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KENYA AND BRITAIN
AFTER INDEPENDENCE

BEYOND NEO-COLONIALISM

POPPY CULLEN



Cambridge Imperial and Post-Colonial Studies Series

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Poppy Cullen

Kenya and Britain after Independence

Beyond Neo-Colonialism

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ABBREVIATIONS

BDOHP	British Diplomatic Oral History Project, Churchill Archives Centre, Churchill College, Cambridge
BHC	British High Commission in Nairobi
CO	Colonial Office
CRO	Commonwealth Relations Office
DSL	Diplomatic Service List
EAD	East Africa Department
EEC	European Economic Community
FCO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office
FO	Foreign Office
GSU	General Service Unit
HMG	Her Majesty's Government
HMOCS	Her Majesty's Overseas Civil Service
IMF	International Monetary Fund
KADU	Kenya African Democratic Union
KANU	Kenya African National Union
KNA	Kenya National Archive, Nairobi
KPU	Kenya People's Union
MMA	Malcolm MacDonald Archive, Durham
MOD	Ministry of Defence
MOU	Memorandum of Intention and Understanding, 1964
MP	Member of Parliament
ODA	Overseas Development Administration
ODM	Ministry of Overseas Development
RAF	Royal Air Force
SAS	Special Air Service
TNA	The National Archive, Kew

x ABBREVIATIONS

UDI	Unilateral Declaration of Independence
UKPH	United Kingdom Passport Holders
UN	United Nations

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Introduction: From Mau Mau Enemies to ‘Best Friends’

The relationship with Kenya is an important and largely overlooked example of British post-colonial foreign policy. Kenyan independence came after one of the most intense and bloody insurgencies in Britain’s colonial history—Mau Mau and the colonial state of emergency in place between 1952 and 1960. This resulted in thousands of deaths and detentions, and to British contemporaries seemed to be evidence of the ‘barbarism’, ‘backwardness’ and ‘brutality’ of Africans.¹ British policy-makers felt much anxiety about Kenya’s future and Britain’s relationship with an independent Kenya. Jomo Kenyatta had only recently been released from detention after his conviction as Mau Mau leader, and was still vilified by some in Britain; he was famously described by Governor Patrick Renison in 1960 as ‘leader to darkness and death’.² Some British officials and politicians had made no secret of their preference for the Kenya African Democratic Union (KADU)—the rival party which Kenyatta’s Kenya African National Union (KANU) had defeated. Potential causes of friction abounded: land, British security interests, and the presence of white and Asian settlers. In spite of all of this, however, this was to become one of the closest—perhaps the closest—relationships between a newly independent African state and Britain, while Kenyatta came to both symbolise and manage the transformation in British attitudes, becoming a favoured African ally. How and why this happened are among the subjects of this book.

A brief comparison with Kenya’s neighbours and former British colonies Tanganyika (later Tanzania) and Uganda makes clear how unusual Kenya’s relationship with Britain was. Tanganyika became independent in 1961,

the first of Britain's East African colonies to do so, under the leadership of Julius Nyerere, with whom the British expected to have a close relationship, describing in 1961 that Nyerere 'possess[ed] a degree of common sense unusual in an African nationalist'.³ However, over the following years he pursued relations with China, the Soviet Union and a variety of external partners over and above Britain. His relationship with the British government was more confrontational, especially over Rhodesia's Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) in 1965, with Nyerere one of the most outspoken critics of British inaction and breaking diplomatic relations with Britain over the issue in 1965. In Uganda, independent in 1962, British officials came to dislike the first president, Milton Obote, and initially to welcome Idi Amin's coup in 1971.⁴ Quickly, however, Amin was reviled in Britain. A key moment was the expulsion of Ugandan Asians in 1972, seeming to show Amin's intractability and unreasonableness. As later chapters show, this action had consequences for Britain's policy towards Kenya. In Uganda and Tanzania, as was the case in Kenya, the choices of the post-colonial leaders were crucial. Their presidents looked to work with others rather than Britain, and took actions which were detrimental to British interests, as well as criticising Britain publicly. Kenyatta, by contrast, followed policies designed to work with Britain and to ensure this relationship.

