve Indian unity through a succession of constitutional formulae, right up to Mountbatten's penultimate offer of May 1947 (the 'May Plan'), was the hope that the Indian Army could be preserved as a pillar of imperial defence. Partition thus also decisively undermined Dominion status as a means of preserving imperial interests. In the end, and notwithstanding the great importance which Mountbatten attached to the idea of himself as governor-general of both new Dominions, Dominion status was little more than a face-saving mechanism in which imperial interest was reduced to the preservation of imperial dignity. More practically, it allowed a swift Transfer of Power, which thus took place without further legislation beyond a simple amendment of the 1935 Government of India Act (Darwin 1988: 97).

The contrasting ways in which Burma and Ceylon were handled cast further doubt on the substance of Dominion status. In both cases, the Transfer of Power was accelerated in the aftermath of war and by virtue of comparison with events in India. In Burma, the process was so swift and so contrary to British policy as hardly to warrant the euphemism 'Transfer of Power' (Tinker 1984–5; Smith & Stockwell 1988; de Silva 1997). Burma's pre-war position within the empire was inextricably tied to India, as an economic adjunct, exporter of rice and resentful recipient of Indian moneylenders and migrant labourers. So too was its political destiny tied to that of India, and it was thus set on the road to Dominion status in the 1935 Government of Burma Act, paralleling the Indian Act. From a British perspective, the three-year hiatus of Japanese occupation necessitated a return to direct British rule for a further three years, to December 1948; this was enshrined in legislation in June 1945, which also allowed for the ethnically distinct hill states ('Scheduled Areas') to remain under British control pending their willingness to be amalgamated with Burma (Christie 1996).

British power and initiative were never fully recovered, however. With Aung San's AFPFL the only political force capable of squaring up to rural communism, and with the Burmese police dangerously sympathetic to the AFPFL, military reinforcements to help the British administration to negotiate from strength were never forthcoming – a parallel with Wavell's request for five divisions to maintain order in India is suggested. In early 1947, against the backdrop of a disintegrating position in India, but with no charismatic princely conjuror to pull a rabbit from his viceregal hat, the Attlee government conceded control of important areas of government, including administration of the 'Scheduled Areas', in return for Dominion status. But Aung San, mindful of Nehru's likely insistence on a Republican constitution for India, and mistrustful of any revival of the economic and political subservience represented by 'traditional' links with the empire, refused the allegiance to the Crown implied by Dominion status. The shock of Aung San's assassination in July 1947, along with most of his cabinet, did nothing to impede Burma's progress towards independence (Darwin 1988: 97–101). Thus, in January 1948, Burma became the first colony since 1776 to secede completely from British imperial influence. Underlining the singularity of this move, when India applied for Commonwealth membership as a republic a year later, it was unthinkable that such an application be denied, even though this rendered Dominion status virtually meaningless, and the concept passed quietly out of history, at 'what seemed its moment of greatest triumph', although Ghana and Malaysia both subsequently applied for Dominion status.[3]

Regarded as a 'model colony', Ceylon seemed set at various moments to undergo a model decolonization, as British policy makers promised themselves 'more Ceylons and fewer Burmas' (in Louis 1999: 337; Ashton 1999: 448; McIntyre 1998: 108). Some aspects of the model were certainly worthy of emulation, but the circumstances which allowed concessions and compromises on both sides were fairly exceptional. Universal suffrage, introduced in Ceylon in 1931 in an effort to head off communal violence, had in fact heightened communal tensions, principally between the majority Sinhalese community and the substantial Tamil minority. The presence of significant numbers of Indian Tamil migrant labourers (distinct from Ceylonese Tamils), many having acquired voting rights, acted as a further political irritant which negotiations between the Ceylon government and New Delhi failed to settle. The structure of representative

