

HOW COLONIAL EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES HELPED SHAPE THE PATTERN OF DECOLONIZATION IN WEST AFRICA

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This paper argues that the pattern of decolonization was a logical consequence of the nature of human capital transfers from the colonizers' to the elites of the former colonies, and this shaped the strategic interaction between these two groups. Where the educational ideology emphasized assimilation, the system tended to produce elites that depended highly on the colonizer for their livelihood, hence necessitating a continuation of the imperial relationship even after independence. On the contrary, where the ideology emphasized the strengthening of the 'solid elements' of the countryside, the system tended to produce elites that were quite independent of the colonizer and consequently had little to lose from a disruption of the imperial relationship at independence. The results of the model shed light into why the French decolonization process in West Africa was generally smooth and transited from colonialism to neo-colonialism whereas British decolonizations in West Africa were generally antagonistic, culminating in complete independence from England. The unique contribution of the paper is in providing an alternative explanation of 20th century decolonization, anchored on human capital transfers, an approach that unifies both the Eurocentric and Afrocentric perspectives.

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1. Introduction

The pattern in which decolonization took place in sub-saharan Africa was quite intriguing. While the French peacefully withdrew from their sub-Saharan African (henceforth, SSA) empires in one day¹, paving the way for a transition from colonialism to neo-colonialism, the British were unable to decolonize smoothly, and the transition to independence in former British SSA colonies was generally antagonistic, often culminating in complete independence from England. Most of the explanations of decolonization² emphasize long run processes of changing economic incentives for the colonizers,³ the rise of new nationalist movements in the colonies and the change in balance of power in international relationships, (Thorn 2000). Although these different explanations are important to an understanding of 20th century decolonization processes, they however fail to account for the contrasting decolonization patterns in SSA.

The objective of this paper is to attempt an explanation of why the decolonization pattern in the French SSA Empire differed significantly from that in the British SSA Empire. The paper argues that the specific pattern of decolonization in SSA was a function of the nature of human capital transfers from the colonizers to the indigenous elites of the former colonies. Underpinning the nature of these human capital transfers is the colonial educational ideology. Specifically, the study models the role of human capital transfers from the colonizers to the indigenous elites of the colonies in the process of decolonization. This approach, it is hoped, will forge a unified economic interpretation of decolonization processes which might in turn, contribute to an understanding of the nature and determinants of post-colonial state institutions in some SSA countries.

This paper extends a growing literature on the determinants of post-colonial institutions in Africa as championed in the works of (Boone 2003), (Herbst 2000), (Mamdani 1996) and (Berry 1993). The reasoning in this paper follows closely that of (Boone 2003) with the main difference that the strategic relationship between colonizers and elites (and correspondingly between elites and the rural masses) is shaped by the colonial educational ideology as opposed to the nature of the geographical landscape as hypothesized in (Boone 2003). This paper also contributes to the literature on the effects of inherited colonial institutions on long term developmental trajectories in developing countries, notably by (Heldring and Robinson 2012), (Acemoglu *et al* 2001), (Engerman and Sokoloff 2002), (La Porta *et al* 2008), (Levine *et al* 2002), and (Agbor *et al* 2010a) all building from (North 1990) framework.

But first a working definition of the concepts of colonization and decolonization is in order. The term “colonization” in this study is understood to mean the process of creation

¹ Besides Guinea, which unilaterally withdrew from the French community in 1958, all French SSA colonies received their political independence from Paris on the same date in 1960.

² These include three major schools, namely, the Eurocentric, Afrocentric and Liberal explanations of decolonization (Thorn 2000). The Eurocentric school basically argues that the colonisers themselves sought to withdraw from empires because it was no longer in their economic or political interest to continue colonial rule, while the Afrocentric view argues that the colonisers were forcefully evicted from empires by elite-led nationalist movements. The liberal view on its part, places the fulcrum of change within shifts in international relations

³ See for instance, (Gartzke and Rohner 2010).

of empires,⁴ whilst “decolonization” describes the process of European withdrawal from empires, whether they be empires of sovereign administration or of trusteeship administration.⁵

Because decolonization is a profoundly complex historical process with multi-faceted determinants, it makes intellectual sense to limit this study both in time and in space. This study thus proposes to model the decolonization processes in West Africa during the 20th century and the focus is naturally on the British and French decolonization processes, although the model also provides useful insight into other decolonization processes outside West Africa. The usefulness of limiting the study to West Africa is that it enables us to isolate specific characteristics of the French and British colonization models without the added complication of dealing with a large white settler population.

The paper is organized as follows. Section 2 briefly highlights the major distinguishing features of British and French colonial education policies in Africa and also contrasts the different perceptions and reactions of Anglophone and Francophone West African elites to post-World War II (WWII) colonization and decolonization discourse. Section 3 presents the model, discusses the results and the theoretical implications while section 4 summarises the core predictions of the model. Section 5 concludes.

2. Distinguishing Aspects of British and French Colonial Education Practices

Historians generally believe that the major distinguishing features between the British and French colonization in black Africa are rooted in their divergent objectives and approaches to colonial education. Whereas French colonial education ideology emphasized the notion of assimilation, British colonial education is believed to have emphasized instead the “strengthening of the solid elements of the countryside.”⁶ We now consider each of these ideologies separately.

2.1 French Colonial Ideology of Educational Transfers

The French assimilatory policy in education was rooted in an imperial ideology that colonies were one and indivisible with France. In the official French mind, France had no colonies, but departments, (Thorn 2000, 27). Several authors argue that French colonial education was aimed at making Frenchmen of Africans.⁷ Hence, the way in which education was generally administered in French African colonies was by boarding primary pupils in far-away schools, where they were taught by French teachers, using the French language and

⁴ Historians have generally distinguished colonization from imperialism, the latter referring to the process of creation of empires and the former referring to only those parts that were actually settled in by the people of the imperialist power, (Thorn 2000). Modern day historians have used the term “formal empires” to denote colonization and “informal empires” to describe territories that were not settled in by Europeans. For simplicity, we make no distinction between the two and use the terms colonization and imperialism interchangeably.

⁵ In spite of the fact that the decolonisation of UN trust territories established after World War II was supposed to be pre-determined and smooth, it often wasn't the case which is why we include them in this category.

⁶ See (Gifford and Louis 1971, 700), (Thorn 2000, 25) and (Cain and Hopkins 1993, 218–19).

⁷ See for instance, (Anne Rafenel 1856), (Gifford and Louis 1971, 552) and (Mazrui and Tidy 1984, 377).

French textbooks.⁸ These pupils only returned to their villages during the long vacations. It has also been argued that, the content of educational programs in French African colonies aimed essentially at alienating the elites from their own culture and society.

