Colonial Approaches to Governance in the Periphery: Direct and Indirect Rule in French Algeria

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Prepared for "Colonial Encounters and Divergent Development Trajectories in the Mediterranean," Harvard University
December 1, 2016

Abstract: When the British and French expanded into Africa, Asia, and the Americas, they began ruling diverse populations that differed from them along ethnic, linguistic, and religious lines. To manage this diversity, they articulated two distinct ideologies: direct and indirect rule. Advocates of direct rule envisioned a colonial project that would modernize and transform colonial territories; proponents of indirect rule favored preserving tradition and working with local authorities. Recent scholarly work on the legacies of colonial rule has coded direct and indirect rule in former colonies, arguing that the type of colonial rule has important long-term consequences. This paper examines how the concepts of direct and indirect rule have been defined and measured in the social science literature. It argues that the distinction between the two has been overstated. Drawing on the case of colonial Algeria, it points to a gap between colonial rhetoric and actual colonial governance. Through considering the Algerian case, it suggests new ways of understanding why and how colonial strategies varied over time and place.

"The Romans accomplished less in Africa in 200 years than the French have since the conquest" – *General Daumas, speaking to the Legislative Corps in Algeria, 1861*.[1]

In 1830, King Charles X of France, hoping for the prestige of a swift military victory, sent an army of 37,000 men to Algeria. The army took Algiers, but too late for the unpopular Charles X, whose regime collapsed in the 1830 July Revolution. Although the original impetus for the conquest was gone, France would remain in Algeria for the next 130 years. How did France govern Algeria? Specifically, what kinds of strategies were employed to gain the compliance of the conquered Berber and Arab populations of Algeria?

The "native question," as Mamdani (1996) called it, affected not just Algeria but nearly the entire African continent as the European powers divided and seized African territory in the 19th and early 20th century. European approaches to governing populations that differed from them along racial, ethnic, religious, and linguistic lines have since been characterized as falling into one of two contrasting logics: direct or indirect rule. Advocates of direct rule defended and justified colonialism as a "civilizing" project that would modernize and transform colonial territories. The conquering state provided the model to be emulated: European bureaucracies, laws, and modes of economic exchange would be transplanted to the colonies. Above, General Daumas speaks of the transformative nature of colonial rule, just 30 years after the French arrived in Algeria.

In contrast, proponents of indirect rule framed the colonial project in preservationist terms. They favored working with local authorities and maintaining indigenous traditions, not replacing them with a centralized authority. Indirect rule implied limited colonial intervention.

[1] *L'Algérie et le Décret du 24 Novembre*, 1861. Centre des Archives Nationales d'Outre-Mer. BIB B2374.

As the 19th century gave way to the 20th, indirect rule appeared to become the preferred approach. Sir Frederick Lugard (1922) formally described the system of indirect rule during his tenure in northern Nigeria, although indirect rule characterized earlier ruling arrangements, including the residency system in India. Even the French, known for their centralized approach to imperial rule, began speaking of "association" instead of "assimilation." Indirect rule was promoted as a correction to the perceived problems of direct rule: its costs, as well as the difficulty of absorbing populations that came to seem too culturally distant to be "civilized." As Sir Donald Cameron, governor of Tanganyika, wrote soon after arriving at his post, "It is our duty to do everything in our power to develop the native on lines which will not Westernize him and turn him into a bad imitation of a European" (quoted in Mamdani 1996, 80). Indirect rule was thus championed on normative grounds, defended "as a deference to native agency and, in more enlightened self-descriptions, as a form of cosmopolitan pluralism, one that recognized the specificity of native society" (Mantena 2010, 6). It also had practical advantages. Jules Ferry, speaking about the newly established protectorate in Tunisia before the French Chamber of Deputies on April 1, 1884, stated that preserving the Ottoman Bey's sovereignty "frees us from installing a French administration in this country, which is to say it frees us from imposing significant burdens on the French budget. It allows us to supervise from above, to govern from above, to avoid taking on, in spite of ourselves, responsibility for all the details of administration" (quoted in Lewis 2013, 62). Governing from above had the added benefit of deterring rebellion since indigenous populations were expected to be less likely to rebel against their own leaders than outsiders.

These two strategies for managing conquered populations were articulated and defended at the elite level, by colonial officers and governors, as well as proponents of empire in European capitals. But how were they carried out in practice? Even as the overarching aims of and justifications for colonialism shifted from a transformative logic to a preservationist one, empirically, imperial strategies continued to vary across and within territories throughout the colonial period.[2]

Scholars working in different disciplines have addressed this variation in opposing ways. Political scientists and sociologists, particularly those concerned with the legacies of colonial rule, have tended to treat the categories of indirect and direct rule as empirical realities, coding colonial territories by using measures designed to capture the directness of colonial rue.[3] In contrast, in recent work, historians have questioned the correspondence between these categories and actual colonial practice, arguing that indirect and direct strategies were often largely rhetorical, capturing colonial aspirations and justifications rather than day-to-day colonial governance. In practice, colonial officers and administrators were too busy responding to immediate challenges and concerns to implement a consistent overarching strategy, and thus much of colonial rule depended upon the man-on-the-spot. In this view, there was far more variation in ruling strategies than the terms direct and indirect rule imply.[4]

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[2] See Herbst (2000, 81–89) on the extent to which colonial approaches varied across Africa, regardless of which European state was in control.

[3] For examples, see Gerring et al (2011); Hariri (2012); Lange (2004); Wucherpfennig et al (2015).