POST-COLONIAL KENYA AND BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

This book focuses on British foreign policy towards a former African colony. This is a fairly uncommon approach. British foreign policy is a subject which has received extensive scholarly attention. But this has often largely ignored Britain's relationships with former colonies after independence, more concerned instead with Europe and America. Studies of post-war foreign policy always highlight the end of empire as a defining moment, and then former colonies are largely relegated until and unless they became particularly significant, such as Rhodesia and South Africa.⁵ This perhaps stems from both a historiographical and a contemporary separation of colonial from foreign policy. In government, these were run by different departments. Scholars, too, have tended to treat these as separate concerns, with a clear tradition of studies of empire and separate studies of foreign policy. In this latter kind of scholarship, the lowering of the colonial flag and raising of its independent replacement typically marks a colony's departure from the narrative.

This scholarly and contemporary divide of foreign policy from empire has created something of an artificial separation, and meant that examinations of foreign policy have not always revealed the full scope of Britain's relations with the world. As Jackson has argued, there has often been:

an artificial division of the post-Second World War years into a period of 'declining empire' and one of 'post-empire', in which the links between the two have been very poorly conceptualised. This ... has deflected attention from the many continuities in Britain's relations with the wider world.⁶

It is true that there is growing recognition of these continuing relations, particularly in recent work by Stockwell on the continuation of British institutions in post-colonial Africa.⁷ But there have been remarkably few bilateral studies of British relations with former African colonies.⁸ The existing accounts of British relations with Kenya have not extended much beyond independence, certainly not into the 1970s, with Parsons' study of the 1964 East African mutinies and Percox's work on the military sphere until 1965.⁹ Asian immigration into Britain in 1967–1968 is often the single occasion where independent Kenya makes an appearance in the wider literature on British foreign policy.¹⁰

This seems a strange lacuna considering that most scholars agree that British foreign policy aimed at a global role, evidencing what Sanders has described as 'great power syndrome'.¹¹ A 1964 government report stated that 'it is in the general interest that Britain's voice should continue to be heard and to carry weight in the world', with a clear belief in the importance of Britain.¹² A sense of confidence and self-belief thus remained and the desire to sustain this 'lay at the core of decision-making'.¹³ Given this desire for a world role, it seems surprising that scholars of British foreign policy have often largely ignored Africa and former colonies. Part of the reason, of course, is that Europe and America did become the central interests of contemporary policy-makers. The Duncan Report in 1969 divided the world into an 'Area of Concentration' of Western Europe, America and Japan, and 'the rest of the world'.¹⁴ Although this report was widely criticised, it clearly conveyed a message that the world was divided into places where core British interests were engaged, and those where they were not. Africa formed part of Cold War policies designed to maintain influence as a counter to Soviet or Chinese competition, but the continent

played a limited part in Britain's global ambitions. As Rouvez has argued, 'Africa would become marginalized for British policymakers'.¹⁵ Yet this shift in the emphasis of British foreign policy away from former colonies and Africa should not be seen as inevitable. Much scholarship on decolonisation has recognised that metropolitan officials had hoped, and perhaps even expected, to maintain the benefits of empire after independence while avoiding its costs. Darwin has argued that independence was to lead 'into the sunny uplands—as they hoped—of diplomatic partnership, economic collaboration and informal influence'.¹⁶ That in most cases this did not happen was not foreseen. Although we know the outcome, this was, as Cooper reminds us, a time of 'multiple possibilities' and unknown futures.¹⁷

In contrast to the literature on British foreign policy, which is rarely centred on continuities through independence, scholars of Africa have frequently stressed the importance of continuities. These scholars have increasingly questioned a simple division between the colonial and the post-colonial, highlighting continuities and colonial legacies.¹⁸ As Ellis has argued, independence, 'while significant, did not always mark the radical break with the past that many observers once took for granted'.¹⁹ The nationalist movements which sought independence did so within the colonial system and using its discourses, seeking to appropriate rather than challenge it, so that 'questions of transforming the colonial system were neither answered nor posed'.²⁰ Colonially imposed state borders were accepted, and so was the primacy of development as a legitimating rhetoric and mission of the state. African economies, built up under colonial rule, were Western export-oriented. They still relied on foreign investment and development aid during the decades after independence and so continued policies of 'extraversion'.²¹ Cooper has characterised these as 'gatekeeper states'.²² In Kenya, institutions, structures and systems of authority after independence remained remarkably similar. Branch and Cheeseman have argued that the post-colonial state should 'be conceptualised as a representation of the interests promoted during the latter years of colonial rule'.²³ Histories of Africa have therefore focused on continuities through independence, while studies of British foreign policy have not, and rarely have these two bodies of scholarship been brought together. The arguments made in this book highlight the importance of continuities in British foreign policy as well as in Kenyan history.