For instance, (Gifford and Louis 1971, 697) report that history textbooks in use in French African colonies were written in such a way as to encourage Africans to deny the validity of their own cultural traditions and to admire instead those of the French. (Gifford and Louis 1971) further contend that while attempts were made to teach the African about their own milieu, they were nevertheless continuously reminded that everything about their environment was inferior to France and the French way of life. Therefore, if African students did master their lessons well, it should be difficult to imagine how they could have done so without internalising the assumptions, standards and prejudices of French culture and society.

In addition, through well tailored educational curricula, black francophone African elites were systematically led into believing in France's superiority in the military, technical, scientific, economic and cultural fields, and it was therefore logical for these elites to seek to share in the benefits of this superiority through continued imperial relationship with France, (Chafer 2002).

Furthermore, it is claimed that an important offshot of the assimilatory education offered to Francophone African elites was that these elites became alienated from the rest of their countrymen, resulting in an idyllic sense of dependency of these elites on France. For instance, Francophone African elites were given French citizenship, and some of them even became ministers and parliamentarians in the French cabinet and legislature in Paris whilst the general population was subjected to the punitive "code d'indigenat".⁹ This discriminatory code not only denied rights to French citizenship to the population masses, but also subjected them to a punitive taxation system and forced labour. This discriminatory treatment of elites probably explains why (Chipman 1989, 86) has argued that in French black Africa:

"independence was intentionally granted as a "gift" whose acceptance by the newly created states was implicitly meant to ensure a close relationship with France".

Finally, some authors have argued that French colonial education was designed to create an 'administrative bourgeoisie' that depended highly on the colonial bureaucracy for its survival. The protagonist of this viewpoint is (Moumouni 1968, 46)¹⁰ who described French colonial education as:

"cut rate designed to secure subordinate officials by impoverishing their spiritual life and detaching them completely from their own people and that it produced an anti-national bureaucratic neo-bourgeoisie"

⁸ (Gifford and Louis 1971, 552) have argued that the main idea behind the insistence on French as the medium of instruction is because French colonial authorities believed that by speaking French, the natives would ultimately end up thinking in French and feeling French.

⁹ The indigenat was a legislative code that allowed colonial officials to punish any African subject with a prison sentence or a fine, as a matter of discipline and without trial, (Chafer 2002).

¹⁰ (Gann and Duignan 1970) also argue that the type of education given to Francophone African graduates made them more inclined to government employment than their counterparts in British colonies.

Based on the preceding, two important inferences can be made about French colonial education practice in black Africa. Firstly, it created an elite that was least inclined to entering into violent confrontation with France. Secondly, it probably contributed in destroying the traditional and cultural ties of the francophone African elites with their countrymen,¹¹ implying that these elites were more likely to face serious collective action problems in rallying the support of the masses in rebellion against France. A few anecdotes will help elucidate these points.

In 1951, during the peak of independence struggles in Africa, the “to-be” first Ivorian President Houphouët Boigny is quoted to have declared that:

“independence was not the best solution for Africa”¹²

Another emblematic figure of French assimilation in West Africa, Leopold Senghor of Senegal,¹³ who together with Houphouët Boigny became ministers in the French government and staunch advocates of the French Union ensuring that French interests prevailed even when the empire started crumbling, is quoted to have declared in an interview in 1955 that:

“What I fear is that in the future under the fatal pressure of African liberation we might be induced to leave the French orbit. We must stay not only in the French Union but in the French Republic”¹⁴

Yet another prominent francophone West African elite, Blaise Diagne, who became Senegal’s black deputy to the French Paliament between 1914–1934, is quoted after a meeting of the second Pan-African Conference held in 1921 in Paris to have declared that:

“his loyalty to France came ahead of his loyalty to other blacks”¹⁵

Evidently, the French were more successful in cultivating a few black elite to whom they accorded full rights of citizenship in France, on condition of course, that these elites accept assimilation into French society and reject their African heritage, family law and customs. No doubt these elites saw themselves and were seen as Frenchmen brought up in a tradition of loyalty to France, willingly accepting its government, its language and culture, which was not the case with Anglophone West African elites.¹⁶ (Cohen 1971, 204) concludes that:

“independence has by no means broken the close ties between France and its former colonies. The legacy of assimilation has continued. France more than any other former colonial power feels committed to aiding her dependencies and the French

¹¹ Both (Suret-Canale 1971) and (Cohen 1971) have supporting evidence to this hypothesis.

¹² See (Meredith 2005, 63)

¹³ Senghor is also reputed to have made the famous remark that “To be a Frenchman above all is an excellent prescription on the political level”, (Meredith 2005, 59).

¹⁴ Quoted in (Meredith 2005, 61).

¹⁵ Quoted in (Gifford and Louis 1971, 842).

¹⁶ Thomas Hodgkin, 1954 in (Meredith 2005) posits that any black African who was politically conscious in British West Africa was automatically an anti-colonial nationalist of some kind.

government gives her former colonies in Black Africa more aid than does Britain to her entire commonwealth which contains fifteen times as large a population”.

2.2 British Colonial Ideology of Educational Transfers

British colonial education practice was firmly inscribed in a colonial governance philosophy of “indirect rule” which made extensive use of traditional chieftaincy institutions. As (Gifford and Louis 1971, 700) have argued, the idea of indirect rule was firmly rooted in the fears expressed by the colonial administration of releasing a pool of “unemployable” school leavers and the potential threat that constituted members of this group on the rest of the population. This view is confirmed in this statement in 1920 by the Colonial Governor of Berber Province (Sudan):

“our purpose is to strengthen the solid elements in the countryside...before the irresponsible body of half-educated officials, students and town riff-raff takes control of the public mind”¹⁷

As (Gifford and Louis 1971) argue further, the un-intended consequence of wanting to strengthen the “solid elements” in the countryside was that British colonial education policy became tailored to emphasize village schools and the preservation of local realities as well as the indigenous way of thinking. Thus, the strengthening of the “solid elements” was manifested through the administration of instruction at the elementary and primary levels in the villages, using native teachers and the local vernacular languages of the indigenous populations.

Unlike French colonial education, the preservation of the indigenous patterns of thinking and traditions were a key priority of British colonial education ideology as can be observed from this recommendation from the Advisory Committee on Native Education in the British Tropical Dependencies in 1925:¹⁸

“Education should be adapted to the mentality, aptitudes, occupations and traditions of the various peoples conserving as far as possible all sound and healthy elements in the fabric of their social life, adapting them where necessary to changed circumstances and progressive ideas as an agent of natural growth and evolution...”

In addition, British colonial education policy allowed a preponderant role to missionary bodies in educational provision which largely accounts for the widespread expansion of education in British colonies as opposed to French colonies. This also increased the likelihood of inclination of anglophone nationalist elites to anti-capitalist political ideologies (or socialist philosophies) due to improper monitoring. As (Foster 1965, 139) puts it:

“Western education was indirectly responsible for creating a group to whom access into the highest levels of the bureaucracy was denied and who constituted the core of the

¹⁷ Quoted in (Gifford and Louis 1971, 700) and also in (Thorn 2000, 25) from (Cain and Hopkins 1993, 218–19).