[4] See Ageron (1991, 22); Porch (1982), *add cites*. Herbst (2000, 82) also emphasizes the difference between colonial theory and practice: "so much of "colonial science" was made up in the face of particular exigencies and often by the man on the spot rather than in the colonial capital, much less in Europe … The hallmark of colonial theories was their extreme flexibility at the expense of theory."

One of the aims of this project is to adjudicate between these competing understandings of how colonial governance occurred, drawing on insights from both the recent historical and social scientific literatures. From the historians, I take the point that characterizations of direct and indirect rule do not correspond well with colonial governance. Indirect and direct characterizations obscure a variety of different arrangements that colonial actors reached with local populations. It is inaccurate to posit that variation in colonial strategy can be meaningfully plotted along a single dimension of the directness of colonial intervention. In the next section, I examine the concepts of direct and indirect rule and their usage in the social science literature, and argue that greater attention needs to be paid to the specific and multiple ways that colonial strategies varied.

Yet colonial rule was unlikely to be as haphazard as histories of particular cases may suggest. The notion that colonial agents had to respond to local actors and conditions on the spot, without much guidance from afar, is a useful corrective, for preferences for indirect or direct rule had to be interpreted and modified to the setting, and local populations' responses and reactions doubtless shaped the will and capacity of colonial actors to act. The constraints and pressures that colonial agents faced may, however, have been similar in many settings, making it possible to formulate general claims about how and why colonial approaches varied over time and place. This paper thus draws from work on the political economy of colonialism; like those papers it proposes testable explanations for variation in colonial strategies of rule.

I argue that understanding this variation requires investigating the politics of the period. Specifically, imperial strategies were often a function of competition and conflict among different actors within colonial states. Colonial rulers were not a unified group, and

I examine how disagreements between military and civilian officers, between those in the colonies and those in the metropole, and among those with different political orientations, led to particular views about how colonial rule should operate. In addition, I suggest that security concerns affected colonial strategy. I look at how colonial violence and fears of rebellion affected the choices of colonial actors and their willingness to empower indigenous leaders.

These arguments differ from the existing literature, which claims that strategies of indirect rule were employed wherever feasible because they were cheaper and more acceptable to local populations, while direct rule occurred where there were numerous settlers and weak pre-existing state institutions. Colonial politics, I argue, were more important in shaping the type of rule than the attributes of the colonial territory itself.

I draw primarily on the case of Algeria to illustrate the plausibility of my arguments and the limits of existing explanations. The Algerian case is useful in two respects. First, the Algerian case demonstrates the difficulties of characterizing a single colony as governed by either direct or indirect rule. The French have often been associated with direct rule, in contrast to the British, who are said to have ruled more indirectly. Algeria was France's prize colony and the level of intervention was extremely high. It is one of the paradigmatic cases of direct rule. If Algeria cannot be adequately categorized as a case of direct rule, it raises the question of which cases would count. Second, the Algerian case, with its lengthy and complex colonial experience, provides an opportunity to consider the merits of competing explanations for different colonial strategies. The discussion of Algeria is,

however, preliminary and incomplete.[5] The purpose is to provide an initial examination of empirical evidence at an early stage of this project.

The next section discusses concepts. The second section looks at subnational variation in colonial approaches in Algeria. The third section lays out the theory and hypotheses.

I. Concepts: Direct and Indirect Rule

The literature suggests two ways to conceptualize direct and indirect rule. The first reflects the theory of indirect rule as laid out by the colonialists themselves. It sees indirect rule as less disruptive than direct rule because it preserved local traditions and practices by working with already-existing authorities. In contrast, direct rule imposed European leaders, laws, and institutions on indigenous populations. Indirect and direct rule thus had opposite effects on pre-colonial structures of power: indirect rule aimed to preserve them, while direct rule was intended to eradicate and replace them with a new colonial order.

Against this view, Mahmood Mamdani (1996) argues that indirect rule did not preserve pre-colonial authority but was instead just as disruptive, if not more so, than direct rule. "In spite of its claims to being a more benign form of rule, one that tended to reproduce "native custom" in a permissive fashion, indirect rule was the more hegemonic assertion of colonial power. Unlike direct rule, it aimed at changing the preferences of the mass of the colonized, not just a narrow elite" (Mamdani 1999, 862). Indirect rule, Mamdani argues, did not maintain local authority as it had existed before colonial conquest,

[5] At this stage, I am working on analyzing archival data collected at the *Archives Nationales d'Outre Mer* in Aix-en-Provence, with further data collection to occur over the next year. I laid out my research plans and initial hypotheses in Lawrence (2016).

but altered it by empowering local leaders in specific ways; it made their authority like "a clenched fist" (ibid., 874). Mamdani (1996) thus characterized direct and indirect rule as "centralized despotism" and "decentralized despotism."

Mamdani's claims raise important questions for existing characterizations of colonial rule: can the existence and continuation of pre-colonial traditions and leadership be taken as a given, as part of what defines indirect rule and sets it apart from direct rule? Or did indirect rule alter, not preserve, prior forms of political authority as Mamdani suggests? If so, how did direct and indirect rule differ?

