INTRODUCTION: KENYA AS A CASE STUDY

Although the rise of nationalist movements in Africa was certainly a contributing factor in the dismantling of the colonial empires, one cannot wholly attribute the 'demise of colonialism' to the rise of nationalism. Decolonization occurred rapidly and along similar lines in territories where nationalist movements were in very different stages of development. In the Ivory Coast, for example, nationalist leaders were reluctant and tardy advocates of independence; in Kenya, the nationalist movement was not yet well organized. This strongly suggests that an understanding of decolonization requires special attention to the 'other side': the colonial interests involved.

This, then, is a study of the 'other side.' Central to the study is the idea that the decolonization process was shaped by an adaptive reaction of colonial political and economic interests to the political ascendency of a nationalist elite and to the threat of disruption by the masses. An analysis of the colonial elite's composition, alignments and bargaining activities is essential to an understanding of the terms of the bargain called independence. In the Kenyan case, the fate of the 'White Highlands' was the critical issue for the European farming community, and was of major importance to the other expatriate interests dominating the colonial political economy. The resolution of the land issue marked a decisive stage in the pre-emption of mass unrest and the cooptation of the nationalist elite into their role as guardians of this political economy.

The study focuses on three aspects of decolonization in Kenya. The first, the actual process of moving from colony to independent state, delimits the political arena. The second is European adaptation to this decolonization process. The third is the bargaining over the land issue: the central conflict. Decolonization, then, is the major process of which European adaptation is a key feature and the land question the critical issue.

For a number of reasons Kenya provides a focal point for analyzing decolonization and elite adaptation in Africa. In the first place, the period of colonial transition was condensed and clearly demarcated.[1] The First Lancaster House Conference, in January 1960, established African majority rule and reversed the expectations of African and European leaders that Kenya Colony was set for a European-dominated multi-racial government. Not only did the Conference surprise both sides, it also initiated the period of colonial transition in which Kenya was headed for independence under an African government. What this change would mean for the economy, the expatriate communities and the political structure was subject to intense

debate. December 12, 1963, Independence Day, marked the end of colonial transition, although bargaining continued beyond that date.

Not only did the period of colonial transition have discrete boundaries but the issues and participants were also clear. Kenya's history as an 'abortive' colony had resulted in the polarization of the country both politically and economically. On one side was the European farming community, perched at the top of the political-economic hierarchy they had largely established. Though less than one per cent of the population, they owned twenty per cent of the arable land, produced eighty-five per cent of the agricultural exports and generated most of the taxable income in the colony. Politically, a Royal Commission in 1955 described them as still largely holding the reins of power in their hands. As a wealthy, expatriate, white landowning elite they were a conspicuously dominating presence over the African societies among whom they dwelled.

As such, they may be said to have spawned their antithesis: the conscious rural African masses aware of their disadvantaged position in the society. The direct nature of the colonial domination of Kenya, visible through the large European presence, created conditions of conflict which in other colonies, such as those under indirect administration, could have been more easily obscured. The need for cheap labor on European farms, the discouragement until late in the colonial period of African cash cropping, and the obtrusive racial discrimination in all areas of Kenyan life were daily reminders to Africans of their subservience. The widespread organized uprising in the early 1950s among Kikuyu peasants (the tribe perhaps most affected by the European presence) can be interpreted as a reaction to the blatancy of Kenyan colonial rule and the failure of the settled elite to fully consolidate its dominance.[2]

The conflict between the masses and the landowners brought to the forefront the central economic issue between them: the alienation and appropriation of 7.5 million acres of the Kenya Highlands for exclusively European use. The 'land issue' centered on the traditional claims to the land by sundry African groups opposing the essentially economic-functional arguments of the colonialists. The fate of the 'White Highlands,' was the linchpin determining the future of the European farming community and the colonial political economy. The European farmer holding non-liquid assets in a threatening environment had to adapt in some way to his surroundings – if only by leaving. With the general recognition of impending African political authority, the search for new political supports for their assets, economy and life style received the focus of European attention.