¹⁸ Quoted in (Gifford and Louis 1971, 688).

early nationalist movement on the Gold Coast. It was this minority of professional lawyers and intelligentsia who supplied the leadership of nationalist activities throughout most of the colonial period”.

Finally, it is arguable that the most important un-intended consequence of the British education policy of “strengthening the solid elements of the countryside”, was the formation of an anglophone elite that was independent in thought and less dependent on the colonial bureaucracy for its livelihood.

Based on the foregoing, two important inferences can be made about British colonial education practice in black Africa. Firstly, the elite that were created were more inclined to entering into violent confrontation with the British colonial authorities since they never really depended on the latter for their livelihood. Secondly, British colonial education contributed in reinforcing the traditional and cultural ties of the elites with their countrymen, implying that anglophone elites were less likely to face serious collective action problems in rallying the support of the general population in rebellion against Britain. As illustration, both Nkrumah and Nyerere, the leading pro-socialist Anglophone anti-colonial nationalists were of the firm conviction that colonialism has destroyed the essential values of African society and needed to be repealed.

In summary, the story of colonial education ideologies seems to suggest that colonial educational transfers contributed to the demise of the British Empire in black Africa, whereas it paradoxically fostered the continuation of France’s imperialism in the region.

3 The Model

We now outline a simple model to formalise the idea that the pattern of decolonization is a function of the nature of human capital transfers from the colonizers to the indigenous elites. We consider a colonised society with three players namely, the colonizer, indigenous elites (henceforth, the elite) and the general population (henceforth, the masses). Colonization is exemplified by the extraction of rent from output (Y) by the colonizer. The size of the elite population is defined as L_e while the size of the general population is defined as $(L - L_e)$ where L is the total population size.

The elite receive a transfer X from the colonizer, in the form of education, in order to enhance the productivity of the colony. As (Agbor *et al* 2010b) argue, educating the citizens of a colonized territory might lead to increased levels of production in the colony, as the local elite gains access to improved production technologies or simply because reliance on a trained local elite in governance reduces the information asymmetries that the colonizer faces in identifying local profitable productive ventures or both. The masses instead receive a basic subsistence salary. Thus Y is the total output from the colony, net of subsistence payments to the masses.

The strategy of the colonizer is to either continue colonial rule or transfer power to the elite (implying decolonization). Continuing with colonial rule procures to the colonizer a rent, which is equivalent to (Y) minus the cost of transfers to the elite (X) and minus whatever is necessary to maintain stability in the colony. Alternatively, the colonizer can decide to leave the colony to its own destiny.

The strategy of the elite during both colonization and decolonization is to either cooperate or not cooperate with the colonizer. Cooperation with the colonizer during colonization offers a fixed payoff to the elite equivalent to $(X > 0)$. Non-cooperation (or rebellion), on the other hand, results in a war of independence, whose outcome is uncertain. The probability of a successful rebellion depends critically on the attitude of the masses. When the masses are in cooperation with the elite in rebellion, the probability of success is much higher than otherwise. The relationship between the elite and the masses also critically affects the strategic choices faced by the elite during decolonization.

During decolonization, the elite might choose to ask for the colonizer's protection against any future subversion of their power by the masses¹⁹ or not cooperate with the colonizer in this regard.²⁰ If the elite chooses cooperation with the colonizer post-independence, it will have to pay an amount, $Q > 0$, to the colonizer. Q is the cost incurred by elites in purchasing the colonizer's protection against future subversion of their power by the masses.

Alternatively, if the elite choose not to cooperate with the colonizer post-independence, Q is zero. However, in this case, the elite will have to incur whatever cost that is necessary in order to maintain stability in the country.

The strategy of the masses during both colonization and decolonization is to either cooperate with the elite in all the choices that the elite make or never cooperate with them in this regard. The decision of the masses to cooperate or not cooperate with the elite is a function of the credibility of the elite, generically intended as the degree of trust that the masses have in the elite's promises. Credibility of the elite in the context of this model is a function of the nature of human capital transfers that the elite receive from the colonizer. Accordingly, the elite is perceived as credible by the masses whenever the nature of human capital transfers to the elite emphasize "local adaptation" or "non-alienation".²¹ In contrast, the elite is perceived as non credible whenever the nature of human capital transfers emphasize "assimilation" of the elite.²²

When the elite is credible, the optimal strategy of the masses is to always cooperate with them, both during colonization and decolonization. Cooperation with the elite during colonization results in a fixed payoff to the masses, equivalent to a basic subsistence salary. Cooperation with the credible elite during decolonization, instead procures an expected income to the masses, based on a promise by the elite to share the gains of decolonization with them.²³ By definition, the option of the masses not cooperating with a credible elite is excluded.

¹⁹ The consensus between the elite and the colonizers post independence implies cooperation in the context of this model.

²⁰ It is important to emphasize that cooperation between the post independence governing elites and the colonisers is a quid pro quo whereby the elites give up some amount of the former colony's resources in exchange for the coloniser's military backing of their regimes. An example of such a deal could be the military accords of cooperation signed between France and its former colonies in black Africa at independence.

²¹ This is a reasonable axiom in the sense that when human capital transfers emphasize local realities, the traditional ties of the elite with the masses are maintained, implying that the elite is less likely to face serious collective action problems.

²² Similarly, this is a reasonable axiom in the sense that an assimilated elite is detached from the masses and consequently, more likely to face serious collective action problems.

²³ Theoretically, this expected income is higher than the subsistence salary received by the masses during colonization.

In the opposite scenario of a non credible elite, the optimal strategy of the masses is always non-cooperation with these elite both during colonization and decolonization. Cooperation of the masses during colonization always yields a basic subsistence salary received from the colonizer, whereas cooperation during decolonization also yields a basic salary, received this time from the governing elite. For simplicity, non-cooperation of the masses at any time does not procure any income to the masses, implying that the masses are punished.²⁴ However, whenever the masses are non-cooperative, the colonizer, as well as the post-independence governing elite do incur an extra cost of repressing the masses denoted by C_m^c and C_m^e .

Assumption 1 When the colonizer follows an “assimilation” strategy (“French”), the elite is alienated from the masses and is therefore perceived by the latter as non-credible. Thus, the colonizer incurs a cost of repression, C_m^c associated with the fact that the masses are not cooperating with the elites. Thus, during colonial rule, the payoff for the colonizer is $(Y - X - C_m^c)$ and the payoff for the elite is $\frac{X}{L_e}$.

Assumption 2 When the colonizer follows a “non-alienation” strategy (“British”), the elite is more connected with the masses, and is therefore perceived by the latter as credible. In this case, the size of the elite, L^e is larger ($L^e > L^c$), and the cost of repression for the colonizer is zero, for simplicity.

Thus, during colonial rule, the payoff for the colonizer is $(Y - X)$ and the payoff for the elite is $\frac{X}{L_e}$.