Numerous studies take the view that continuity from the pre-colonial era sets indirect rule apart from direct rule. Scholars of colonial Nigeria outlined seven characteristics that define indirect rule, the first of which is the continuity of the pre-colonial dynasty (in Fisher 1994, 5). Herbst (2000, 83) argues explicitly that Mamdani overstated the extent to which British indirect rule disrupted pre-colonial arrangements, writing: "In some ways, the British managed to duplicate many aspects of pre-colonial rule, including the incomplete domination of the subject population that was inevitable when foreigners tried to rule through local structures." Recently, Gerring et al (2011) have offered a thorough analysis of direct and indirect rule. They argue that indirect rule was more likely to be employed where state-like structures of authority already existed. They conceptualize indirect and direct rule as a continuum, rather than two distinct types. This continuum represents the amount of power delegated to local intermediaries who rule for a powerful central actor. They define indirect rule as "a more decentralized framework in which important decision-making powers are delegated to the weaker entity" (Gerring et al. 2011, 377).

Notably, these studies characterize the role of local intermediaries differently than Mamdani does. For Gerring et al, among others, indirect rule implies power-sharing with local elites, while under direct rule power is centralized in the colonial administration. In contrast, Mamdani argues that the power of intermediaries stems not from their pre-existing status, but from their relationship to the European colonial state. Indirect rule is not a concession to the power of local elites, but serves to create and augment their power. Put otherwise, for Gerring et al, the power of local elites causes them to become intermediaries, while for Mamdani, it is their role as intermediaries that causes them to become powerful.

The tension between these accounts lies in their respective definitions of indirect and direct rule. For Mamdani, independent authority was not the defining feature of indirect rule. For Gerring et al, the power of local leaders vis-à-vis the conquering power is definitional: greater independent authority implies indirect rule, greater dependence on the conqueror implies direct rule. Although Gerring's et al definition is intuitive, parsimonious, and permits variation along a continuum, I suggest that it is problematic in three ways.

First, at a practical level, it is difficult to operationalize. The power of the elites who ruled on behalf of colonial powers varied tremendously in ways that are not captured by a single continuum.[6] For instance, local rulers could have independent authority, yet

[6] Recognizing the tremendous empirical variation in indirect rule arrangements, Naseemullah and Staniland (2014) offer a typology of indirect rule in which the power of local intermediaries varies. They describe a suzerain system, in which local rulers maintain a high degree of autonomy, a de jure system, in which the state monopolizes important functions but delegates coercive powers to local intermediaries, and a hybrid system, in which the state and local intermediaries have overlapping spheres of control. They take an important step toward disaggregating different indirect rule arrangements, but cases may still move between these categories, rendering categorization difficult.

exercise it on different scales. As Herbst (2000, 81) writes, "in some British areas, indirect rule meant the appointment of a council of elders whose writ did not extend much beyond a village, while in other areas, it meant the recognition of an already powerful ruler who had authority over hundreds of thousands of people." Rulers could also exercise a significant amount of power but then find themselves dismissed by the colonial administration, which retained the right to remove leaders. Fitting cases onto a continuum of power is not an easy task if the ability of local leaders to act independently fluctuated over time and space. Measures of power are also difficult to obtain since local rulers exercised powers in different domains, such as policing, tax collection, and the administration of justice. Measurements of one of these may not reflect their power in other domains.

Second, the requirement that local leaders have independent authority omits cases in which conquerors ruled via local leaders who were not powerful before the colonial era. Gerring et al explicitly discount indirect rule via chiefs who are largely colonial creations from their definition. The warrant chiefs in Africa are, they suggest, a form of pseudo-indirect rule because they have little independent authority.[7] This practice of installing chiefs is puzzling, however. If Gerring et al are right that this is fake form of indirect rule, it raises the question of why the British did not simply rule directly. What use were local intermediaries who did not have their own power bases? What difference did it make that

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Moreover, like the Gerring et al definition, the implication that direct rule equates with more power for the state, while indirect entails power-sharing, requires empirical validation.

[7] The warrant chiefs are not the only examples of this; Wucherpfennig et al (2015) posit that French indirect rule was different from British indirect rule because chiefs who worked with the French tended to have less independent power than the chiefs in British colonies. Ochono's (2014) study of Middle Belt Nigeria also shows that the British outsourced colonial rule to Hausa-Fulani outsiders, rather than using local chiefs or ruling directly.

rulers were locals rather than Europeans if their actions were dictated by the colonial power? For Gerring et al (2011, 388), this was a misstep; an attempt to construct indirect rule where it could not succeed. In Mamdani's framework, these chiefs were useful, not because of any prior legitimacy or power, but because the colonial powers' delegation of them as chiefs was itself a source of power. Reconciling these viewpoints requires considering why Europeans sometimes worked through leaders with minimal independent authority.

Third, and perhaps most important, defining indirect rule as a power-sharing arrangement effectively assumes away some of the most interesting and pressing questions about what it was that indirect and direct rule were intended to accomplish. If we take Mamdani's position seriously, direct rule may not have given the colonial state more power over indigenous populations than indirect rule did. Indirect rule may have been a particularly effective way to extend European power and achieve colonial objectives, or it may have been a concession to existing power-holders, as Gerring et al suggest. Mediating between these points of view requires an investigation into the reasons why particular colonial actors advocated for direct or indirect rule. It also requires a better understanding of the powers of and constraints on the local intermediaries who ruled on behalf of European states.

It is easy to see why the relative power of European and indigenous actors has been considered an important differentiating characteristic between direct and indirect rule. Continuity with pre-colonial traditions and the preservation of local authority was the overarching theoretical goal articulated by the colonialists themselves. But it is a mistake to take their word for it; in practice, this continuity was variable. Rather than accepting

either that colonial rhetoric accurately described arrangements on the ground or that indirect rule altered and augmented the power of local elites, it makes sense to think of their power as a variable, not a defining feature of one type of colonial rule. Empirically, both Gerring et al and Mamdani are correct; colonial rulers did sometimes share power with local elites, but other times, they empowered local actors who were outsiders or who had little prior authority.