This, however, is not to make a case for the uniqueness of Kenya in colonial Africa. Certainly every colony had its own special features. However, one could argue that on a spectrum of imperial involvement in Africa Kenya falls close to the center. On one end of this series would be a Uganda with a pattern of peasant agriculture operating through a small

colonial administration utilizing indirect rule. On the other is a Rhodesia where domination was direct and where the white expatriate community was able to squeeze out both African and metropolitan political influence. In Kenya both the colonial-settler and indigenous-peasant structures paralleled and intermeshed with each other. The nature of the joining of the conflict between these two forces in Kenya hopefully will highlight processes present in other decolonizations.

A final, if rather mundane, justification for the study of Kenyan decolonization lies in the availability of information. Perhaps because of their fetish for the written word, Europeans are eternally condemned to reappear in their own histories. Kenya Europeans are no exception. They took notes, kept records, and by making their papers available allow a history of the period earlier than if official documents alone were depended upon. Beside this secretarial function, the presence of a settled expatriate community, possessing considerable influence in the metropole, forced the decolonizing power to publicly assuage them as well as allow them access to at least parts of the 'official mind.'

The events that follow, then, are viewed through a European looking glass. While no apologies need to be made, the reader should be consistently conscious of the subjectivity involved. The numerous and economically important Asians of Kenya appear to play almost no role as a community in decolonization. Individual Asians were financial supporters of a number of groups, mainly the European liberals and moderate nationalists, and exerted influence through their standing in the commercial sector. African leaders and groups may often appear as ill-formed figures, from the European perspective. The nationalists were frequently objects of manipulation, divided and uncertain of the direction their rule would take. But centering on the months prior to independence should not cause us to neglect the years of struggle, imprisonment and violence which the nationalists endured in order to enter the political arena where they confronted their opponents in the colonial twilight.

CHAPTER 1

CONSENSUAL DECOLONIZATION: CONDITIONS, PROCESS, AND THE SALIENT ASPECTS OF THE KENYAN CASE

Their purpose is to capture the vanguard, to turn the movement of liberation towards the right and to disarm the people: quick, quick, let's decolonize. Decolonize the Congo, before it turns into another Algeria. Vote the constitutional framework for all Africa, create the *Communaute,* renovate that same *Communaute*, but for God's sake let's decolonize quick.'

Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*

Decolonization was 'the logical result indeed the triumph' of Imperial policies and tradition.

Harold Macmillan

This initial chapter will set the stage. By making explicit the conditions and process of consensual decolonization it will establish a context, within which the study will focus on two aspects of Kenya decolonization. While the study will not 'prove' this prefiguration of a decolonization model, these initial generalizations will aid in establishing the importance and relevance of the processes of adaptation and bargaining to be studied. Toward this objective, the chapter will define the relevant terms, discuss the conditions and process of consensual decolonization, and introduce the salient feature and issue of the Kenyan case – elite adaptation, and the bargaining and resolution of the land question.

SOME DEFINITIONS

Decolonization, as generally understood, means the transfer of political authority from a colonial state to indigenous leaders within the framework of state sovereignty. This definition deals only with the formal transfer of 'authority,' referring to the capacity to legitimate political decisions, and not with political 'power,' which may be taken to mean the ability to influence those decisions. Certainly the characteristics of authority and power overlap. Those with authority may be expected to have some power; those without authority may or may not be politically powerful. At one pole a state possessing authority without power is a 'satellite' to some other country; a state with relatively autonomous power is 'independent.' Decolonization or the 'attainment of independence' as such do not necessarily say anything about what is an empirical question of influence. Similarly, no inference can

be drawn from the use of the phrase 'indigenous leaders' that decolonization necessarily implies the evolution toward a people's full social control over the instruments of government. Whether decolonization does in fact lead to greater popular participation and control remains a seldom debated issue.[3]

Within this context, the focus will be upon consensual decolonization – the process of transferring colonial political authority in which there is a large measure of agreement among the participants that the outcome of the process is to be independence. Although 'consensual decolonization' is often used synonymously with 'decolonization' in this study, cases where decolonization directly resulted from military conflicts (Algeria), or from sudden uncontrolled shifts of nationalist strength (Guinea) are excluded. In both Algeria and Guinea, there was a sufficient measure of opposition (from colonial interests) to exclude these from our definition. At the same time similarities of process can be expected in all types of decolonization.