Given this simple set up, the stage game can be summarised as follows:

- The society starts in colonization
- The colonizer decides whether to continue with colonization or leave the country
- Under colonization, the elite decides whether to start a revolt while under decolonization, the elite decide whether to pay for the colonizer’s protection
- In both colonization and decolonization, the masses have to decide whether to cooperate with the elite.
- Nature defines the order of probabilities as follows: $0 < p_w'' < p_w < p_w' < 1$, where:
 - p_w'' is the probability of non-credible elites winning a war of independence against colonization,
 - p_w is the probability of non-credible elites winning a post-independence war of rebellion engaged by the masses
 - p_w' is the probability of the “non-credible elite-colonizer” front winning a post-independence war of rebellion engaged by the masses.
 - p_w''' is the probability of credible elites winning a war of independence against colonization. By definition, $0 < p_w''' < p_w'' < 1$.

²⁴ A more realistic set-up is to assume that the masses receive a basic income transfer that is independent of their effort and which is theoretically below the salary when the masses are cooperating.

The intuition for this order of probabilities is that, non-credible elites, by virtue of the fact that they lack the support of the general population, might find it more difficult to overturn the colonial regime than credible elites (who have the support of the masses behind them). An example of such a scenario include, the Nkwame Nkrumah rebellion in 1951 that easily brought down the British Gold Coast Empire whilst, similar rebellion by the revolutionary leaders Um Nyobe, Ernest Wandji and Felix Moumie in French Cameroon during the late 1950s, were systematically crushed down.

Likewise, the intuition for supposing that the probability of non-credible elites winning a war of independence against colonization (p_w'') should be lower than the probability of the same elites winning a post-independence war of rebellion waged by the masses (p_w), is based on the simple logic of fighting technologies. Here, it is explicitly assumed that the colonizers have a more efficient fighting technology than by the masses. Similarly, a joint “colonizer - non-credible elites” front is much more likely to crush any subversive attempts by the masses, than if non-credible elites alone were to face the masses, justifying why $p_w'' < p_w'$.

To simplify the exposition, we assume that the decision of the masses to cooperate with a credible elite (or not cooperate with a non-credible elite) is irreversible.

Given the set up of the game described above, we now divide the game into two depending on the strategic choices of the masses. In the first subgame, we analyse the payoffs when the masses are never cooperating with the elite during colonization and decolonization (that is, the case of assimilated or non-credible elite), while in the second subgame we analyse the payoffs when the masses always cooperate with the elite (independent or credible elite scenario). We then solve each subgame by backward induction.

3.1 Subgame I - Colonization and Decolonization with Assimilated or Non-Credible Elite

Consider first the game tree of assimilated elites illustrated in Figure 1. The colonizer has the choice of continuing colonial rule (stay) or decolonizing (leave). If the colonizer chooses to stay and the elite cooperate with them, there is colonial rule with repression of the masses as a result of the fact that the masses are not cooperating with the elite. The payoffs to the colonizer and non-credible elites in this case are respectively $(Y - X - C_m^c)$ and $\frac{X}{L_e}$.

If instead the colonizer stays and the elite refuses to cooperate with colonial rule, a war of independence will ensue in which the colonizer attempts to depose, replace or even exterminate the elites.²⁵ In this case, the pay-off to the colonizer is $(1 - p_w'')Y - C_e^c$. where p_w'' is the probability of non-credible elites winning a war of independence against colonizer, and C_e^c is the cost to the colonizer of making war with the elites alone.

²⁵ For simplicity, we assume that the elites always get a payoff of zero for loosing either in the war of independence against the coloniser or in a post independence war of rebellion engaged by the masses.

Decision Rule of Masses: Never Cooperate with Elites

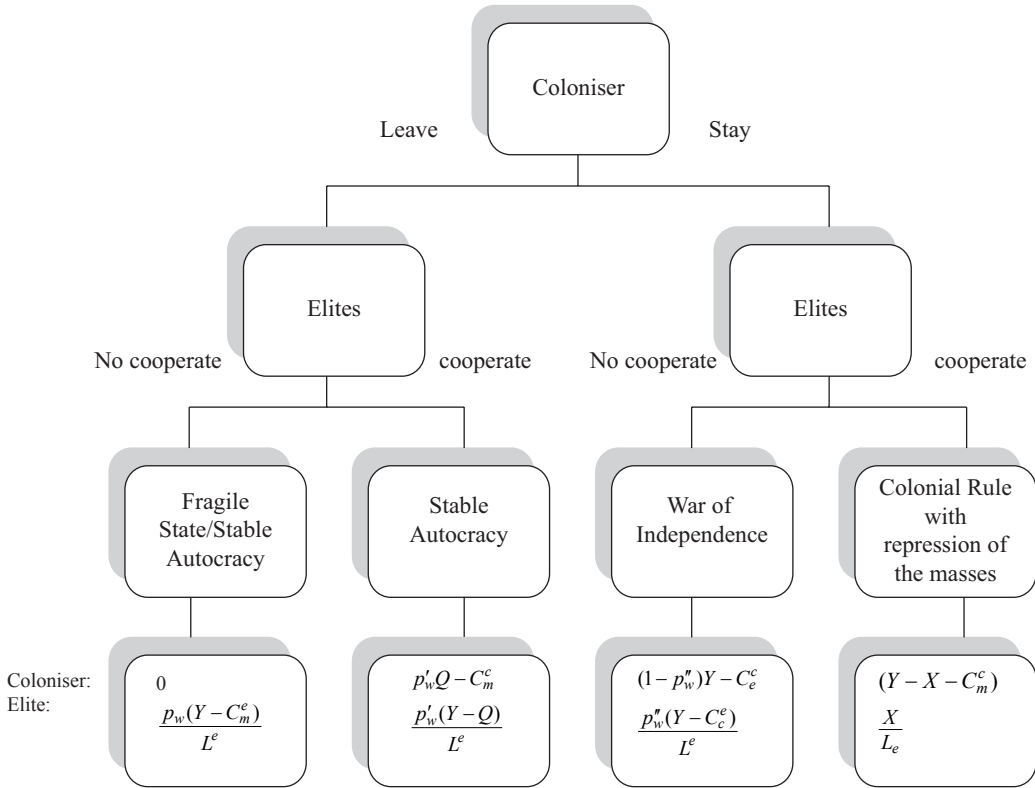


Figure 1: Game Tree of Assimilated or Non-Credible Elites

Correspondingly, the pay-off to non-credible elites is $\frac{p''_w(Y - C_c^c)}{L^e}$, where C_c^c is the cost that assimilated elites incur for engaging the colonizer in a war of independence. C_c^c is defined for the range $0 < C_c^c < \infty$ because of the likelihood of extermination of these rebellious elites. Alternatively, if the colonizer chooses to leave and the elites ask for continued cooperation thereafter, a stable autocracy will be installed in the country. The pay-off to the colonizer in this case is $p'_w Q - C_m^c$, where C_m^c is the costs that the colonizer incurs in maintaining stability in the country post-independence.²⁶ p'_w is the probability of the “non-credible elite - colonizer” front successfully suppressing any post-independence rebellion by the masses, and Q is the cost to the country of maintaining the post-independence imperial relationship with the former colonizer. Correspondingly, the pay-off to non-credible elites is $\frac{p'_w(Y - Q)}{L^e}$.