DECOLONISATION IN KENYA

Kenya, particularly because of Mau Mau, has featured prominently as 'one of the classic cases' in histories of British decolonisation.²⁴ Colonial states of emergency and the measures taken in Kenya were not unique, but the response was particularly brutal; in 2011, the British High Court ruled that the British government had a case to answer, and in 2013, the British government acknowledged this and agreed to pay £19.9 million compensation to victims of British abuse.²⁵ This also resulted in the British government acknowledging previously concealed colonial archives, which have since been opened as the migrated archives.²⁶ Through the 1950s, the Kenyan emergency coexisted with moves towards independence in West Africa, but colonial officials continued to prefer a multiracial system for East Africa and to think of independence there as distant. During Mau Mau, British policy focused on counter-insurgency, but, as Furedi has argued, 'somewhere along the way the aim of counterinsurgency changed from restoring the authority of the colonial state to preparing the way for the process of controlled decolonization'.²⁷ The colonial government implemented two new constitutions which increased African involvement in Kenyan politics, with the first Africans directly elected to the Legislative Council in 1957. But still colonial officials took a long view: at a meeting at Chequers in 1959, independence for Kenya was suggested for perhaps 1975.²⁸

Policy changed in 1960, with new Colonial Secretary Iain Macleod accepting at the first Lancaster House conference that Kenya would achieve majority rule. In doing so, Macleod changed the trajectory of British government planning for Kenya. Reluctantly, so-called 'moderate' Europeans led by Michael Blundell and the New Kenya Group accepted this and agreed to the proposals, leading to Blundell's vilification by many Europeans. The New Kenya Group came to argue that 'independence for Kenya is certain and we must plan to make it a success'.²⁹ The year 1960 was more generally a 'watershed' year for the British Empire.³⁰ In February, Prime Minister Harold Macmillan made his famous 'wind of change' speech in South Africa, viewed by contemporaries and subsequently as a sign of changed British attitudes. In November, 'the epoch-making Resolution 1514' was passed in the United Nations (UN), calling upon European powers to hasten independence for their remaining colonies.³¹ The year 1960 was also the formal end of the Kenyan emergency, with effective military victory having been achieved by 1956. The two Kenyan nationalist parties, KADU and KANU,

were formed in 1960, and it was with these that the British government worked in making future plans.

Kenyatta's release from detention was the crucial issue of Kenyan politics as both KANU and KADU pressed for this. British officials had hoped to continue detaining him. But, in January 1961, Renison and Macleod agreed that the best interests of the British government had changed, and they planned to move Kenyatta from Lodwar to Maralal where he could be visited, 'so that one may embark on a process of debunking the legend of Kenyatta'.³² In 'the Kenyatta election' of February 1961, KANU won 67.4% of the vote and nineteen seats to KADU's 16.4% and eleven.³³ Renison hoped to attract members of both parties to join the government in 'a Government of moderates, rather than KANU tough boys'.³⁴ Very quickly, however, this idea of compromise broke down and KANU refused to join the government while Kenyatta remained in detention. A government of KADU and the New Kenya Group was formed. In Britain, Kenyatta's release was discussed at the highest levels of government.³⁵ Many MPs felt strongly and offered vocal support or opposition. Views in 1961 varied from Fenner Brockway's insistence that 'the release of this man is absolutely essential' to Biggs-Davison's 'outrageous and utterly degrading'.³⁶ Increasingly, however, British officials came to realise that they could not direct Kenyan politics away from Kenyatta as they had hoped, and the goal changed instead to finding means of accommodation. Kenyatta's release was announced on 1 August.³⁷ Over the following years, there were two more Lancaster House conferences and further elections were held in 1963. A constitution was agreed, favouring KADU proposals for a regional (*majimbo*) system. Kenya became internally self-governing in June 1963 and independent on 12 December 1963.