But consensual decolonization is not merely the transfer of formal political authority to indigenous rulers. It is also a bargaining process surrounding this transfer, oriented to integrating a potentially disruptive nationalist movement into the structures and requisites of the colonial political-economic system.[4] 'Process' as used here is simply the actions and inter-relationships of groups of people as they struggle for, and use, power to achieve their purposes.[5] Hence, process is *not* a plan. In this analysis the decolonization process is an accumulation of, and abstraction from a series of policies, which may appear quite disjunctive to the participants. In that the metropole state is the initiator, authority, and participant with the greatest political resources in the decolonization process, it may be expected to have the greatest influence over that process.

Bargaining is a process of combining divergent interests and viewpoints to produce a common agreement. Implied in this definition is a situation '. . . in which the ability of one participant to gain his ends is dependent to an important degree on the choices or decisions that the other participant will make.'[6] Given this interdependency, there is likely a thrust toward consensus among all the participants in the bargaining. What this consensus will consist of is not a question to be answered in the abstract. It will depend on the skill, resources and objectives of the participants, as well as on the context of decolonization within which the negotiations proceed.[7]

Within the process of decolonization, we can distinguish three major themes. These themes are both conditions for the attainment of independence and aspects of the decolonization process leading to that attainment. The first is the *adaptation* of the colonial elites to the removal of colonial authority. The second is the *cooptation* of the nationalist elites into the colonial system. The third is the *pre-emption* or control of mass discontent, ensuring the acquiescence of the masses to the process of consensual decolonization.

By *adaptation* is meant the changes in a social group aiding the survival,

functioning, maintenance or achievement of purpose, of the group. It is a reaction to threats both external and internal. There are two aspects to this definition. One, taken from the narrower use of the word in biology, refers to changes necessary for survival. This is the type of adaptive behavior which the more precarious European farming groups pursued during decolonization. The second aspect of adaptation refers to modifications which aid in the functioning or maintenance of a system or group, or to the achievement of their purposes. The behavior of the European liberals and the metropole government are closer to this end of the spectrum of adaptive behavior. The one implies a gradual yielding to an inevitable alteration caused by a weakening bargaining position; the other is a more creative adjustment to new relationships and institutions considered not only as threats, but as opportunities as well.[8]

The process of decolonization is adaptive then insofar as it reflects the adjustment in political behavior of the colonial political and economic elites to the removal of metropole authority. Implied by this is that these elites will seek to preserve their values and positions by altering their methods of influence, modifying their own structures and institutions, and identifying with the new rulers as well as seeking to affect their composition and behavior. This adaptation is thus not only adaptive to decolonization, but is also an influence upon it.

Decolonization is *cooptive* insofar as it is the process of absorbing new or opposing elements into the leadership or policy-determining structure of the colonial system as a means of averting threats to its stability or existence. Philip Selznick describes formal cooptation by an organization as resulting when the organization's legitimacy is called into question, and when there is a need of greater administrative accessibility to the relevant public. Cooptation is needed 'when the requirements of ordering the activities of a large organization or state make it advisable to establish the forms of self-government.' Selznick further asserts that the locus of significant decisions is preserved in the initiating group.[9]

Cooptation in the context of decolonization also involves the political socialization of the nationalist party. An important aspect of this socialization is the learning directly linked to recruitment into, and performance of, specialized political roles in the bureaucracy and leadership positions. Another aspect is the ostensibly non-political learning which nevertheless ultimately affects political behavior. This would include the learning of politically relevant social attitudes and personality characteristics. That political socialization has an essentially conservative character with regard to existing political arrangements is a conclusion shared by a number of scholars.[10]

Finally, decolonization is *pre-emptive* in its attempts to anticipate and prevent in advance the formation and mobilization of a mass nationalist movement. The political quiescence and subordination of the masses is a

necessary condition for the attainment of independence as well as a goal of the decolonization process. Conflict encourages mobility, and the fear of widespread violence and mass uprisings is both a cause of, and a threat to, decolonization in the sense adopted here. This fear of mass mobilization is also the catalyst encouraging the consensual resolution of the bargaining process.