Finally, in the event that the colonizer leaves and the elite choose to go without the colonizer’s protection, two outcomes are feasible depending on the character of the elite

²⁶ We have assumed for simplicity, that the costs the colonizer incurs in maintaining stability in the country is the same during colonization and decolonization.

(or its ability to effectively repress the masses). If the elite is able to effectively repress the masses (probably because of its military capabilities), a stable autocracy will emerge in the country. However, if the elite's ability to repress the masses is questionable, a fragile state will emerge post-independence. The pay-offs to the colonizer and non-credible elites in this instance are zero and $\frac{p_w(Y - C_m^e)}{L^e}$ respectively, where p_w is the probability of non-credible elites winning a post-independence war of rebellion against the masses, and C_m^e is the cost that non-credible elites incur in waging war with the masses post-independence.

Solution of the subgame

Since the strategy of the masses is never to cooperate with the elites, the elite is faced with two choices: either cooperate or not cooperate with the colonizer.

Cooperation is always a dominant strategy for non-credible elites if and only if the latter's payoff from cooperation during colonization (and during decolonization) is higher than its payoff from non cooperation. Referring to Figure 1, this implies that:

$$\frac{X}{L^e} > \frac{p_w''(Y - C_c^e)}{L^e} \quad (1)$$

and

$$\frac{p_w'(Y - Q)}{L^e} > \frac{p_w(Y - C_m^e)}{L^e} \quad (2)$$

Given the non-credible elite's dominant strategy of cooperation, decolonization is a dominant strategy for the colonizer if and only if:

$$p_w'Q - C_m^c > Y - X - C_m^c \quad (3)$$

Proposition 1: There exists a range of feasible values of Q , that is $\left(\frac{Y - X}{p_w'} < Q < C_m^e\right)$ for which the payoff from decolonizing are higher than those from colonial rule.

Proof: Equation 1 above simply says that, non-credible elites will cooperate with colonial rule as long as the per capita transfer that they receive from the colonizer is greater than their expected gains from not cooperating.

Equation 2 implies that:

$$p_w'(Y - Q) > p_w(Y - C_m^e) \rightarrow Q < \frac{p_w}{p_w'} C_m^e + \frac{p_w' - p_w}{p_w'} Y$$

Defining $\frac{p_w}{p_w'} = -\left(\frac{p_w' - p_w}{p_w'} - 1\right) = 1 - \alpha$ where $\alpha = \frac{p_w' - p_w}{p_w'}$; $0 \leq \alpha \leq 1$.

Implies that: $Q < (1 - \alpha)C_m^e + \alpha Y \quad (4)$

Equation 4 above suggests that there exists an upper bound of Q , that is, ($Q < C_m^e$) where $\alpha = 0$, or when $p'_w = p_w$ for which decolonization is rational for the colonizer.

Equation 3 above implies that:

$$Q > \frac{Y - X}{p'_w} \quad (5)$$

Hence, equation 5 suggests that there exists a lower bound of Q , equal to $\frac{Y - X}{p'_w}$ for which the colonizer is willing to decolonize.

Combining equations 4 and 5 above gives:

$$\frac{Y - X}{p'_w} < Q < C_m^e \quad (6)$$

Equation 6 above defines the feasible range of Q , for which decolonization occurs. In other words, equation 6 defines the range of feasible gains which the colonizer is willing to accept decolonization in exchange for its protection of the power of the post-independence governing elites from subversion by the masses.

Intuition and Implications of the Results

Given the elite's dominant strategy of always cooperating with the colonizer, the main factors that determine the switch from colonization to neo-colonialism are namely, the output from the colony (Y), the amount of transfers made by the colonizer to the elite (X), and the probability of the "non-credible elites - colonizer" alliance successfully suppressing future subversion by the masses (p'_w), as demonstrated in equation 5 above.

The above named parameters (Y, X, p'_w), are largely at the appreciation of the colonizer, suggesting that the initiative to decolonize in this case primarily originates from the colonizer. Consequently, this analysis fits well with the Eurocentric explanation of decolonization, which claims that the colonizers left mainly because the utility from being a colonizer was declining.

Accordingly, this scenario best depicts the French decolonization process in SSA where France is known to have suddenly and unilaterally transformed its 15 former colonies into independent republics in the same year (1960).

In conclusion, we note that several different outcomes of the present schematization are feasible once one relaxes the key assumption that cooperation with the colonizer is a dominant strategy of non-credible elites but that discussion is beyond the scope of this study. The appendix illustrates other possible strategic outcomes which, while possible in principle, are less helpful in describing the decolonization process in West Africa.

3.2 Subgame II - Colonization and Decolonization with Independent or Credible Elite

The game changes in the case that the elite is credible relative to the masses. Our assumption that credible elite have preferences that are aligned with the masses holds. The game tree of independent elites is illustrated in Figure 2. As before, the colonizer has the choice of