government up to 1946, modelled on the London County Council, was a clumsy system of executive committees to which individual ministers answered. Early in the war, Ceylon was regarded as 'likely to present the most difficult problem with which the Colonial Office would be dealing' (in Ashton 1999: 460). Ceylon acquired a crucial wartime role as a major source of raw materials, providing 60 per cent of Allied natural rubber supplies after the fall of Malaya, and as headquarters of Mountbatten's South-East Asia Command from April 1944. Ceylon's political leaders, headed by the conservative Sinhalese leader Dom Stephen Senanayake, could point to loyal cooperation in the Allied war effort, and in return expected Dominion status and cabinet government. What they were offered by Lord Soulbury's Commission, which reported in October 1945, fell short of Dominion status, though it endorsed the demand for internal self-government, with Britain retaining responsibility for defence and external affairs.

The arguments for Britain conceding independence to Ceylon were fairly compelling for both sides, but even so it took almost two years of negotiation, to June 1947, to persuade the Labour government to strike a deal that might be interpreted by a hostile Conservative opposition as yet a further instance of imperial 'scuttle' (Boyce 1999). Never again were the British likely to find such a ready group of collaborators in the imperial endgame as Senanayake and his Sinhalese supporters, whom Patrick Gordon Walker, Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, portrayed as 'extremely rich landowners with local power and influence comparable to a whig landlord's in George III's time'. There was nonetheless a measure of self-delusion in the Commonwealth enthusiast Gordon Walker's view that: '. . . if we treat them strictly as a dominion they will behave very like a loyal colony; whereas if we treat them as a Colony we may end in driving them out of the Commonwealth' (March 1948, in Darwin 1988: 105).

In the decolonizing endgame, mutual interest counted more than 'loyalty'. This was the Colonial Office's first territory to advance to self-government, and working on Lord Soulbury's injunction to avoid 'giving too little and too late', officials were determined to force a satisfactory settlement. Officials were accused of seeking to 'rid themselves of the island and so avoid another Indian problem' (in Ashton 1999: 463n.). Viewed cynically, the CO apparently believed that communal tensions, discrimination against migrant labourers, and rural class war were best left to the local experts. Senanayake's United National Party, formed in 1946, had much to gain from rapid agreement with Britain, in order to bolster support against substantial, but divided, opposition from Communists and other left-wing groups. The interim government devised a system of constitutional safeguards to protect minorities, including a bicameral legislature and representation with weightage for both area and population, to benefit the Tamil and Muslim communities who lived in more sparsely populated territory; even these safeguards did nothing to allay the fears of the Tamil Congress, formed in 1944. Following the February 1947 London Conference on Commonwealth citizenship and nationality, the problem of nationality for Indian immigrants was also effectively shelved for an independent Senanayake government to settle, in legislation which 'effectively removed voters of Indian origin from the electoral rolls' (ibid.: 463). The post-imperial relationship was more satisfactorily

managed in terms of defence and external relations, in that Britain preserved base rights including access to the naval base at Trincomalee, and in return acted as a counterweight for Ceylon against India's regional predominance. Dominion status was thus attacked by the communists as an illusory independence, and Ceylon was refused UN membership on a Soviet veto until 1955.

The February 1948 Transfer of Power to Ceylon, renamed Sri Lanka in 1972, was celebrated as a significant step forward for British imperial stabilization after the war, or, more simply, as a 'consolation' (Boyce 1999: 107). Some commentators went further, including one CO official, who hailed the evolving Commonwealth as 'the boldest stroke of political idealism which the world has yet witnessed, and on by far the grandest scale', and for whom Ceylon pointed forward: 'Dominion status for coloured colonial peoples, however sincerely professed as an objective, remained a castle in the air. It has now come down to earth' (in McIntyre 1998: 29).

But on the whole, and notwithstanding all public declarations to the contrary, the three new Dominions, and one lost cause, in the late 1940s were seen by the British 'official mind' as a first step along a much more protracted journey. Certainly, as we shall see in the following chapter, the governors of British Africa could be forgiven for desiring policies which would facilitate 'more Ceylons', but this was to be understood more in terms of internal political development, rather than the 'ultimate' end goal of such development.