If we reject a conceptualization based on power, and turn the disruptiveness of colonial rule into a question rather than a defining feature, how then should direct and indirect rule be defined? Defining these terms is complicated because there are multiple dimensions along which indirect and direct rule are said to differ. One common understanding of the difference between them is the use of locals in colonial administration. Some have suggested that any use of locals qualifies as indirect rule,[8] but places commonly considered under direct rule also employed locals as interpreters, clerks, and tax collectors; they reported directly to the colonial administration but they also sometimes had considerable independent authority and influence.[9] Use of locals was ubiquitous in the colonial period, so by this definition, few cases would count as direct rule.

It may be more accurate to say that it is not the general use of locals, but whether or not they are given nominal recognition as leaders.[10] Nominal recognition does not imply that leaders wield a particular amount of power, but it does acknowledge them as official

[8] See the discussion in Fisher (1994, 5–6). Doyle (1986) suggests that under direct rule, only the lowest levels of the administration are entrusted to indigenous actors.

[9] On this, see Derrick (1983), who notes that clerks sometimes headed colonial offices during long absences by European staff; they also had considerable prestige and access to information that they could leverage over both colonial administrators and the local population.

[10] Fisher (1994, 6–7) writes that the external power recognizes, at least to some degree, the sovereignty of the local state.

authorities designated by the colonial power. This criterion sets apart the employment of locals from their designation as leaders; under direct rule, locals may be employed and delegated specific tasks, but the nominal rulers are Europeans, even if locals sometimes stand in on their behalf.

`Another common criterion to distinguish indirect from direct rule is the system of law. Direct rule suggests a single system of law set by the occupying power. That system does not imply fairness or rights; it often established unjust laws for indigenous populations, but it was a centralized legal structure. Legal pluralism characterizes indirect rule. Areas of indirect rule are governed by customary law, which may differ from region to region, or even tribe to tribe; the legal code of the occupying power is reserved for Europeans and select others (Mamdani 1996, 17).

If it were the case that places clearly fell under either customary or European law, this criterion would be useful for coding and classification. Indeed, statistical work has often used customary law as an indictor of indirect rule, regardless of how it is defined (see Gerring et al. 2011; Hariri 2012; Lange 2004). Yet, customary law often governed some domains while European-based law governed others, or customary law was altered such that it was not, in fact customary. For example, Lewis (2013) shows how the decision to have different legal systems for Tunisians and French citizens in Tunisia under the protectorate was exceedingly difficult to implement, and ended up requiring a significant French presence in the courts that were supposed to be run by Tunisians for Tunisians, rendering problematic the idea that this form of rule was meaningfully "indirect." The trouble was that discerning who could and could not be considered "French" or "Tunisian" itself required adjudication, as claimants manipulated identity clams in order to appear in

the judicial system that they preferred. In practice, deciding whether and when there is a customary legal system, versus a European legal system, may be difficult to determine, and many cases may have both types of systems depending on the region, area of law (criminal versus civil for example), or constituent status.

Other institutions may also be implicated in common understandings of direct and indirect rule. The extent to which the police are European or indigenous, the ration of European personnel to indigenous personnel in the colonial administration, the system of education, and the presence of European settler communities have also been descriptively linked to the type of colonial rule (Hechter 2013; Hechter 2000).

In sum, the concepts of indirect and direct rule are not easily differentiable along a single axis of the "directness" of colonial oversight. It is not just the naming of indigenous actors to leadership positions that sets areas commonly considered under indirect rule apart from areas labeled direct rule. The institutions – legal, criminal, and administrative – may also differ, and there may or may not be a significant European population. Understanding the causes and effects of European strategies thus requires greater specificity about what precisely differed across colonial space, so that the consequences of specific colonial policies can be considered. The next section illustrates some of these issues through discussing colonial Algeria.

II. Military and Civilian Rule in Colonial Algeria

French colonial rule is typically considered more direct than British colonial rule. The French colonial model was explicitly interventionist. France had a civilizing mission: it aimed to assimilate its colonies. Further, France's Jacobin centralizing political tradition meant that colonial administration would be directed from the center (Kudo 2010, 21).

Algeria, France's most important colonial territory, was not just a colony, but considered an integral part of France itself. In 1848, the three divisions of Bone, Constantine, and Algiers were designated French departments, like departments in France. Algeria is a case that we might expect to be easily classifiable as direct rule, but this section shows that colonial governance varied over time and place in Algeria, making an assertion of the type of colonial rule for the entire colony inaccurate. Large areas of Algeria were governed in ways that we typically think of as indirect, and the type of rule varied depending on who was in charge. Further, control from the center was not uniform and colonial officers, settlers, and civilian leaders were able to act independently, sometimes ignoring directives from the center or acting on their own initiative.

Algeria under the July Monarchy, 1830-1848

France's first decade in Algeria was characterized by uncertainty (Lorcin 1995). Proposed policies in the early years included withdrawal, a limited occupation of coastal cities with native chiefs governing the interior, exterminating or expelling indigenous populations, and full conquest.