Another crucial decision taken during these years was to start a process of land transfer. In the early 1960s, the British government and others provided finance for Kenyans to buy European-owned land in a series of land settlement programmes. Concern about Europeans deserting or ruining their estates if not sold for inflated prices, or of landless Africans claiming them, drove fears of a widespread land grab at independence. Land transfer was not a way of radically altering ownership, but a means of preserving stability. Wasserman has argued that land had the potential to be 'the major hindrance to a smooth transition ensuring the stability of the nationalist regime', particularly as many Kenyans equated independence with access to land ownership, expecting wide-scale redistribution of European land to Africans.³⁸ Instead, settlement schemes and the principle

of respect for private property were accepted by Kenya's incoming leadership, with additional schemes implemented after independence.³⁹ This decision was part of a broader choice by the Kenyan elite—which will be highlighted in different contexts throughout this book—to continue to look towards Britain and to maintain systems and structures from the colonial era. For the British government, too, the decision to aid land transfer was an important one. This was a long-term financial commitment and these contributions made up a large part of Britain's aid to Kenya into the 1970s.⁴⁰ Land transfer was significant in promoting continuity—in-
deed, in many ways this underwrote the emergence of the post-colonial relationship. As Wasserman's comprehensive study has shown, it was a key part of the process of 'consensual decolonization'.⁴¹ Land transfer continued to be a concern for the British government and a large part of their aid funding, but the key decisions had been taken before independence and were largely unchallenged as a principle thereafter. The importance of land settlement schemes has been widely recognised, and this book focuses on other aspects of the developing relationship.

BEYOND NEO-COLONIALISM

Neo-colonialism was an accusation made after independence by those who claimed the continued dominance of Britain, particularly economic, over former colonies. For proponents of this argument, this was the defining feature of post-colonial relationships. Initially applied to Latin America, this idea was quickly appropriated for Africa. In one of the key denouncements, Ghana's President Kwame Nkrumah argued in 1965 that:

the neo-colonialism of today represents imperialism in its final and perhaps its most dangerous stage ... the State which is subject to it is, in theory, independent and has all the outward trappings of international sovereignty. In reality its economic system and thus its political policy is directed from outside.⁴²

Through the 1960s and 1970s, the period covered by this book, African accusations of neo-colonialism remained, as well as scholarly criticism. This critical view was often coupled with ideas of underdevelopment and dependency, inspired by a world-systems approach. Commentators such as Rodney argued that Europe had from first contact 'underdeveloped' the continent.⁴³ Kenya became a key example of neo-colonialism as scholars

debated the role of foreign ownership and multinational corporations as opposed to the growth of an African middle class.⁴⁴ One significant study was Leys' (1975) *Underdevelopment in Kenya*, in which he argued that foreign ownership remained prevalent while 'direct rule by the metropolitan power [became] unnecessary [as] society has been "locked into" its subordinate role in the international capitalist system by new means'.⁴⁵ Mamdani argued in 1984 that Kenya was 'not an independent national economy, but a neo-colonial economy in which Britain was the leading imperialist'.⁴⁶ Taken to their most extreme, these arguments posited a situation in which Britain remained in control of Kenya economically and politically, with Kenyans trapped into an economic world system they could not influence, let alone control. These studies have thus been highly critical of British motives and relations with Africa.

The concepts of neo-colonialism and underdevelopment have remained prominent in part because they help to explain undeniable inequalities of power, economic position and prosperity. These have continued beyond the end of colonial empires and the language of 'more' or 'less developed' countries still permeates contemporary discourse. Maekawa has recently argued that, although it is not an appropriate term for considering the East African Community, 'the neo-colonial concept still dominates academia'.⁴⁷ But although potentially compelling in explaining the unfulfilled promise of independence, these arguments are problematic. In 1980, Leys revised his original position to take into account an African capitalist class, and even suggested that scholars should 'finally rid ourselves of the ideological handicap of dependency theory', although not all agreed with his new stance.⁴⁸

There are clear limits to the explanatory potential of these theories. They have not paid enough attention to how dependency worked in practice, typically focusing on the abstract with little direct evidence. Especially problematic is what neo-colonialism suggests about British and Kenya freedom of action and motivation. It assumes that the actions of the British government were far more coherent and planned during decolonisation than they actually were, with an evident ambition to convert a formal empire into an informal one. British officials liked to project control, as in the description by one former colonial official in 1979 that decolonisation was 'the culmination of an evolutionary process...consistently, and on the whole logically, carried out, at varying tempo, over a period of nearly 200 years'.⁴⁹ In fact, however, British officials 'were never more than a step ahead'.⁵⁰ Decisions were sometimes unclear, and almost always

independence occurred sooner than the British government would have liked or had planned. This pragmatic and flexible approach to policy-making continued to characterise post-colonial British activity.