Having given ground substantially in South Asia, the British had also conceded ideological ground in granting independence even to countries which were not deemed to be 'ready' (which was the case for Ceylon and Burma, if not for India). Now came the drawing of a line. In December 1949, the Colonial Secretary, Arthur Creech Jones, in a memorandum on 'Constitutional Development in smaller colonial territories', considered that the central purpose of British colonial policy was: 'to guide the Colonial territories to responsible self-government within the Commonwealth in conditions that ensure to the people concerned both a fair standard of living and freedom from oppression from any quarter'.

To this end, a territory had to be 'economically viable and capable of defending its own interests'. By this reckoning, some territories might potentially achieve full independence, some might combine with others to form units capable of achieving viability, while others belonged in 'neither of the two categories'. As he concluded: '. . . it is hardly likely that full self-government will be achieved under any foreseeable conditions (apart from associations with other territories) by any except Nigeria, the Gold Coast and the Federation of Malaya with Singapore'.[4] Thus, British policy had given credence to the idea of a Commonwealth of Nations, to which members belonged as equals. But deprived of any real content, the prize of Dominion status had proved to be little more than a sop to British imperial sensibilities. Conversely, the Empire-Commonwealth was still implicitly divided into hierarchies of 'readiness' and viability, while the old colonial rhetoric of guidance towards 'eventual' self-government was, if anything, reinforced by the need to draw a line, albeit one that would be repeatedly redrawn over the coming decade and more, as timetable after timetable was foreshortened by the accelerating progress towards independence of even the smallest and least 'viable' of states.

9

Conclusion: The Impact of Decolonization

> The Vietnamese people's great victory at Dien Bien Phu is no longer, strictly speaking, a Vietnamese victory. Since July 1954, the problem that the colonial peoples have set themselves has been the following: 'What do we have to do to bring off a Dien Bien Phu? How do we go about it?' ... This atmosphere of violence changes not only the colonized but also the colonialists as they become aware of multiple Dien Bien Phus. This is why colonialist governments are increasingly in the grip of ordered panic. Their aim is to stay one step ahead, to shift liberation movements to the Right, to disarm the people: quick, let's decolonize! Let's decolonize the Congo before it becomes another Algeria. Let's pass the Framework Law for Africa, create the Community, revise the Community, but please, please, let's decolonize, decolonize ... So they decolonize so quickly that they impose independence on Houphouët-Boigny. (Fanon [1961]2002: 69)

> Were the countries fully ready for Independence? Of course not. Nor was India, and the bloodshed that followed the grant of Independence there was incomparably worse than anything that has happened since to any country. Yet the decision of the Attlee Government was the only realistic one. Equally we could not possibly have held by force to our territories in Africa. We could not, with an enormous force engaged, even continue to hold the small island of Cyprus. General de Gaulle could not contain Algeria. The march of men towards their freedom can be guided, but not halted. Of course there were risks in moving quickly. But the risks of moving slowly were far greater. (Iain Macleod, *The Spectator*, 31 January 1964, in Porter & Stockwell 1989: vol. II, doc. 82, 571)

Aside from some predictable contrasts of tone and perspective, these two roughly contemporary analyses of the decolonizing endgame offer a perhaps surprising degree of consensus and complementarity. Intellectual honesty in both cases may reflect the fact that neither writer felt obliged to follow his respective 'party line'. We will never know how differently Frantz Fanon might have couched his polemic had he not been writing in haste in an effort to beat the leukaemia that killed him in December 1961 (Macey 2000: 454–5), had he lived to see the triumph of the Algerian cause which he had served for several years, or to experience the many causes of post-colonial disillusion which are prefigured in his text. Iain Macleod had been British Colonial Secretary

at the time Fanon was writing, but by 1964 he was no longer in government, and was thus free to respond to criticisms of Britain's headlong imperial retreat by Lord Salisbury, a more orthodox Conservative defender of empire who had resigned from the Cabinet in 1957 over Macmillan's Cyprus policy. From both sides of the colonial divide, therefore, the view emerges that the events of the late 1950s and early 1960s, or more generally of the period from 1945, were driven by imperial efforts, impelled by imperial weakness and by the growing momentum of anti-colonial mobilization, to accelerate the end of colonial rule in Africa and elsewhere, even if this meant imposing independence on (for Fanon) objectively pro-colonial leaders, or on countries which (for Macleod) were not yet ready for independent statehood.