Decision Rule of Masses: Always Cooperate with Elites

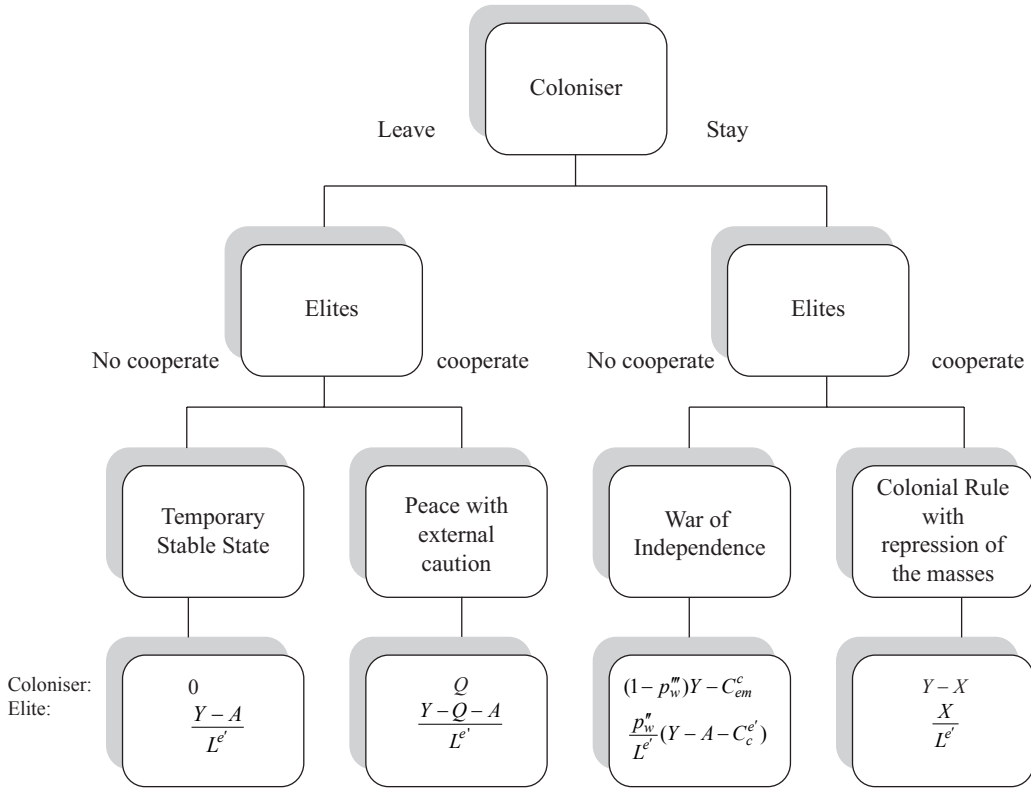


Figure 2: Colonisation & Decolonisation with Independent or Credible Elites

either staying or leaving. If he stays and the elite cooperate with him, there is colonial rule without repression of the masses. Accordingly, the payoffs to the colonizer and credible elites are respectively, $Y - X$ and $\frac{X}{L'}$.

If instead the colonizer stays and the elite refuse to cooperate with colonial rule, a war of independence will ensue in which the colonizer attempts to depose, replace or even exterminate the elites.

In this case, the pay-off to the colonizer is $(1 - p_w'')Y - C_{em}^c$ where C_{em}^c is the cost the colonizer incurs in waging war against a joint elite-masses nationalist front and p_w'' is the probability of credible elites winning a war of independence against the colonizer. Correspondingly, the pay-off to credible elites is²⁷ $\frac{P_w''}{L'}(Y - A - C_c^{e'})$ where $A > 0$ is an indirect cost that credible elites incur in rebellion against the colonizer (specifically, it is an *ex-post* fixed compensation that the elite pay to the masses for their cooperation) and $C_c^{e'}$ is the cost that credible elites incur directly for fighting against the colonizer.

²⁷ Note that as before, we assume for simplicity that the payoff to the elites for losing the war of independence is always zero.

Alternatively, if the colonizer chooses to leave and the elites ask for continued cooperation thereafter, the outcome of this scenario might be peace cautioned by external protection from the colonizer and the pay-offs are Q and $\frac{Y-Q-A}{L^e}$ for the colonizer and credible elites respectively.²⁸ Q is as defined in the preceding scenario.

Finally, in the event that the colonizer leaves and the elite choose to go without the colonizer's protection, this might result in "complete" independence, although the cooperation ties existing between the elites and masses might not necessarily be sustained afterwards.²⁹ The resulting pay-offs are thus 0 and $\frac{Y-A}{L^e}$ for the colonizer and credible elites respectively, where A in this case, is the amount of transfers needed by the elites to purchase peace with the masses after the colonizer departs.

Solution of the subgame

Since the masses always cooperate with the elites, the elite is faced with two choices: either cooperate or not cooperate with the colonizer.

Non-cooperation is always a dominant strategy for credible elites if and only if the latter's payoff from non-cooperation during colonization (and correspondingly, during decolonization) is higher than its payoff from cooperation. Referring to Figure 2, this implies that:

$$\frac{(Y - A - C_c^e)p_w'''}{L^e} > \frac{X}{L^e} \rightarrow p_w'''(Y - A - C_c^e) > X \quad (7)$$

Which simplifies to:

$$Y > \left(\frac{X}{p_w'''} + A + C_c^e \right) \quad (8)$$

and

$$\frac{Y - A}{L^e} > \frac{Y - Q - A}{L^e} \quad (9)$$

Observe also that as long as $Q > 0$, equation 9 above always holds true.

Given the credible elite's dominant strategy of non cooperation, decolonization is a dominant strategy for the colonizer if and only if:

$$0 > (1 - p_w'')Y - C_{em}^c \quad (10)$$

Proposition 2: As the probability of elite nationalist movements winning a war

²⁸ Following the initial premise that the masses always cooperate with independent elites, an implicit assumption has been made that A , the cost to independent elites of purchasing the cooperation of the masses, is the same during colonization and decolonization.

²⁹ It is worth mentioning that a new form of strategic bargaining for the control of resources might likely arise between the elites and the masses post independence which might probably jeopardize the "entente" between the two groups. (Fedderke and Kularatne 2011) have a nice exposition of this scenario.

of independence against the colonizer approaches unity, the colonizer is better off quitting the scene and there exists a range of feasible values of output (Y) that is, $\left(\frac{X}{p_w'''} + A + C_c^{e'}\right) < Y < \frac{C_{em}^c}{(1 - p_w''')}$ for which the colonizer is better off decolonizing.

Proof: Equation 8 above defines the minimum bound of output produced in the colony which guarantees elites' non-cooperation with colonial rule. It suggests that as long as the output produced in the colony is at least greater than the combined costs (to the credible elites) of compensating the masses for their cooperation in rebellion against the colonizer (A) and making war with the colonizer (C_c^e) the elites will always rebel against colonization.

On condition that $C_{em}^c > 0$, equation 10 implies that as the probability of victory in the elite-led war of independence against the colonizer rises, (i.e., $p_w''' \rightarrow 1$), the colonizer is better off leaving. Equation 10 also suggests that decolonization might become a rational option for the colonizer when nationalism is strong, that is, as $C_{em}^c \rightarrow \infty$.

Equation 10 can also be re-arranged in the following way:

$$Y < \frac{C_{em}^c}{(1 - p_w''')} \quad (11)$$

Combining equations 8 and 11 above yields:

$$\frac{X}{p_w'''} + A + C_c^{e'} < Y < \frac{C_{em}^c}{(1 - p_w''')} \quad (12)$$

Equation 12 above defines the range of feasible values of output produced in the colony, Y , for which elite aspirations make it no longer profitable for the colonizer to stay.

Intuition and Implications of the Results

The solution of the preceding sub-game suggests that, when the elites are credible, they will always find it optimal to rebel against the colonizer as long as the output produced in the colony is at least greater than the total cost of liberation

The results above suggest that the colonizer might attempt to resist the rebellion of the elites, as long as the colonizer's cost of engaging in a war of independence - C_{em}^c - is less than a fraction $(1 - p_w''')$ of total output Y . However, as C_{em}^c rises indefinitely, or as the probability of nationalist elites winning a war of independence approaches unity ($p_w''' \rightarrow 1$), there is no other option left for the colonizer but to switch from fighting a war of independence to granting full independence. Equation 12 above defines the range of feasible values of total output produced in the colony that guarantees the switch from colonization to independence.

The way that these results should be understood is that, in contrast with the preceding case of assimilated elites, human capital transfers from the colonizer to the elites in this case serve mainly in resolving elites' collective action problems which potentially raises their fighting technology (as $C_{em}^c \rightarrow \infty$ and $p_w''' \rightarrow 1$), until it is no longer feasible for the colonizers to stay. This scenario therefore upholds the Afro-centric perspective of decolonization.