A further major problem with neo-colonialism is the removal of African agency.⁵¹ Neo-colonialism implies a relationship of dominance and subordination and, as Berman argues, is guilty of 'treating Africans as a relatively undifferentiated mass who were exploited, impoverished and impotent victims; dominated classes rather than agents of their own history'.⁵² This assumption was clearly false. In many instances, British involvement stemmed from Kenyan requests. Okumu in 1977 argued that 'Kenya *continues to cultivate Britain* as her major source of economic and technical assistance',⁵³ while Cheeseman has suggested that 'continuity can only be understood as stemming from the *conscious choice* of the KANU executive to reinstitute the structures of colonial rule'.⁵⁴ As Pinkney argues, though focusing on a later period, these were 'relationships which are clearly unequal, yet do not imply complete subordination'—a crucial distinction.⁵⁵ The Kenyans involved in this relationship sought to gain the greatest possible benefit for themselves and it will be argued in this book that they had substantial power to shape and direct their relations with Britain to their benefit.

British officials were well aware of their need for Kenyan support, and did not feel themselves to be neo-colonial puppet-masters. As independence approached, colonial officials hoped for continued informal influence, but recognised that this would depend on their ability to form and sustain relations with Africans—indeed, the whole colonial project had relied on African intermediaries. As Hopkins argues, during the era of decolonisation, the aim of colonial officials was 'to make friends and influence the people who would shape policies in the new states'.⁵⁶ Cultivating allies and thereby retaining influence was crucial to British decolonisation policies, and continued to characterise Britain's relationship with Kenya after independence. This led colonial officials to focus on trying to find 'moderates' to lead the colonies past independence—men who would be prepared to work with the British and to British timetables. But this was by no means assured, and the British were often bad at categorising these men. Both Nkrumah and Kenyatta were nationalists recast by colonial policy-makers from 'extreme radicals' to 'moderates', and others faced similar recategorisation. This relationship could only be pursued by British actors through contact with Kenyans, and was only successful because a Kenyan elite around Kenyatta decided that it was in their

interests to foster this. For the emerging Kenyan elite, there was some common cultural ground with the British but, far more importantly, they seized opportunities to entrench their own positions, and cooperation with the British became a way to do this.

Pushing this still further, this book argues that the kind of relationship which developed after independence between Britain and Kenya was largely owing to Kenyan rather than British choices. Bell has argued that 'in any alliance ... it is the weaker partner which makes the crucial choice'.⁵⁷ In many ways, the Kenyans set the tone and terms of the relationship. As Branch has highlighted, Britain 'was able to exert some sway in the region only because of a confluence of interests with the Kenyan Government'.⁵⁸ Atieno-Odhiambo has argued that for the Kenyan elite an 'ideology of order' was crucial to state power.⁵⁹ This focus on order was a goal British officials shared. Kenya's elite decided to continue working with the British in multiple fields, and to pursue a relationship with Britain rather than other partners. They could have chosen differently. Certainly, working with the British was in many ways easier and more convenient: Kenya and Britain had relationships and colonially established connections. As Cowan has argued, the former colonial power 'is at least a known quantity with whom it is easier to negotiate than with an unknown power'.⁶⁰ But although the British were those with the resources to allocate, they could rarely dictate entirely, and Kenyatta and his elite were able to make their own decisions and to choose when and how to work with the British. Kenyatta could have decided to refuse land transfer and allow a wide-scale land redistribution, to reject the British military presence as Tanzania and Uganda did, or to expel the Asian population as Amin did in Uganda. These decisions might not have contributed much to stability or outside confidence in Kenya, but they would likely have been popular. Moreover, Kenya's leaders could have pursued closer relations with the Soviet Union, America, Israel or several other states in Western Europe and elsewhere who sought to work with Kenya, or to reject Britain's diplomatic mission after Rhodesia's UDI, as Tanzania did.⁶¹ There were good reasons for not making these choices. A widespread land redistribution would have been difficult and costly, bound to lead to winners and losers and potentially to violence and disruption. Looking to other outside powers would have raised different issues, and there were domestic political reasons not to, with opposition figure Oginga Odinga supported by the Soviet Union. These were logical and realistic choices made by a new government looking

to cement its position, made for a variety of reasons but—and crucially—reasons of their own choosing and not simply at British bequest.