In concluding this study of decolonization, it may be worth asking just *what* it was that came to an end in this abrupt way, thus dissatisfying both the anti-colonial would-be revolutionary and the liberal colonial reformer (and his imperialist party colleagues). Several orders of answer might be given, corresponding loosely to Braudel's timescales for historical enquiry. First, then, this was the point at which the British empire stuttered to the end of its prolonged cycle of 'decline, revival and fall' (Gallagher 1982). That Britain had succeeded in stemming imperial decline over the *longue durée* has been ascribed to the canny pragmatism of an 'official mind' which preferred the sinews of informal empire to the cumbersome trappings of direct control. When the latter became necessary, it was sustained by the management of astutely cultivated collaborative relationships at the imperial periphery. This pragmatism had periodically allowed Britain to reconfigure its imperial holdings, and in the twentieth century had assisted its revival from the depredations of two world wars, but after 1945, the British 'official mind' had faltered in its attempts, either to recruit new collaborators in a radically changed geopolitical and ideological climate, or, for that matter, to entice the new American power into sharing in a grand imperial partnership, on something approximating to the old informal model (Louis & Robinson [1994]2003).

This by now largely unassailable 'peripheral' approach may help us to appreciate how the greatest of the colonial empires persisted for so long and why it finally dipped below the threshold of viability. However, Gallagher, Robinson et al. tell us little of other, lesser, modern empires (while the older Spanish and Portuguese empires had shrunk to shadows of their former greatness well before the twentieth century). Moreover, in the present context, it might seem perverse to favour an approach which thus places formal colonial rule in a kind of historical parenthesis as the less favoured mode of imperialism. Further, although the key concept of collaboration has been central to the present study (notwithstanding the extraneous moral connotations of the term itself), its explanatory power in the period of decolonization may be doubted, conveying, as Darwin (1991: 101) acknowledges, the idea of the colonial power somehow 'using up available collaborators like a film star running through spouses'. Crucially, also, the concept of collaboration, concentrating as it does on the functional aspects of colonialism, leaves little room for the ideological content or political purpose of particular collaborative choices in the later colonial context.

The present study has drawn at various points on Frederick Cooper's comparative work on British and French imperialism (e.g. 1996a, 1997, 2002). Cooper's vision too has drawn back to embrace the imperial *longue durée* (2005), but in its concerns with