The process of decolonization occurs during the period of colonial transition, although it is certainly not limited to this period. This is the span of time preceding independence in which the major participants in the decolonization process accept independence as the inevitable outcome of the bargaining, while continuing to accept colonial officialdom as authoritative. The major actors regard colonial transition as a time of 'preparation' for independence in the near future. Independence is to be marked by the predominance of representatives of the majority African racial groups in the formal instruments of government, i.e., offices and votes. Aside from this anticipation of a formal changeover, substantive changes in the patterns of political and economic relationships both within the colony and those linking the colony to the metropole remain obscure. The acceptance of the metropole officialdom as authoritative is an expression of the obedience that the participants still believe the colonial structure deserves. Despite the questionable neutrality of various colonial officials, the accepted means of modifying their unfavorable decisions generally involves influence upon other parts of the metropole governing structure. The legitimacy of the authority itself remains unchallenged.[11]

Colonial transition, then, is characterized both by its authority structure and its goal. These two 'ordering principles' serve to orient the process of decolonization toward the ritualized conclusion of independence and to limit the acceptable degree of conflict among the participants.[12]

CONSENSUAL DECOLONIZATION

Conditions

There were two sets of conditions generally applicable to the process of decolonization in Africa in the 1960s. The first were general historical conditions serving as permissive incentives encouraging the colonial divestment. These have been widely discussed and included the international political environment, the rise of Third World nationalism, and the changing intellectual climate toward colonialism. The second set of conditions were specific situational ones within the colony and metropole. These provided the strong likelihood of a successful process of consensual decolonization occurring. They included the orientation and capacities of the nationalist elite, the political quiescence of the masses, and the adaptive potential of the metropole power.

Historical conditions. The essential function of the historical conditions was to raise the colonial calculation of costs over benefits for the metropole. At some point metropole government leaders came to view the formal political link with the colony as more expense than it was worth, or soon to become so. As one student of British colonial policy wrote: 'A point had been reached beyond which the prolongation of the old tempo and style of colonial policy would simply incur greater political, social and economic costs than Britain could hope to meet.'[13] In the period of the late 1950s and early 1960s the calculation likely contained a number of factors.

The East–West conflict made the Third World a battleground and a prize for the competing powers. The presence of communist and neutralist countries in international forums gave the 'other side' an opportunity to exploit the widespread distaste for colonial holdings. In his famous 'Winds of Change' speech in December 1959, Prime Minister Harold Macmillan stressed: 'As I see it, the great issue in this second half of the Twentieth Century is whether the uncommitted peoples of Asia and Africa will swing to the East or to the West . . .' To drive nationalism back, he asserted, would be to drive it to communism.[14] Beyond this, nationalist forces were seen as a potential ally in the Cold War struggle. In his important book, *British Policy in Changing Africa*, the former head of the Africa Division of the Colonial Office, Sir Andrew Cohen, asserted that 'successful cooperation with nationalism is our greatest bulwark against communism in Africa.'[15] American assistance was expected in stabilizing the post-colonial areas, both by maintaining traditional interests and by inhibiting foreign rivals' inroads in the contested Third World.[16]

The rise of articulate, western-educated nationalist leaders threatening to raise the cost of maintaining colonial possessions undoubtedly accelerated the process of decolonization. The attainment of independence by colonies in Asia and Northern Africa had set a 'demonstration effect.'Independence for non-white states such as India and Ghana gave an impetus to nationalist arguments in other colonial territories. Examples of the costly (and unsuccessful) conflicts in Algeria, Indochina and Indonesia stood as precedents few colonial officials wished to emulate. As Peter Worsley wrote:

> . . . if, in both colonisation and decolonisation, force has always been the ultimate sanction, it has not always been used. A few decisive military-political actions have established new balances of power for whole regions. The repercussions of the most decisive revolutions, too, established more than a local or even a regional change; they altered the whole field of forces on the world level.[17]

The international climate had cooled toward the rectitude of the imperial mission. Colonization itself appeared to be an anachronism, an affront to universally proclaimed truths of the United Nations Charter and the Atlantic Charter. The benefits of colonies for the metropole were widely disputed both from the Left and the Right. The European powers were turning inward to meet domestic priorities and hopes for European unity. The

Second World War had diminished the colonial powers' resources and its stature in the Third World. Crises like Suez in 1956 appeared to underline the new limits on the power of the European colonial countries. Third World nationalism, self-determination and independence seemed to be historical forces whose inevitable time had come.

Situational conditions. There was no inevitable connection between these conditions and decolonization. All the colonial powers at some time or place stood resolutely against the 'winds of change.' The French in Vietnam, Madagascar and Algeria, the Dutch in Indonesia, the British in pre-War India and Kenya – all chose to use force to suppress indigenous movements with which they were unwilling or unable to come to terms. In these cases the previous conditions were all to a greater or lesser degree present. The question then becomes: what situational conditions explain the probability of a relatively consensual, decolonization process occurring?