DEFINING POLICY

This book studies policy-making, and, in doing so, asks what 'policy' was and how it was made. It is very easy to discuss British policy as a well-defined concept, simply made and implemented, but this was in fact a much more complex process. Policy emerges from a series of decisions taken at varying times on different issues by multiple people. As Lindblom argues, policy 'is not made once and for all; it is made and re-made endlessly'.⁶² In Britain, a combination of 'habits of thought' and patterns of relationships informed multiple decisions across government; and those decisions were policy, and in turn reproduced the relationships which made them. The British relationship with Kenya was shaped by a dense network of relationships which produced policy more consistently and effectively than any position paper could have done.

Explicit discussions about what policy should be were infrequent. Policy-making was not necessarily a result of considered discussions of strategy or based on clear long-term goals, with the national interest 'not ... objectively determined but what the decision-makers perceive it to be'.⁶³ Policy was made through a series of decisions based on precedent, ideas of national interest, circumstances and pragmatism. There were several institutions and individuals pursuing their own agendas; 'not one calculating decision-maker'.⁶⁴ As scholars have recognised, British foreign policy was largely pragmatic rather than idealistic. Holt has pointed to the 'general consensus that pragmatism was the over-riding characteristic of British foreign policy-making, an approach that takes attention away from planning, diminishes coherence, and leads to a generally reactive foreign policy'.⁶⁵ Indeed, Peden has even suggested that 'some Foreign Office officials were suspicious of long-term planning'.⁶⁶ This study confirms that policy towards Kenya was largely pragmatic and reactive, with relatively few grand initiatives aimed at bringing substantial change to the relationship.

A study of foreign policy is by its nature a study of policy-makers, as to understand the policies which were followed, it is necessary to understand who was making decisions and how they did so. In analysing British foreign policy towards Kenya, this book focuses on a select group of people. In Kenya, those most involved were the elite around Kenyatta, sometimes termed his 'kitchen cabinet'. From the British side, although some issues

within the relationship sparked British public interest and press comment, this book focuses on a small group working in Whitehall and Westminster. Mostly, those involved were not politicians but rather civil servants and diplomats—people who were trained for this role, were employed to act in this way for the government, and served in multiple positions around the world and within Whitehall. For them, Kenya was a small part of their careers.

This book thus focuses on the ‘official mind’ of British policy-making, a concept originally deployed by Robinson and Gallagher in their 1961 *Africa and the Victorians*.⁶⁷ Many have since used this idea as a way of explaining the actions of policy-makers, particularly civil servants. Of particular note is Otte’s *The Foreign Office Mind*, in which he argues that ‘every political action, be it as a recommendation or as an actual deed, is based on a set of values and ideas’.⁶⁸ Understanding the ‘official mind’ thus helps to explain the policy choices that were made. Otte pointed to the shared background of Foreign Office officials from 1865 to 1914 and the values which had been inculcated in them through public schooling and class background; given the necessary condition of a £400 private income, this was a profession open only to a few.⁶⁹ Hyam has studied the ‘Colonial Office Mind’ from 1900 to 1914, highlighting again shared backgrounds and certain shared ideas and characteristics.⁷⁰ In both of these works, the number of men being studied was small, and they had homogeneous backgrounds. The number involved in foreign policy-making in the 1960s–1970s was larger, but there were still shared experiences, and many did come from similar backgrounds. Blackwell has pointed to similarities among Foreign Office officials immediately after 1945.⁷¹ But a study of the official mind of late twentieth-century foreign policy-makers is still lacking. Although Heinlein’s study of decolonisation is subtitled *Scrutinising the Official Mind*, it focuses less than might be expected on officials, being still concerned with the actions of ministers and prime ministers to a large degree.⁷² Here, the ‘official mind’ of those who worked on Kenya will be explored.