Typical examples of decolonization processes depicted by this scenario are the British decolonizations in most of SSA, where Britain characteristically engaged in wars of independence with nationalist movements before finally conceding to independence.³⁰ It is perhaps worth recalling that independence in many former British colonies in Africa was generally followed by political instability as a result of the emergence of a new strategic bargaining between the elites and the masses. Other examples include the decolonization of the Lusophone states of Guinea-Bissau, Angola and Mozambique where nationalist organisations engaged in protracted guerrilla warfare with Portugal before the latter finally conceded to independence. Furthermore, independence in the Lusophone African countries generally resulted in fragile states as prolonged post-colonial wars ensued between rival nationalist factions seeking to control economic resources.

In conclusion, we note that a different outcome from the present schematization is feasible once one relaxes the key assumption that non-cooperation with the colonizer is a dominant strategy of credible elites but that discussion is beyond the scope of this study. We however, did consider the many different possible strategic outcomes which, while feasible in principle, are less helpful in describing the decolonization process in West Africa. These other options are presented in the appendix.

4 Summary of Core Predictions of the Model

The results of the model predict two important differences between the French and British models of colonization and decolonization in West Africa:

1. French colonization was generally more repressive than British colonization. On the other hand, French decolonization was smooth and peaceful while British decolonization was often protracted and violent. Also, the pace of transition to independence in French West Africa was generally faster than that in British West Africa.
2. Former French West African colonies are generally more stable politically than their British counterparts after independence.

The empirical evidence by (Morgenthau 1964) suggests that francophone elites were more professionally inclined to government occupations during the period 1947–1952. Averagely about 75% of francophone West African leaders represented in the territorial legislative assembly were colonial government employees. In contrast, (Gifford and Louis 1971) report that in the former British colony of the Gold Coast, about 90% of 32 active members of the National Congress of British West Africa (NCBWA) - the pioneer nationalist movement in the 1920s - were employed in the liberal professions. Also, a few data points available for the years 1933, 1934 and 1935, give the per capita number of prisoners in Ivory Coast at 0.05, 0.05 and 0.07 respectively, while in Ghana it was 0.03 throughout those years, (Asiwaju 2001) and (Kay and Stephen 1972). This suggests (without demonstrating) a more repressive colonial regime in the Ivory Coast in comparison

³⁰ The characteristic pattern of transfer of power by Britain in sub-Saharan Africa consisted first in procrastination, followed by a phase of violence begets violence, then finally conceding to complete independence, (Thorn 2000).

to Ghana. Several historical sources also confirm that French colonial rule was not only highly repressive but also heavy in terms of the fiscal burden,³¹see (Crowder 1968, 185).

5 Conclusion

We have argued that the pattern of decolonization in West Africa was a function of the nature of human capital transfers from the colonizers to the indigenous elites of the former colonies, and this shaped the strategic relationship between these two groups.

Where the colonial education ideology emphasized the notion of “*assimilation*”, the system generally tended to produce elites that depended highly on the colonizer for their livelihood, hence necessitating a continuation of the imperial relationship even after independence was obtained. On the contrary, where the ideology emphasized the strengthening of the “*solid elements*” of the countryside, the system tended to produce a bunch of elites that were quite independent of the colonizer and consequently had little to lose from a disruption of the imperial relationship at independence.

Based on a single assumption on the “credibility” of the indigenous elite, several scenarios can be envisaged, allowing an understanding of the different paths of decolonization in West Africa and beyond. The contribution of this study has been in providing a framework for understanding the different paths of decolonization in Africa in general, but more specifically in the British and French West African empires, an approach which unifies both the Eurocentric and Afro-centric perspectives.

Further research should consider relaxing some of the assumptions made in this paper and also consider testing some of the predictions of our model.

Appendix

A Variants of Sub-game I Colonization & Decolonization with Assimilated Elite

Continuing to refer to Figure 1 above, we now discuss scenarios whereby cooperation with the colonizer is no longer a dominant strategy of non-credible elites. We distinguish three cases namely, where assimilated elites cooperate with the colonizer during colonial rule but refuse cooperation after independence, where assimilated elites always refuse cooperation with the colonizer both during colonial rule and after independence, and where assimilated elites do not cooperate with the colonizer during colonial rule but cooperate after independence.

1st Variant: Assimilated elites cooperate with the colonizer during colonial rule but refuse cooperation after independence. The independence outcome is either a stable autocracy or a fragile state depending on the character of the elites.

From Figure 1 above, cooperation with the colonizer during colonial rule is a dominant strategy for assimilated elites if and only if:

$$\frac{X}{L^e} > \frac{p_w''(Y - C_c^e)}{L^e} \rightarrow X > p_w''(Y - C_c^e)$$

³¹ Crowder (1968:186) contends that the idea which seemed best to the French colonial system for achieving the employment of native labor was to impose relatively high taxes on blacks, and in default of payment they would incur a sentence of forced labor.

On the other hand, non-cooperation with the colonizer post-independence is a dominant strategy for assimilated elites if and only if:

$$\frac{p_w(Y - C_m^e)}{L^e} > \frac{p'_w(Y - Q)}{L^e}$$

Which simplifies to:

$$C_m^e < (1 - \beta)Q + \beta Y \text{ where } \beta = \frac{p_w - p'_w}{p_w} \quad (13)$$

Given the above choices of the elites, the colonizer's dominant strategy is to decolonize if and only if:

$$0 > Y - X - C_m^c \rightarrow (X + C_m^c) > Y \quad (14)$$

Equation 13 above suggests that assimilated elites' dominant strategy of non-cooperation with the colonizer post-independence is largely dependent on the elites' ability to effectively repress the masses. As long as the elites' cost of repressing the masses, C_m^e , is less than what is needed to purchase the colonizer's protection, Q , the elite will always refuse cooperation with the colonizer post-independence.

Equation 14 suggests that whenever the cost of colonial rule is greater than the colonizer's derived utility from empire, it makes sense to decolonize. The combined interpretation of equations 13 and 14 above suggests that the pattern of decolonization whereby elites cooperate with the colonizer during colonization but refuse cooperation after independence is feasible under two simultaneous conditions namely:

1. Whenever the colony is no longer profitable to the colonizer
2. And as long as the elites are capable of effectively suppressing any post-independence subversion by the masses. It could be the case that the elites form part of the military.

This scenario unifies both the Eurocentric and Afro-centric explanations of decolonization because the utility derived from empires as well as the character of the elite (or specifically, its ability to repress the masses) both matter in the decision to decolonize.