The first condition present in the colony was that the political elite of the colony be able to rule consensually among themselves and functionally in terms of a mastery of the inherited political framework. The functional aspect not only implied that they be well-educated in the metropole mold but that they had 'maturity' or 'responsibility.' These vague though catchy phrases referred both to some competency by the indigenous elite in managing metropolitan political procedures and to the absence of (as well as the elite's ability to prevent) upheaval in colonial-metropolitan relations.[18] The need for elite consensus did not prohibit attempts to divide and isolate potential nationalist threats during the period of transition. This divide-and-rule strategy, however, gave way to a desire for political consensus or quiescence as independence neared and as the undesirable segments of the elite were eliminated.[19]

The reason for this stress on consensus lay in a second political requirement of a colony for a successful consensual decolonization: the prevention of mass unrest. Disagreement on the rate, desirability and conditions of self-government among the indigenous elite could facilitate the formation and mobilization of mass nationalist opinion. As one American scholar wrote, 'it is conflict that involves the people in politics and the nature of conflict determines the nature of the public involvement.'[20] The prospect of mass mobilization was both a cause of and a threat to decolonization. Independence was a means (not always successful) of pre-empting the mobilization of mass discontent and maintaining stability at a low cost. The British Colonial Secretary, Iain Macleod, later wrote of his policies: 'It has been said that after I became Colonial Secretary there was a deliberate speeding up of the movement towards independence. I agree. There was. And in my view any other policy would have led to terrible bloodshed in Africa. This is the heart of the argument . . .'[21]

This tacit agreement on the prevention of mass mobilization was to lead

to the political irrelevance of the masses. Lavish praise was to be the only political contribution expected of the lower classes. The nationalist elite behaved '. . . to ensure the political superfluity of any political activity other than voting.'[22] The lack of significant mass involvement in politics continued with the formation of one-party states. Reflecting the weakness of their political system, one-party governments acted to prevent the mobilization of the mass base by rival parties.[23] The ruling party and its government were in turn removed from mass involvement and pressures.[24]

This pre-emption or control of mass discontent through decolonization has been noted by a number of scholars. Richard Rathbone, in his thesis on *The Transfer of Power in Ghana, 1945–57*, quoted a letter from Colonial Governor of Ghana, C. N. Arden-Clarke, in this context as remarking, '. . . you cannot slow down a flood – the best you can hope to do is keep the torrent within its proper channel.' Rathbone concluded that the 1930s made clear to colonial officials that gradualism in Asian colonies would have to give way to rapid change if discontent was to be contained and stability maintained.[25] Similarly, in Jamaica, Trevor Munroe found that the advance to self-government had little to do with the growth of nationalism, and that in fact rapid decolonization made mass nationalism unnecessary for the creation of the new state out of the former dependency.[26] Immanuel Wallerstein summed up the pre-emptive strategy of the colonial authorities. Wallerstein wrote that the response of the Europeans in most of Africa 'was to come to terms with the middle-class leadership by arranging a rapid transfer of power to them in the expectation of ending their verbal radicalism before it became coherent, ideological and national in organization . . .'[27]

In the historical context of African decolonization of the early 1960s the effort at pre-emption may have conflicted with the goal of coopting a trained indigenous social class into the political framework. Certainly the British Secretary of State at the time, Iain Macleod, emphasized the unviability of the colonial relationship and the threats of violence in pushing for more rapid devolution. But this was an alteration of timing, not of kind. The political and economic models to be followed, the integration of the indigenous elite into colonial patterns and the forms of the transfer itself were compressed, not altered. Just on the most visible level of the forms of political authority in the English colonies, changes in the 'Westminster Model' were neither sought nor thought needed. 'There was never any seriously sustained attempt, and certainly not at the policy-making level of successive British governments, to consider the possibility of granting independence on any other basis than that of the "Westminster Model." '[28]

Economic criteria for a colony's evolution were more ambivalent than the political requisites. Rathbone listed economic viability as a criterion for Ghanaian independence.[29] But explaining French devolution in Togo or Niger, Belgian in Ruanda, and British in Gambia, under this criterion would be tortuous. More important than the relative viability of the econ-