This book therefore highlights the value in studying British policy-making at the official level of the civil service and not simply at ministerial level. This was where British policy-making towards Kenya occurred. Smith, Marsh and Richards have argued that ‘government departments are the key policy-making institutions in British politics’ yet have received limited scholarly attention, which has tended to focus on issues which engaged ministers.⁷³ A focus on ministers does cover the most

prominent issues of the time. However, there were a myriad of day-to-day decisions being made by civil servants about relations with countries which did not receive ministerial priority, and looking only at the involvement of prime ministers and foreign secretaries misses this and obscures the work of Whitehall. Kenya received priority at ministerial level fairly rarely, which means that when it did is highly revealing of the importance being placed on a particular issue. Most of the time, the key policy-makers were the heads of the East Africa Department and the High Commissioners in Nairobi. These were the men who shaped ideas about Kenya, and who had significant input into policy.

These men were important because 'who we choose as ambassadors, where we send them and what we ask them to do *are* foreign policy'.⁷⁴ Changes to diplomatic practice in the twentieth century, such as the increased speed of communications and technology and the growth of summit diplomacy, had meant ambassadors were thought by some increasingly moribund.⁷⁵ In 1998, Wolfe argued that 'the ambassador does not have a prominent place in discussion of foreign policy'.⁷⁶ Yet resident ambassadors have remained and continued to be valued. Recently, there has been a growing historiographical interest in the work of diplomats, with a series of witness seminars and several edited collections on Britain's overseas embassies.⁷⁷ As Berridge and Young have argued, the key importance of embassies was their permanence as 'a constant presence on the ground'.⁷⁸ Britain's diplomats in Nairobi were among the most significant individuals involved in making decisions and recommendations. They asked for permission, clearance or guidance on major issues and worked within the confines of the Whitehall and Westminster systems. But while there were no major concerns, they were largely left to get on with their jobs, and they did. Their work made up much of the substance of the relationship and of British policy-making.

Crucial to understanding the Anglo-Kenyan relationship is an awareness of the differences between the British and Kenyan states. The British system of government was bureaucratic and institutional, 'best characterised as emphasising consensus'.⁷⁹ This did not mean that those within it always agreed on the emphasis of priorities; a series of different departments made up the British government and there could be disputes between these. Notwithstanding, the culture of Whitehall fostered a collective identity and 'civil service cohesion' which encouraged a broad sense of British interests.⁸⁰ British diplomats and politicians approached their relations from this perspective, as individuals' careers and personal interests were understood

in institutional and national terms, which shaped their behaviours and ideas. British policy on any particular issue was the product of negotiation, shaped by relationships, but always informed by a broad sense of British interests and the parameters of possible action.

By contrast, the Kenyan state was neo-patrimonial, based on personal ties and client networks. Dimier has described that:

from outside, those states resembled any bureaucracy, with its procedural kind of control, its hierarchies, transparency and impersonal rules. From inside, they were taken over by ... a patrimonial kind of authority and legitimacy which rested on bonds of trust, loyalty, mutual dependence and permanent exception to the rules.⁸¹

Formal structures existed, but personal patron–client networks often proved more significant. Branch and Cheeseman have characterised the Kenyan state as bureaucratic-executive: ‘a particularly strong combination of administrative and executive power underpinned by an alliance of elites.’⁸² Institutions were not the predominant sites of policy-making, and formal procedures were often bypassed in a situation where personalities were more important than the official positions they occupied. Jackson and Rosberg argued in 1982 that in much of Africa ‘persons take precedence over rules’.⁸³ This was the key difference to the British model. The Kenyans who were involved in decision-making and interacting with the British were seeking their own advantage, as different factions competed over priorities, policies and contacts. Rather than being guided by a general sense of national interest—as British policy-makers were—Kenyans sought personal and factional advantage from their contact with Britain and from the foreign policies they pursued.

This book therefore explores the interaction between a bureaucratic and a neo-patrimonial state. In seeking Cold War allies, and in pursuing close personal connections, international partners have often encouraged African neo-patrimonial systems by focusing on leaders and engaging with them on an individual basis. Cooper has argued that ‘it took two sides to foster patrimonialism on the international level ... [with] the internationalization of clientage—cultivated from both sides’.⁸⁴ The British were no exception to this in their relations with Kenya. They had been doing this already in the colonial period in seeking African intermediaries and allies, and during the era of decolonisation this was apparent in their search for ‘moderate’ leaders. In the post-colonial period, they worked with Kenyans

individually, privileging certain contacts and focusing on those they viewed as their ‘friends’, particularly the elite around Kenyatta. Despite their own institutional bureaucracy, in their interaction with the Kenyans, British actors helped to shape and reinforce Kenyan neo-patrimonialism.

