

Lange, Matthew (2009), *Lineages of Despotism and Development: British Colonialism and State Power*, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, ISBN 978-0-266-47068-9, 208 pp.

There is a wide range of literature on the impact of colonialism on development. A predominant position claims that colonialism, with its legacy of exploitation and arbitrary frontiers, is still hampering the development of former colonies, even 50 years after independence. Other scholars consider the current situation of these countries to be the responsibility of the ruling elites, no longer attributable to colonialism. Post-colonial and post-development studies place the blame on the still-prevailing hegemonial discourse of the colonial rulers and their post-colonial followers. In African studies, current political dynamics in African countries are often explained by culturally rooted pre-colonial patterns.

Matthew Lange, assistant professor of sociology at McGill University in Montreal, challenges these positions with a thorough empirical analysis of the developmental legacies of British colonialism. In his book, he concludes that pre-colonial and post-colonial factors account for little variation in development among former British colonies, whereas the two main forms of British colonialism – direct and indirect rule – exert a decisive influence. Direct rule required the construction of centralized, territory-wide and bureaucratic legal-administrative institutions that were controlled by colonial officials. Indirect rule, on the other hand, established collaborative relations between the colonial administration and regional chiefs.

According to Lange, these different forms of rule led to different states after independence and to radically different development outcomes. He suggests that direct rule had a much more positive effect on broad-based development than indirect rule. He explains this theory by citing the existence of more bureaucratic states, more infrastructural power, and more inclusion of social actors in policy-making and implementation because of direct rule. Lange regrets that indirect rule was romanticized as a gentle and respectful means of foreign domination. In reality, indirect rule frequently promoted misrule because the central state apparatus remained infrastructurally weak whereas regional chiefs received great power that enabled them to dominate their subjects at will. One could summarize Lange's central argument as follows: Direct rule laid the institutional foundations for development, and indirect rule caused despotism.

Lange applies a research methodology comprising one quantitative and two qualitative tiers. In a quantitative analysis of a set of 39 former British colonies (first tier), Lange shows the negative correlation between indirect rule (measured as the percentage of total court cases heard in "customary" courts) and development outcomes (per capita income, average school at-

tainment, infant mortality rate, democracy and governance indicators) over an extended period of time. The influence of the form of colonial rule did not diminish even after several decades of independence; rather, it increased. It left a lasting impact on development processes and made them path-dependent. Lange analyses the significance of other independent variables and possible pre-colonial factors, and he excludes the special case of settler colonies. The results remain stable and confirm a strong link between 1) direct rule and development and 2) indirect rule and development failure.

In the second tier, Lange selects two directly ruled colonies (Mauritius, Guyana) and two indirectly ruled colonies (Sierra Leone, Botswana) for comparative-historical analysis. Mauritius and Sierra Leone correspond to the general pattern, while Guyana (development failure despite direct rule) and Botswana (development despite indirect rule) are outlier cases to test both the statistical results and the findings of the non-outlier cases more rigorously. Finally, for the third tier, Lange presents abbreviated case-studies of Barbados, Ghana, Hong Kong, India, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nigeria, Singapore, the Solomon Islands, South Africa and Sri Lanka. At the end of his book, he briefly discusses the legacies of other colonial powers (Japan, France, Portugal and Spain). For Lange, the two qualitative tiers confirm the results of the quantitative analysis.

Lange focuses on the impact of the form of colonial rule on the legal-administrative capacities of states. It would be worthwhile to complement this reasoning by more deeply investigating the economic aspects of colonial rule. Certainly, there were also different legacies with respect to natural resource extraction, use of labour, physical capital formation and industrialization that might be important additional factors in order to explain the different development trajectories of former colonies. Even if one follows Lange's argument that directly ruled British colonies were better off after independence, this does not answer the question of whether colonialism had a positive impact overall on the development of these territories.

One of the strong points of this work is Lange's evaluation of the disastrous effects of indirect rule. What Chabal, Daloz, Bayart and others describe as culturally rooted peculiarities of African politics have more of a colonial heritage than a pre-colonial one. Indirect rule gave unchecked power to regional chiefs, freeing them from previous forms of social constraints. New functions (for example, paramount chiefs) and new chiefdoms were created outside the traditional legitimacy.

Unfortunately, the main part of Lange's book concentrates on the four small colonies of Mauritius, Sierra Leone, Guyana and Botswana. It would have been more convincing to present some of the bigger cases like India, Kenya, Malaysia and Nigeria in more detail.

The outlier cases Guyana and Botswana demonstrate that the development trajectories determined largely by direct or indirect rule might be changed; in those two cases, this happened during independence. Whether it is possible to change the trajectory of path-dependent development later on and what crucial factors might trigger such a deviation from the general pattern is not discussed by Lange. Despite these open questions, his book is an outstanding contribution to the literature on development.

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