2nd Variant: Assimilated elites always refuse cooperation with the colonizer both during colonial rule and after independence. The independence outcome could either be a stable autocracy or a fragile state depending on the character of the elite. Referring to Figure 1 above, non-cooperation with the colonizer during colonization is a dominant strategy for assimilated elites if and only if:

$$p_w''(Y - C_c^e) > X \rightarrow p_w'' > \frac{X}{Y - C_c^e} \quad (15)$$

On the other hand, non-cooperation with the colonizer post-independence is a dominant strategy for assimilated elites if and only if:

$$\frac{p_w(Y - C_m^e)}{L^e} > \frac{p'_w(Y - Q)}{L^e}$$

$$\rightarrow C_m^e < (1 - \beta)Q + \beta Y \text{ where } \beta \text{ is as previously defined} \quad (16)$$

Given the above choices of the elites, the colonizer's dominant strategy is to decolonize if and only if:

$$0 > (1 - p_w'')Y - C_e^c \rightarrow p_w'' > 1 - \frac{C_e^c}{Y} \quad (17)$$

Equation 17 above suggests that the colonizer will leave whenever the probability of elites winning the war of independence rises above $\left(1 - \frac{C_e^c}{Y}\right)$. Notice also that as the colonizer's cost of fighting the war of independence with the elites, C_e^c rises indefinitely, it is more preferable for the colonizer to leave.

The combined interpretation of equations 15, 16 and 17 above suggests that the pattern of decolonization whereby assimilated elites never cooperate with the colonizer during colonization and after independence is feasible under two simultaneous conditions namely:

1. Whenever the elites' probability of winning the war of independence against the colonizer, p_w'' , is greater than both $\frac{X}{(Y - C_e^c)}$ and $\left(1 - \frac{C_e^c}{Y}\right)$.
2. And as long as the elites are capable of effectively suppressing any post-independence subversion by the masses.

The above conditions could either be the result of some personal revolutionary characteristic of the nationalist elites, or its "appartenance" in the military. This is a variant of the Afro-centric explanation of decolonization because the character of the elite (or specifically, its ability to threaten the colonial system and repress the masses at the same time) does matter in bringing about decolonization. An example of decolonization that might represent this scenario is the British disengagement of Uganda where independence was achieved not so much because of the strength of nationalist movements, but precisely because of the personal charisma of military leaders such as Milton Obote and Idi Amin Dada.³²

3rd Variant: Assimilated elites do not cooperate with the colonizer during colonial rule but cooperate after independence. The independence outcome is a stable autocracy.

Referring to Figure 1 above, non-cooperation with the colonizer during colonization is a dominant strategy for assimilated elites if and only if:

$$p_w''(Y - C_e^c) > X \rightarrow p_w'' > \frac{X}{(Y - C_e^c)}$$

³² See (Thorn 2000, 54) for this evidence. Another example of decolonization that depended much on the personal character of the elite could be the Belgians and General Mobutu of the Congo, although the post-colonial imperial relationships that Mobutu maintained do not clearly fit in this scenario.

On the other hand, cooperation with the colonizer post-independence is a dominant strategy for assimilated elites if and only if:

$$Q < (1 - \beta)C_m^e + \beta Y \quad \text{where } \beta \text{ is as previously defined} \quad (18)$$

When $\beta = 0$, Q has an upper bound defined by C_m^e . Given the above choices of the elites, the colonizer's dominant strategy is to decolonize if and only if:

$$\begin{aligned} p'_w Q - C_m^c &> (1 - p''_w)Y - C_e^c \\ \rightarrow Q &> \left(\frac{1 - p''_w}{p''_w} \right) Y + \frac{1}{p'_w} (C_m^c - C_e^c) \end{aligned} \quad (19)$$

Equation 19 above suggests a minimum bound of Q , for which decolonization followed by the cooperation of assimilated elites occurs. The combined interpretation of equations 18 and 19 above, suggests that the pattern of decolonization whereby elites obtain independence through conflict with the colonizer yet cooperate with the latter post-independence, is feasible under the following conditions namely:

1. The elite's cost of repressing the masses (post-independence) is at least greater than its cost of purchasing the colonizer's protection against the masses.
2. Whenever the cost of purchasing the colonizer's protection, Q , lies within the range

$$\text{defined by } \left[\left(\frac{1 - p''_w}{p''_w} \right) Y + \frac{1}{p'_w} (C_m^c - C_e^c) \right] < Q < (1 - \beta)C_m^e + \beta Y$$

This scenario upholds both the Eurocentric and Afro-centric explanations of decolonization. This is because both the character of the elite and the expectations of the colonizer matter in bringing about decolonization. An example of a decolonization process that followed this route could be the French decolonization of Algeria where the emerging nationalist leader, Ben Bella, was compelled to accept proposals of limited continuity of French imperialism after having fought one of the longest wars of decolonization in Africa.³³ Of course, Ben Bella was quickly overthrown three years later and an authoritarian rule under Boumedienne was established in the country for almost a quarter of a century.

B Variant of Sub-game II Colonization & Decolonization with Independent Elite

Referring to Figure 2 above, we now discuss the unique scenario whereby non-cooperation with the colonizer is no longer a dominant strategy of independent elites.

Suppose now that the independent elites cooperate with the colonizer during colonial rule but refuse cooperation after independence. The independence outcome could be a stable monarchy.

³³ The Evian agreement of March 1962 between the French colonial authorities and leaders of the Algerian Liberation Front (FLN) provided for (1) a transitory period of three years for French settlers to decide whether they wanted to remain French citizens or become Algerian citizens (2) French companies to maintain their leasing rights to develop oil fields and (3) France was allowed to maintain the important naval base at Mers-el-Kebir for a minimum of fifteen years (although she withdrew as early as 1968), (Thorn 2000, 84).

Cooperation with the colonizer during colonization is a dominant strategy for independent elites if and only if:

$$X > p_w'''(Y - A - C_c^e) \quad (20)$$

On the other hand, as previously observed, non-cooperation with the colonizer is always a dominant strategy for independent elites post-independence. Given the above choices of the elites, the colonizer's dominant strategy is to decolonize if and only if:

$$0 > Y - X \quad (21)$$

As observed from equation 21 above, the decolonization decision is largely the initiative of the colonizer, and is precisely because colonial rule has become unprofitable. This scenario is a classic representation of the Eurocentric perspective of decolonization and the transfer of power is expected to occur in an amicable atmosphere. However, in this scenario, the post-colonial elite changes its attitude towards the colonizer and becomes radical or uncompromising once independence is acquired. An example of decolonization that depicts this scenario could be the British disengagement in Egypt whereby imperial relationship with the nationalist elites changed dramatically for the worse after independence.³⁴ Harold Macmillan, the British Prime Minister of the early 1960s, is quoted to have regretted the change in attitude of Nasser, the post-colonial Egyptian leader whom Britain had trusted, as he lamented: "the collapse of the agreeable educated liberal North Oxford society to whom we have transferred power"³⁵

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³⁴ Colonel Nasser, shortly after independence in July 1956, nationalized the Suez Canal, which was vital to Britain's trade and oil supplies

³⁵ Quoted in (Thorn 2000, 48)

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