For several years after the collapse of Charles X's regime, the generals in Algeria were largely left to formulate their own policies, although they were frequently recalled – there were ten different governor-generals during the first decade. These early governors took different actions toward the indigenous population. The second, for example, General Clauzel, sought to work with Muslim chiefs who he hoped would assist the French; he proposed installing Tunisian beys to rule at Oran and Constantine and signed a secret treaty with the Tunisian ruling family before being recalled (Ageron 1991, 11). General Savary, the fourth governor, and a former minister of police, used more violent tactics,

exterminating an entire tribe, assassinating several Arab chiefs, and ruling brutally in the town of Algiers before dying in office (ibid). Subsequent governors oscillated between brutality against indigenous groups, and forming alliances with local leaders. This twin use of violence on the one hand, and delegation to local authorities on the other, became characteristic of military rule in Algeria.

General Bugeaud (governor from 1841-1847), initiated a systematic approach to native administration when he re-established the Direction of Arab Affairs in 1841. Bugeaud initially meant to model the management of the indigenous population after the Ottoman *makhzan* system. But Daumas, the director of Arab Affairs, studied the existing administration of Algerian leader Abd el-Kader, and persuaded Bugeaud that a system of indirect government entrusted to Arab chiefs from the military and religious nobility was the best example to follow: "The aristocracy still have great power and influence over the natives, and must always be given great consideration" (in Ageron 1991, 22). The military thus did not abolish the previous system of government, but took over the organization it had found (ibid., 23).

The Direction of Arab Affairs oversaw local *bureaux arabes*, which were charged with administering the indigenous Algerians. Each included French and indigenous personnel: French military officers who spoke Arabic, knew the area, and coordinated with the cadi (local judge and notary), khodja (arab secretary), and French and indigenous soldiers. The purpose of the Arab affairs bureaus was "above all to assure security through intelligence collection, surveillance, and ties to notables."[11]

[11] CAOM, Gouvernement général de l'Algérie. Bureaux arabes de l'Oranie - Registres (1841/1913), histoire administrative.

The French officers of the *bureaux arabes* acted as intermediaries between the French military leadership and the native chiefs (Ageron 1991, 23). Known as Arabists, they spoke Arabic, claimed knowledge of local people and customs, and tended to have experience in Algeria. They saw themselves as vastly more enlightened when it came to indigenous administration than civilian rulers.[12]

Civilian rule was the exception during the 1830-1848 period; only small urban pockets were under civilian government. In these areas, French civil servants and magistrates behaved as if they were in France, applying French metropolitan law. In 1847, civilian areas were divided into communes, the basic units of local government in France, headed by mayors whose salary came from taxes collected from the subject population (Ageron, 26). By the time Bugeaud left in 1847, there were 109,400 settlers in Algeria. Of these, about 15,000 had settled in the military ruled areas of the countryside; the rest lived in the cities of the coast (ibid.). These early settlers hated the military officers of the *bureaux arabes*, who they saw as siding with the natives (Ageron, 24).

The military's approach to native administration, which more closely resembles indirect than direct rule, was not the only strategy the military followed during these years. Alongside their claims to understand and represent the interests of the indigenous population of Algeria, the military also used considerable force. Bugeaud advocated conquering Algeria "by plough and by sword." Accordingly even as administrative offices were established to administer local populations, the French army engaged in atrocious acts of violence. The French employed a tactic they called "*razzia*," a term taken from the Algerian word for raiding. They used the term to imply that their attacks against

[12] On the bureaux arabes and the Saint Simonian ideology that guided many of its officers, see Abi-Mershed (2010); Pilbeam (2013), add…

recalcitrant tribes were consistent with local norms of violence, but the level of brutality of the French practice went beyond the term's original usage (Gallois 2013, 2–4). In 1845, Bugeaud commented on the recent asphyxiation of a local tribe by French soldiers, "It is a cruel extremity, but a horrifying example was necessary to strike terror among these turbulent and fanatical montagnards" (in Brower 2009, 22).

The military principle in place was the aggressive use of force to overwhelm the enemy and crush resistance (ibid., 23). Lieutenant Colonel Lucien-François de Montagnac described "how to make war on the Arabs" in the following way: Kill all the men down to the age of fifteen, take all the women and children, put them on boats and send them to Marquesas Islands, or somewhere else; in a word, annihilate all who will not grovel at our feet like dogs" ibid., 22). During Bugeaud's term, France expanded its reach into Algeria, attacking the resistance leader Abd el-Kader, to whom they had earlier contemplated delegating power (Ageron 1991, 18–19).

Algeria under the Second Republic (1848-1851) and the Second Empire (1852-1870)

The period from 1848 to 1870 saw multiple shifts in authority in Algeria, as civilian areas grew and consolidated, while the military's authority waxed and waned. The 1848 Revolution in France brought in a republican government that settlers hoped would favor their desire to expand civilian control of Algeria. The Constitution of 1848 stated that Algeria was an integral part of France and promised to extend the laws of France to Algeria. It was at this time that Algiers, Bone, and Constantine became departments, the basic units of provincial government in metropolitan France. In each of the three departments, there were areas under civilian and military control. In the civilian areas, the departments were divided into *arrondissements* (districts) and communes, just as they were in metropolitan

France (Ageron 1991, 29). The military zones were divided in *cercles* and communes and the *bureaux arabes* continued to shape policy toward the indigenous Algerians.

Within each department, there were three types of communes: *communes de plein exercise,* which were largely populated by settlers and were administered very similarly to communes in France, *communes mixtes*, where there were both settler and indigenous populations, and *communes indigènes*, which were largely indigenous. This spatial variation provides an opportunity to better understand the causes and consequences of different colonial approaches. Since the question here concerns the colonial policies toward indigenous populations, I am particularly interested in the comparison between mixed communes under both military and civilian control. I am still in the process of compiling sources on how these areas were governed; below I provide a preliminary discussion of the motivations of civilian and military colonial agents.