the workings of formal colonial rule, some of which are shared here, the primary perspective adopted is inevitably that of the Braudelian 'conjuncture'; that is, in this case, the period of perhaps eighty years within which the colonial empires were conquered or consolidated, institutionalized within their final borders, disrupted by the events of 1914–18 and especially 1940–5, and thus approached the final 'twenty years crisis' of decolonization. Cooper's recently formulated idea of the British or French (and perhaps also Belgian or Dutch) 'empire-state' may help us to understand, beyond the workings of an unwavering 'official mind', just what it meant to 'think like an empire', and moreover an empire which, 'far from being an anachronistic political form in the "modern era"', took its responsibilities as a modern state increasingly seriously (ibid.: 154, 200). To be sure, before the Second World War, there was typically a yawning gap between the rhetoric of 'trusteeship' or 'civilizing missions' and the realities of colonial rule on the ground, which, as suggested here, constituted a kind of improvised 'bricolage' whereby colonial conquests were sometimes crudely adapted to governmental or commercial purpose. British India, however, the largest and most complex of colonial states, was in the interwar period already being developed as a grandiose model for the future of modern colonialism, or so it no doubt seemed to the framers of the constitution which emerged from the 1935 Government of India Act. The fact that this Act was consequent upon nearly two decades of intermittently intense conflict between British officialdom and an assertive nationalist movement also prefigured subsequent developments elsewhere within what has been characterized as the 'late colonial state'. Across the colonized world, various political options were explored, ranging from nationalist mobilization to communist organization and agitation, to monarchical restoration, to 'moderate' political accommodation with colonial rule. However, and although violent resistance to colonialism manifested itself in various recurrent, but unfailingly abortive forms, it has been argued here that, even if colonialism showed signs of fatigue or self-contradiction, particularly in the wake of the economic crisis of the 1930s, there was as yet little evidence to suggest the imminent emergence of a viable alternative to colonial empire as a 'normal' feature of the international system. As its new constitution came into force in 1937, none could reasonably have predicted that even India was on course to break away from British over-rule within a decade, or that it would do so as two separate states.

The Second World War occupies a central position in any account of decolonization, but it must be recognized that its impact was necessarily multi-layered and pluri-dimensional, with some devastating immediate consequences and others that took time to work themselves out, whether in the manner of a time-delayed fuse or of a pack of dominoes. This time around, as was recognized early on by both Churchill and de Gaulle (in his Appeal of 18 June 1940), it truly was a world war in breadth and depth. The global reach of the war was far more extensive and more evenly spread than in 1914–18, the colonized fought, laboured and died in large numbers for 'their' empire-states, and colonized regions in Asia, Africa, the Middle East and the Pacific constituted central theatres of war, where empires changed hands (for example, between Vichy and de Gaulle), were fought over, occupied or, in the case of Southeast Asia, eclipsed and then, in 1945, fought over all over again. The war also brought challenges to the sustaining ideologies of the colonial powers, whether enshrined

in the anti-colonialism professed by the two emerging Superpowers, or in the fact that the war was increasingly cast as a struggle for democracy and national self-determination and against fascism and racial discrimination. The colonial powers could derive little comfort from the argument that American anti-colonialism and Soviet anti-imperialism were both to some extent self-serving, given the contrast between British and French exhaustion, sapped morale and (in the British case) over-extension at war's end, and the dynamism of the Big Two (with Britain a poor Third and France a grudging Fifth behind Nationalist China). Indeed, from the perspectives of *longue durée* and political conjuncture, the Second World War effectively settled the matter of imperial statehood once and for all. Thus Niall Ferguson may be forgiven some rose-tinted hyperbole when he argues that Churchill's victory in 1945 'could only ever have been Pyrrhic', that 'the British sacrificed [their] Empire to stop the Germans, Italians and Japanese from keeping theirs', and asks rhetorically: 'Did not that sacrifice alone expunge all the Empire's other sins?' (2003: 363). Less forgivably, having thus talked up Britain's 'truly noble' shouldering of its imperial burden, Ferguson goes on to expunge almost the entire process of decolonization from the historical record . . .

In the present context, the Second World War may perhaps best be understood as an accelerator of imperial change, articulating a shift, in Braudelian terms, from the conjunctural perspective to that of event. It is at this level of enquiry that we may determine the nature of what ultimately collapsed over the 15 or 20 years from 1945. This *late colonial shift* not only quickened the pace of change along an apparently parabolic curve, but also transformed the way in which imperial futures were perceived, not only by colonial officials forced to relinquish the leisurely timescales of secular colonial evolution, but also by the colonized, for whom the deadening certainties of pre-war colonial rule had suddenly been lifted. Well before Dien Bien Phu, both colonizers and colonized acted on the presumption that empires *could* be lost after 1945, though it was far from certain that they *would* be, or how quickly. This perceptual shift was typically reflected in a qualitative change in colonial policy making, which has been variously characterized as an attempted 'second colonial occupation' or as the 'interventionist moment' (Cooper 2005: 188) in the life-cycle of colonial 'empire-states'. However, it was equally reflected in the ways in which colonial initiatives were taken up, transformed, or simply rejected, by an emerging generation of political and social actors within the forum of the late colonial state, and in the growth of a distinctive late colonial politics. The substantive shift was thus not so much on one side or other of the colonial dialectic, but in the nature of the interaction itself.