THE NATURE OF THE RELATIONSHIP

At the simplest—and in some ways most important—level, British actors consistently sought simply to promote and ensure ‘friendly’ relations with Kenya. As Young argues, ‘promotion of “friendly relations” may seem an idealistic view of the intentions of officials employed to protect their country’s interests. But ... the promotion of friendliness can be the most effective way to achieve general ends.’⁸⁵ For the British involved, this was certainly true regarding Kenya. Prior to independence, they hoped to make ‘friends’ among emerging nationalists. When it became apparent that they had, at least to some degree, made a ‘friend’ of Kenyatta, ensuring he remained positive towards Britain became their overriding aim. British decision-makers hoped for a positive relationship in which Kenya would remain favourable and beneficial to Britain. A general positive atmosphere was more significant than any individual outcome. This broad aim allowed for pragmatic and changing interpretations of British interests in Kenya, which could be reshaped and reinterpreted as circumstances shifted. The few existing studies have tended to focus on one aspect of the relationship, such as the military, rather than recognising the constant interplay between different interests.⁸⁶ This book argues that there was no single dominant British interest in Kenya, but the combination of different aims and opportunities made Kenya particularly significant as a relationship which offered direct benefits. British concerns included military relationships; economic connections in aid, trade and investment; a stake in Kenyan security; strategic concerns about the east of Suez role; and for Kenya to remain an ally in the Cold War. Making policy involved constant decisions about how to balance and pursue these various interests.

This relationship also involved constant negotiation. Historians have not always recognised this. Rouvez has argued that when interests ‘clashed’, former colonial powers ‘had to interact by cajoling or coercing’;⁸⁷ but in Kenya the British often reacted by negotiating. British officials were concerned about giving the impression of directing Kenyan decisions, and thereby losing Kenyan goodwill—which was ultimately their most important asset. Accusations of neo-colonialism could damage the

relationship. Nor is it true, as Clayton argued in 1980, that ‘Kenyatta has seen benefits without constraints upon his military and foreign policy as a result of the British alliance’.⁸⁸ British policy-makers did not dictate, but neither were they disinterested or without a sense of their own interests. British diplomats, politicians and soldiers offered much to Kenya, but they did so because they gained much in return, and, as will be highlighted throughout the book, the balance of advantages was something decision-makers in both countries sought to influence to their benefit. Negotiation is a key aspect of diplomacy and ‘an indispensable mechanism for states’,⁸⁹ but the term in this context has a broader application than purely formal diplomatic negotiations; rather, it is intended to convey the atmosphere of exchange and willingness to talk which characterised relations at multiple levels. Policy-making was a two-way process between Britons and Kenyans, and the relationship was formed by their interaction.

This book thus points to the ability of small states to influence the policies of larger ones, even when it might appear that the more powerful states should be those directing the relationship. Broad has pointed to the importance of recognising that policy is not unidirectional and that historians ‘must be prepared to acknowledge the significance of smaller states as an important determinant in the workings of the international system’.⁹⁰ He argues that Britain’s relationship with the Nordic community, 1968–1972, was both ‘highly asymmetrical’ and ‘mutually beneficial’.⁹¹ This description also fits the Anglo-Kenyan relationship. Kenya was a small state, newly independent, and reliant on external aid; nevertheless, Kenyans were able to shape British policy and determine how this relationship was pursued from within Britain, in terms of both aims and modes of interaction.

Other crucial influences on how policies were made were British policy-makers’ claims about their knowledge of Kenya—despite the fact that these were often based on misunderstandings. The ideas of individual Britons about Kenya were shaped by their experiences, by who they talked to within Kenya and by whose views they chose to privilege. Diplomats working on Kenya were expected to provide local knowledge and expertise, and when there were explicit discussions about policy, claims to knowledge mattered. But this information was often flawed; as Vital has argued, diplomats work on ‘matters over which their control is severely restricted, of which their knowledge can never be better than imperfect and which they must generally approach without the tactical and intellectual advantages of unambiguous and wholly appropriate goals’.⁹² The belief often