In 1852, Napoleon III came to power, establishing the Second Empire in France. With the return of monarchy, the military again gained the upper hand. In a letter written in 1863, Napoleon III stated "Algeria is not, strictly speaking, a colony but an Arab kingdom." This statement, along with the claim that the natives of Algeria, like the settlers, had an equal right to Napoleon III's protection, infuriated the settlers.[13] The *bureaux arabes* implemented the emperor's program, establishing Muslim courts of justice, reopening Koranic schools in military territory, and introducing Arab-French primary schools in certain urban and tribal areas. In civilian areas, settlers pushed back against policies favoring the indigenous population. They made strides toward the policy of

[13] Quoted in Ageron (1991, 38).

cantonnement, which delimited property rights. In practice this policy forced native Algerians to cede their lands to the state.

The influence of the *bureaux arabes* began declining after 1870, when areas under military control began to be transferred to civilian rule. In 1875, there were 1,418,315 million people living under military rule, including 7,055 French settlers; while 1,047,092 were under civilian rule, including 136,826 French settlers. By 1902, number of people living under military rule in the three departments had declined to 588,691 (and only 3,245 French settlers), while there were 4,134,534 people under civilian control, including 354,884 French settlers.[14] The transfer of communes from military to civilian rule provides another opportunity to explore the reasons for and consequences of changing colonial policies.

This preliminary discussion of the first forty years of colonialism in Algeria shows that the French approach is not easily classifiable as direct or indirect. The French implemented different strategies in different places, and their approach changed over time. Even though Algeria has been considered a quintessential case of direct rule, the French military empowered local elites, retained law based on the sharia, and supported indigenous education in Arabic. The French military also attacked some local chiefs, rather than empowering them, engaging in horrific violence as the conquest continued into the Algerian interior. In some areas, French rule was very similar to French rule in France, with metropolitan laws and administration, but the majority of the country was under military rule that did not include metropolitan institutions. There was no single overarching logic of colonial rule in Algeria; the military and civilians had approaches that were at odds with

[14] Tableau Général des Communes d'Algérie, 1875 & 1902. CAOM.

one another. In the next section, I consider why actors' approaches to colonial governance differ.

III. Theory: Who favored direct and indirect rule and why?

Competition between military and civilian actors was core feature of colonial rule in Algeria. Civilian administrators and settlers insisted that their approach was superior, that the ultimate goal was the administrative assimilation of Algeria to the motherland.[15] They wanted to destroy the native aristocracy and replace it with a French bureaucratic system. They accused the military of "despotism by the sword," pointing to the continued reliance on violence as a weakness of the military's approach.[16] In response, proponents of the military's approach defended the use of indigenous chiefs and the maintenance of native institutions and practices, decrying civilian rule as inept and unjust.[17] General Hanoteau, an officer of the *bureaux arabes*, criticized the settlers in the civilian zones, stating, "What our settlers dream of is a bourgeois feudalism in which they will be the lords and the natives the serfs."[18] Both sides presented themselves as better suited to governing Algeria; defending their own bureaucratic interests in the colony.

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[15] They favored administrative assimilation and the import of metropolitan laws for settlers, not the assimilation of indigenous Algerians; settlers vehemently opposed citizenship rights of Algerians. On the prospects of assimilation for Algerians, see Lawrence (2013).

[16] For examples of these views, see: Morsly, Docteur T. Conseiller Municipal de Constantine. « Contribution à la Question Indigène en Algerie. » Constantine : Imprimerie Jérome Marle et F. Biron, 1894 CAOM B3932 ; « Un Programme Algérien » Discours de M. Marchal, vice-président du Conseil Général d'Alger, membre du Conseil Supérieur. Alger : Imprimerie C. Zamith, 1898. CAOM B7721 ; Foucher, Vitor. Les Bureaux Arabs en Algérie. Extrait de la « Revue Contemporaine » t. XXXIV 31 Octobre 1857, pp. 209-230 CAOM B3931.

[17] See« Alger : Situation Politique 1860 » Gouvernement Général Civil de L'Algérie. Bureau Politiques. FR ANOM GGA 11 H1 ; Leblanc de Prébois, François (ex-représentant de l'Algérie en 1848), « Bilan du Régime Civil de l'Algérie à la fin de 1871 ». Paris : E. Dentu, 1872 CAOM B7059.

[18] Quoted in Ageron (1991, 39–40).

Two factors helped shape whether the military or the civilian leadership dominated at particular points in time: the stance of the government in Paris, and the security situation in Algeria. The French government changed hands over the course of the period; with civilians generally better supported by republican actors, while the military was favored by monarchy. But this alone could not give one party the upper hand. A key issue was also the ongoing need for security, a concern shared by both civilians and the military, but which was the primary job of the military. Rebellions and the threat of the rebellion ensured that the military retained an important role in governing Algeria.

But why was it that the military favored a style of rule that more closely resembles indirect rule, while the civilian leadership wanted to import French institutions? This section develops a general argument for different approaches to colonial governance, laying out the implications that still require empirical investigation, both in Algeria and in additional cases.