In a 'first wave' of decolonization, in South and Southeast Asia after 1945, circumstances were heavily weighted against the colonial powers, and change took place very rapidly indeed. Arguably, the concept of a late colonial shift is least applicable in the case which perhaps most colours our view of decolonization in the immediate post-war period, but which remained *sui generis* to the last. In India, just as 'lateness came early' (Darwin 1999), so too did imperial demission, as the war's aftermath brought British rule dangerously close to the 'edge of the volcano'. Here the alternative to a humiliating, staged military and administrative withdrawal, mooted by the penultimate Viceroy, was the accelerated imperial endgame promoted by his successor. This

allowed Britain to retain some measure of dignity in retreat, as did arguably the resilience of the state structures reinforced a decade before. However, while the creation of separate, communally divided successor states was probably inevitable by this stage, the 'moth-eaten' form of the partition, the haste with which it was implemented, and the scale of the violence that resulted, were by-products of British weakness, as Macleod acknowledged in 1964, but also of British face-saving expediency. While the formula of an amicable Transfer of Power to newly self-governing Dominions accorded well with British sensibilities, and reasonably reflected short-term realities in post-imperial India and Pakistan, as also in Ceylon, it represented a poor euphemism for events in Burma, where British control was never recovered in the wake of Japanese retreat. Burma set a precedent followed only by the Republic of Ireland and, later, South Africa, by rejecting membership of a British Commonwealth of Nations which all too quickly lost relevance as the husk of shrinking British imperial power and reach.

Explicit policies of imperial retreat were the exception rather than the rule in the immediate post-war period. Aside from the Philippines, already promised independence by the United States (a deceptively reluctant colonial power), Southeast Asia was the object of determined efforts by the British, French and Dutch to recover colonial positions lost to wartime Japanese expansion. These efforts can seem self-deluding attempts to restore an imperial *status quo ante*, or taken to illustrate 'the dangers of failing to accommodate political movements in the colonies' (Cooper 2005: 188). Certainly, nowhere outside India and Algeria was such determined and resourceful nationalist opposition offered to continuing colonial rule as in the shape of the Vietnamese and Indonesian revolutions. However, the returning powers attempted more than mere colonial restoration, bringing with them blueprints for the integration of their colonies into a new, rational and reformist imperial order; none of these blueprints was realized, and even the British failed to implement an ambitious plan for Malayan Union, while a 'second colonial occupation' exploiting tin and rubber production was compromised by communist insurgency. Short of wholesale retreat, the French and Dutch were never likely to reach an accommodation with their revolutionary interlocutors, although interim deals were struck in both cases before relations deteriorated beyond repair. The onset of the Asian Cold War had a decisive impact across the region, although with widely differing effects: defeating insurgency in Malaya made the country 'safe for decolonization' (Holland 1985), while in Indonesia the nationalist regime itself destroyed local communists, thus persuading the Americans that a continuing Dutch presence was otiose. In Indochina, by contrast, the French war with the Viet Minh was transformed by Mao's victory in China, and by American involvement: in this sense, *pace* Fanon, French humiliation at Dien Bien Phu was exceptional rather than exemplary, since the war had long since left behind its original 'late colonial' character.

Elsewhere, and particularly in the African empires, the dialectical poles of colonial 'thesis' and nationalist 'antithesis' exerted a more even pull. Here, colonial territories were integrated into the imperial economy through the long-overdue (if still inadequate) injection of development funding and expertise, and the more extensive exploitation of colonial resources. Meanwhile the impact of this intense and often-resented intervention into colonial society was allayed through the gradual extension

of systems of political representation, at local, territorial and, in the French case, metropolitan levels. Although initiated by official political reformism, late colonial politics was transformed into a vital process through the dynamic input of political actors, who adopted the forms and modalities of a conventional – and increasingly democratic – politics with enthusiasm. This was a 'time of politics' (Iliffe 1979: 477), as the post-war wave of strikes and disorder set off a chain reaction of party formation, coalition building, and mass mobilization, in counterpoint to official policy and constitution writing. As colonial governments conceded the electoral principle, they confronted an explosion in the growth and activism of political parties and trades unions. Indeed, officials were actors in the political game themselves, whether in a governor's friendly (read 'paternalist') mentoring of suitably moderate politicians, or the more partisan official involvement in party politics that was a trademark of the French proconsular tradition. However, it was far from clear, as Cooper extensively argues (for example, 2002), that the motivation of ordinary Africans need always be interpreted in terms of mobilization in the cause of eventual independence: in the late colonial state, there was much else to mobilize against, not least the impact of its increasingly onerous interventions, both in burgeoning colonial cities and in the countryside.

This late colonial African politics worked itself out differently within the British and French systems, although the two roughly converged, not least in their timetables for decolonization. In effect, the British 'official mind' started out with an idea of controlled, gradual evolution towards eventual self-government, but was jolted into a far more rapid process of concessions, as nationalists such as Nkrumah and Azikiwe couched their demands in terms of 'Self-Government NOW' (Nkrumah's slogan in the 1940s), thus presenting the British 'official mind' with a dilemma when those terms became the platform for a successful election campaign, such as Nkrumah's in 1951. Subsequent iterations of this electoral politics found younger nationalists, such as Nyerere or Kaunda, scrupulously respecting increasingly arcane constitutional rules centring on ultimately fruitless British attempts to disguise settler dominance as 'multi-racialism'; and yet still they won their way through to independence. Conversely, the French system imposed a limited, but expanding conception of political representation, contained within the new French Union, but politics readily jumped the tracks laid down by an explicit and rigid constitutional framework, or even turned the Republican values and democratic institutions of the state against it. Rather than 'self-government NOW', it was the 'mystique of equality' proclaimed by Senghor which prevailed, whether in the prolonged campaigns by African workers for parity with their metropolitan French comrades, or in the political progress towards territorial autonomy and universal suffrage, culminating in the regime established by the 1956 Framework Law. The impact on colonial policy makers was comparable in both empires: while British officials 'seemed to trap themselves into a spiral of constitutional concessions' (Darwin 1991: 116), their French counterparts were 'caught between the threat that imperial citizenship would fail and that it would succeed too well' (Cooper 2005: 177). Both ended up recognizing – and this was part of the logic of the Framework Law, if only implicitly of Macmillan's famous 'profit and loss account' – that the political game in Africa was becoming too costly to sustain.

Typically, this politics remained with the bounds of more or less 'peaceful' activity, although the conception of 'peace' needs to be stretched considerably to encompass a series of disorderly episodes and their attendant 'emergencies' in Gold Coast, Nigeria, Côte d'Ivoire, Cameroun, Nyasaland, Northern and Southern Rhodesia (and many other cases not studied in this volume). The distinction was a fluid one between these episodes and other, more prolonged or intense late colonial conflicts in Madagascar, Kenya, Algeria, Cyprus, alongside those in Southeast Asia (and this list too could be extended). Indeed, a comparative approach allows us to retain some of that fluidity of definition, and to counter, for example, the not uncommon view that 'Britain abandoned its empire skilfully, almost without conflict', though we might concur that France 'fought a string of appalling, unnecessary wars, ending with the Algerian war which nearly destroyed French democracy itself'.[1] Like the Tolstoyan family, each case had its own reasons for the 'unhappiness' that led to conflict. These reasons might include an acute sense of lost independence or national identity, or of social disruption arising from colonial pressures; the dominant presence of settlers or other minorities within colonial society; or the failure or inadequacy of reforms that might have headed off conflict. However, it is difficult not to see the proximate cause of each conflict, if not its deeper roots, in the tensions and contradictions of late colonialism.