Indirect rule and the military

I argue that indirect rule was useful for the military in part because the primary task of a military engaged in conquest is to establish order. Security is the foremost concern for a general engaged in operations overseas. Indirect rule helped solve this problem: it allowed colonial militaries to delegate the use of force to indigenous leaders charged with maintaining stability and preventing disorder. Disorder could take the form of outright revolt, but it could also involve less overt forms of resistance, such as the refusal to provide labor for colonial projects or tax evasion. By delegating authority to local rulers, the actions these rulers took could be justified as consistent with indigenous culture and traditions. The ability to pass off the coercion exercised by local intermediaries as a

manifestation of tradition conveniently distanced colonial actors from the brutality of colonial rule; it provided a way to deflect direct responsibility for coercion that was useful, or in some instances essential, to the success of the colonial project.

By portraying the coercive acts of local intermediaries as a lamentable by-product of indirect rule, colonial actors could account for violence to domestic audiences in the metropole who oversaw colonial rule from afar. Proponents of indirect rule were thus careful to not to publicly condone the use of brute force, and Europeans retained the prerogative to investigate such "abuses" when they occurred. In practice, however, brutality was expected to accompany indirect rule. As C.L. Temple, the lieutenant governor in northern Nigeria from 1914-1917 explained in *Native Races and their Rulers*, "To put this policy into effect means first of all that you must shut your eyes, up to a certain point, to a great many practices which, though not absolutely repugnant to humanity are nevertheless reprehensible to our ideas… you have to make up your mind that men are not all equal before the law and cannot be so treated" (quoted in Smith 1970, 16). In this view, indirect rule, with its reliance on multiple systems of law ostensibly based on tradition, required a degree of tolerance for unrestrained leadership, up to an unspecified point.

The need for colonial officials to "shut their eyes" to brutal practices could be taken to imply a necessary absence of accountability that accompanied the delegation of rule to local leaders. Indeed, Gerring et al (2011, 414) suggest that indirect rule entails a trade-off between accountability and the effectiveness of local rulers, writing that interference may threaten the legitimacy of the designated rulers. Yet practices that were justified as unwelcome accompaniments to indirect rule may, in fact, have had utility for colonial actors. Instead of conceptualizing the use of force as a problem of accountability, the

absence of accountability and direct oversight could be advantageous, not only because it distanced the colonial power from violence carried out by intermediaries and allowed them to avoid direct responsibility, but also because coercion itself was useful for deterring and dealing with acts of rebellion and for justifying the continued need for military oversight. Martin Thomas (2012, 2) has directed our attention to the utility of policing for the economic aims of colonizing powers, pointing to the use of repression against workers in industries and plantations. This repression is not a by-product of colonial rule, but part of "what colonial police were called upon to do." To take an example, in colonial Gambia, the British not only tolerated coercion by chiefs, they expected chiefs to wield "strong powers" in order to fully control their districts (Ceesay 2014, 29).

Military actors, by *habitus*, are likely to prioritize order and to favor methods that reduce restrictions on the use of force. In areas of indirect rule, force could be delegated to local actors, but additionally, indirect rule gave the military itself significant freedom of action. In Algeria, the military carried out numerous attacks on unconquered areas, and also brutally put down rebellions when they occurred. The violence of the military in Algeria stands in contrast to their role as the "defender" of the indigenous people and the civilian claim that the military officers in Algeria put the native ahead of the settler. It is indeed remarkable that French military officers both brutally attacked and vehemently defended indigenous populations, and this apparent contradiction makes more sense if w posit that the ability to wield violence was a more fundamental part of the appeal of indirect approaches than respect for indigenous norms and institutions.[19]

[19] One key problem that confronted colonial officers in Algeria was that although they wished to rely on local chiefs, their notes and correspondence suggest that they often had trouble believing they could trust local chiefs because of the history of French violence in the colonies. The archives suggest a

Several empirical implications follow from hypothesizing indirect rule as an authoritarian project aimed at establishing order. First, the argument has implications for the kinds of traditions that might be tolerated under indirect rule. As Suzanne Rudolph (2005, 9) writes, "tradition is not an unbreakable package." Customary law codified some practices and omitted others; colonial rulers likewise tolerated some customs, but outlawed others, as the eventual abolition of slavery suggests. The argument here suggests that indirect rule would tend to permit elements of tradition that were useful for maintaining autocratic control. The *razzia*, for example, mentioned above, was appropriated by the French and used against recalcitrant tribes. Bugeaud stated explicitly in 1841 that the *razzia* was "systematized because of its usefulness" (quoted in Gallois, p. 3), suggesting that the French were selective about which elements of "traditional" culture they used.

A second implication is that we should observe variation in the kinds of coercion employed. Specifically, in areas that were ruled more indirectly, colonial officers and local leaders should have had a freer hand to engage in practices such as collective punishment, imprisonment without due process, confiscation of property, and violent punishment of offenders than in areas of direct rule. To take a different example, in Gambia in 1919, when "the Upper Saloum Chief burnt down the entire village at Bantanto forcing its inhabitants to seek refuge in nearby Nianija district, a subsequent inquiry exonerated the chief. It stated thus: "The crimes were very common, and were not crimes in the eyes of his people … In fact, they were committed to show 'power'" (Ceesay 2014, 34). In areas of direct rule, the

lingering suspicion that leaders might defect at any point because the conquest had been so brutal that it would be difficult to forgive and forget.

legal code in place, including the Native Codes that established punishments specific to indigenous peoples, should provide a more uniform set of penalties and restrictions.

A third implication is that indigenous leaders who were not significant power-holders during the pre-colonial era could still perform an effective intermediary role. The opportunity to use coercion under the guise of tradition allowed leaders who were appointed by the colonial power to consolidate control even when they lacked a legitimate pre-colonial leadership role. We might expect that these leaders would need to rely on force more heavily than leaders who already had established roles before the colonial period, at least initially. The move to appoint leaders who lacked their own independent power is puzzling for existing accounts of direct and indirect rule, but if the powers that they were granted helped to establish their control, they could still fulfill a useful role for colonial actors.