Particular emphasis has been placed in this study on the distinctive forms and methods of late colonial warfare. Here too, although combatants on all sides drew on the experience of earlier resistance and its repression, or on a continuous recourse to violence stretching back to conquest, we may nonetheless detect a new seriousness of purpose, a qualitative difference in the nature and outlook of insurgent movements, as also in the responses of the late colonial 'security state' (Darwin 1999). These were self-proclaimed contests for the 'hearts and minds' of civilian non-combatants, as insurgents embraced the strategy and tactics of peasant insurrection but also of 'terror', while colonial armies and official agencies fought back with ever more recondite (if not always more effective) doctrines of counter-insurgency, deployed new technologies (helicopters, electrified barriers, napalm), and refined methods of repression (torture, detention and 'rehabilitation', forced resettlement) which underline the essential modernity of the late colonial state and offer lessons for post-colonial practice.[2]

Meanwhile, shifting metropolitan calculations suggested a recalibrated 'zero-sum' game between growing domestic prosperity and the burden of modern welfare provision, and the apparent demands of outdated and costly imperial commitments. Some of those costs could be counted, in investments 'wasted' overseas, in a potentially open-ended sharing of welfare benefits with new imperial citizens, or in the human and economic costs of conscription. Other costs were incalculable, in the moral opprobrium of late colonial scandals or the 'gangrene' of torture and other abuses. To this must be added, in the French case, the Algerian war's impact on domestic political stability, bringing down the regime in 1958, and wreaking havoc to the last, through the combined effects of military insubordination and settler resistance, which came together in the die-hard terrorism of the OAS.

By the late 1950s, therefore, the colonial powers were poised for the final surge of rapid change which characterized the late colonial endgame. A fundamental part of

the background to this change was the recognition of diminishing international options in the face of terminal imperial decline, as reflected in the calamitous diplomatic aftermath of Dien Bien Phu, the Suez expedition or the Sakhiet raid. This was reinforced by a growing international coalition of formerly colonized states, acting in concert in the United Nations and other bodies. At this point also, the more extreme or eccentric experiments in late colonial statehood started to unravel, as the Belgian Congo packed its decolonization into a breathless 18 months, with catastrophic consequences after independence, and the British, with apparent reluctance, abandoned their trials for the establishment of 'multi-racial' constitutions in Central and East Africa. At the very least, this new international environment acted to 'supercharge' the impact of political developments within the colonial state (Darwin 1991), amplifying the wider resonance of each subsequent example of colonial violence or intransigence, and forcing the curtailment of long-cherished timetables for further political development. So in the end, the late colonial project proved too costly to be worth carrying through, and was aborted. Inherent in this terminal pragmatism of the European colonial powers, as Fanon and Macleod both recognized implicitly, was thus the possibility of post-colonial disillusion.

Notes

1 Neal Ascherson, 'As the Queen goes to France this week, the Entente Cordiale remains a fractious, fragile alliance', *Observer*, 4 April 2004. Aside from the 100-year-old Franco-British Entente, the article also drew attention to the fiftieth anniversary of Dien Bien Phu.
2 Cf. the Pentagon's screening of Pontecorvo's (1965) film in August 2003: Patrick Jarreau, 'La direction des opérations spéciales du Pentagone organise une projection de La Bataille d'Alger', *Le Monde*, 9 September 2003. As the Pentagon's flyer put it: 'How to win a battle against terrorism and lose the war of ideas. Children shoot soldiers at point-blank range. Women plant bombs in cafes. Soon the entire Arab population builds to a mad fervor. Sound familiar?': in 'The Battle of Algiers', en.wikipedia.org, accessed 10 January 2007.