Civilian Administration and Direct Approaches

Areas where civilians were in power in Algeria were hardly more benevolent and just than areas controlled by the military. The civilian zones were not violence-free, but the forms of violence and they types of penalties that Algerians faced differed.

My argument is that colonial bureaucrats and settlers conceptualized order differently than the military did. For them, order meant rule of law.[20] The mission of colonial bureaucrats differed from their military counterparts; for them, the key goal was to install an administration capable of governing newly conquered areas. This implied

[20] As Thomas (2012, 7) argued for colonial police officers across European colonies, different actors may have their own standards for how the world ought to be.

implementing a bureaucratic structure that would routinize and regulate relations between Europeans and the colonialize population.[21]

This understanding of order did not imply rights for the colonized population. Often, it carried with it a set of legal penalties and restrictions targeted specifically at the native population. It provided rights to Europeans in the colony, but established an inferior legal status for the wider population. Settlers thus have often been associated with the establishment of direct rule; they were eager to maintain their citizenship rights and prevent the conquered population from gaining similar rights in order to preserve their privileges. Both settlers and administrators can be expected to favor the installation of a legal code that would offer uniformity and clearly delineate the laws governing behavior.

The establishment of a unified legal code, with rights for Europeans and selected groups among the colonized, affected the form of collective action that occurred in response to colonial rule. As I have argued elsewhere, the initial response of indigenous activists in the French colonies was to use the legal code to make demands upon the French administration. Rebellion against colonialism in the French Empire was guided by the laws and rights in place, as activists pointed to the hypocrisy of a system whose aim was to "civilize" native populations but which refused to extend to them the same rights that European citizens enjoyed. Activists thus sought to extend the rights that were provided to European settlers to the local population and worked to dismantle the Native Codes that set them apart from Europeans (Lawrence 2013). Direct rule was thus not always illegitimate because of the identity of the colonial rulers, but because of the laws and rules that accompanied it.

[21] On European ways of seeing and bringing order to a colony, see Mitchell (1991).

Competition and Colonial Governance

The hypotheses I have outlined focus on the interests of particular colonial actors. They reflect insights from historians about the importance of studying the interactions that occurred during the colonial period. Colonial policy was not decided upon in imperial centers and then implemented surgically from above. Colonial actors had opposing ideas and interests that led to divergent views about how colonial governance should be approached. Competition between different colonial agents led to shifts in strategy over time and place. And the actions of the indigenous population also mattered because the prospect of rebellion empowered some colonial actors over others.

These arguments differ from existing explanations for direct and indirect rule in ways that require greater elucidation. The primary alternatives focus on two factors: the costs of direct versus indirect rule, and the suitability of each type of rule for particular locations. Indirect rule is said to be less costly and therefore more attractive to colonial powers looking to reduce the cost of empire. Yet indirect rule cannot be implemented in all settings; Gerring et al (2011), for example, argue that it is only possible where there are pre-existing leaders capable of ruling for the imperial power. For lack of time and space, I do not discuss these alternative arguments here. It is worthwhile to add, however, that I do not intend to suggest that these factors were not important, but that the politics of the period may be equally crucial, if not more so, for explaining why colonial strategies were adopted and why they changed over time.

Conclusion & Implications

This paper has offered a preliminary look at variation in colonial governance, with a focus on colonial Algeria. It is part of an ongoing project that seeks to investigate different colonial strategies, demonstrate subnational variation that is often ignored in macro characterizations of colonial rule, and consider why colonial approaches varied.

Studying indirect and direct rule during the late colonial period is important for understanding how Europeans ruled over diverse populations at great distances from imperial centers. Recent scholarship has shown how imperialists thought about and defended both forms of colonial rule.[22] My aim is to compare different modes of rule and describe how they worked on the ground.

This topic has implications for understanding the effects of the colonial period. The idea that colonial rule had long-term consequences makes sense, given that colonial rulers often claimed to be in the business of transformation. Even where colonial interventions were supposed to be indirect and limited, rulers acted in ways that changed local economies and patterns of authority. A growing body of work has found persistent legacies of the colonial era. Direct and indirect rule in particular have been linked to nationalist resistance, the empowerment of privileged groups, economic underdevelopment, and autocracy,[23] yet the mechanisms remain unclear because knowledge of and data on colonial practices is lacking. A better understanding of how imperial governance varied can point to potential problems with current ways of measuring and interpreting colonial era variables.

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[22] See the recent studies by Mantena (2010) and Pitts (2009).

[23] For recent examples, see Acemoglu et al (2014); Hariri (2012); Hechter (2000; 2013); Kohli (2004); Lange (2004); Wucherpfennig et al (2015).

Further, strategies such as indirect rule, or divide-and-rule, continue to be invoked in contemporary cases of occupation and state expansion.[24] This project suggests that these approaches are unlikely to be implemented in the ways that proponents envision. Indirect rule may not be effective because of its use of indigenous leaders, as is so often assumed, but because of the violence that accompanied its application. A closer look at the colonial period may thus have important lessons for the study of counter-insurgency and conquest more broadly; by looking at the gap between what colonial rulers said about what they were doing and what they actually did, it is possible to identify structural limitations that thwart policy implementation.

[24] See Fisher (1994, 3–4) and Naseemullah and Staniland (2014).

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