The Origins of Foreign Aid:
Colonial Development and Welfare Funds in the Late British Empire

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Abstract

This paper is part of a book-length project in which I investigate the origins of foreign aid and its impact on state building in British and French colonies in Africa, the West Indies, and Southeast Asia. I begin by studying the Colonial Development and Welfare (CDW) Act, an imperial aid program initiated by the British between 1929 and 1970 and meant to grow colonial economies and expand the welfare conditions of native subjects. Studying the CDW program (and the French equivalent, the FIDES initiative inaugurated in 1945), I seek to shed light on the historical origins of fiscal capacity in the Global South, the social and bureaucratic transformations that accelerated colonial independence, and the effectiveness of large-scale foreign aid interventions in conditions of low fungibility. Having a good understanding of the selection process into high or low levels of imperial aid is necessary to establish any causal effect of imperial aid on state capacity and political mobilization during and after colonial rule. Hence, in this paper I focus on the allocation criteria of CDW funds, that is, why some colonies received more imperial aid than others. First, I reconstruct the six CDW allocations in the full lifespan of the program; second, I retrieve the allocation criteria from declassified correspondence between the Colonial Office and the British Treasury; third and last, I test the effective relevance of said criteria against hard data for all participant colonies (all 54 of them). The empirical analysis shows that imperial aid disproportionally targeted poorer colonies with weak state capacity, suggesting an equalizing motivation in the program. Next in this research agenda is to examine the causal impact of CDW funds on colonial fiscal capacity and political mobilization.

[PRELIMINARY. COMMENTS WELCOME]

1 Introduction

Before World War I British Crown colonies (i.e., territories without self-government) relied largely on domestic resources to fund local expenditures. Unlike sovereign nations Crown colonies had limited access to foreign loans, and subsidies from the metropole occurred on rare occasions, for instance, after a severe drought. This changed during the interwar period. In the late 1920s London instituted a four-decade program of imperial aid aimed at growing the markets and welfare standards of Crown colonies. Initial conditions were challenging. Crown colonies were hardly monetized, and the few welfare services were confined to white settlers. Perhaps more importantly, the capacity of the colonial state was so limited that economic push required simultaneous investments in basic administrative capacity, then called "government machinery."

The 1929 Colonial Development Program—renamed Colonial Development and Welfare in 1940—represented a major change in colonial policy because for the first time London assumed some responsibility for the welfare of the peoples in the colonies. Although the relationship between the metropole and Crown colonies remained fundamentally oppressive, new voices critical of imperial exploitation grew louder in Parliament, convincing a new generation of British leaders that development and welfare could be brought to the colonies without imperiling the Empire.

History proved them wrong. By investing in native education and local bureaucracies, by sponsoring trade unions and cooperatives meant for smoother industrial relations, and by securing streams of revenue to fund local expenditures, the Empire equipped native peoples with further means to self-rule their own independent states. "Their illusion [that of the British imperialist] was that they thought they could control political evolution. [...] What they saw as a goal in 1945 [self-government of the colonies sustained by economic progress] was not where they ended twenty years later" (Cooper, 2019, p.50-1).

This paper is the first installment of a book-length project in which I seek to answer three questions. First, why did the British change course? That is, why did they decide to devote British taxpayers' money to improve living standards overseas? Were they chasing the greater good or advancing domestic interests? Second, was the program effective? That is, did it grow local economies and expand welfare services before colonial rule came to an end? Third, did imperial aid carry any legacy helping to stabilize democratic practice after independence? Before addressing these important questions, here I seek to accomplish a self-contained goal, namely understanding the criteria used to allocate developmental funds to Crown colonies. This is a crucial step in establishing whether imperial aid had any causal effect on local conditions before and after independence.

I seek to make three contributions in the larger project. First, I aim to provide a better understanding of the historical origins of fiscal capacity and public indebtedness in the Global South (Albers et al., 2023; Frankema and Booth, 2019; Frieden, 1991; Gardner, 2012; Queralt, 2022). The influx of imperial aid required colonial authorities to mobilize local taxation to the best of their ability to help cofinance CDW projects. Changes in internal promotion within the colonial service after the 1930 Warren Fisher Reform helped meet that goal. With the end of patronage in the colonial service, good fiscal performance (i.e., growth in tax revenue) became the best single predictor of upward promotion of colonial governors (Xu, 2018), the maximum authority in the colonies. Thus, the flow of developmental aid combined with a very specific system of incentives for colonial administrators could have helped colonies grow fiscal capacity with lasting consequences.

Second, I seek to offer a microfoundation for the relationship between British colonial rule and long-term democratic practice. Compared to other empires, the British promoted the rule of law (Porta et al., 1999), the preservation of native representative institutions (Bolt et al., 2022), and constitutional reform in the late colonial period (Lee and Paine, 2019; Young, 1969). What is less well known is that in the eyes of the imperial administrator, constitutional advancement in the late colonial empire could follow only a well-functioning state machinery and a dynamic economy. To secure these goals, in 1940 the Colonial Office escalated the developmental aid program initiated in 1929 by including the promotion of welfare conditions and injecting five times the initial funds. Inspired by the scholarship of Rosenstein-Rodan, the Colonial Development and Welfare (CDW) Act was an early experiment of big push theory, aiming at growing the economy, welfare, and administrative capacity of the recipient territory as a means to facilitate its self-rule. The dyad comprising economic prosperity and constitutional government within the Commonwealth was made explicit in parliamentary debates and published in CDW brochures circulated at the United Nations:

> CD and W is an integral part of the most exciting period in British colonial history, the decade 1945-55, in which these countries have nearly all moved decisively forward [...] towards self-government and control of their own political and economic destinies (British Information Services, 1956, p.2)

An understanding of the relationship between development and self-government under colonial rule is necessary to reconstruct the causal sequence underlying the association between democratic rule and the British colonial legacy that appears in recent empirical work (i.e., the so-called British colonial origins fixed effect).

Third, native populations had little to no agency in the design of CDW plans, or "schemes" as they were called. CDW planning and implementation were largely in the hands of colonial officials, accountable to the Colonial Governor and ultimately London. Although normatively reprehensible, the institutional configuration of the CDW program might mitigate fungibility issues common in modern-day foreign aid (e.g., the deviation of funds by local leaders to core political supporters).[1] The CDW program could have had fewer scalability issues, too. After 1940 CDW schemes were not considered in isolation but as part of multiyear development plans scaled at the colony level. For instance, these plans included comprehensive programs from primary to tertiary education for the entire colonial territory. Altogether, the analysis

[1]See Boone (1996) and Feyzioglu et al. (1998) for evidence of fungibility of aid funds in post-colonial times.

of the impact of CDW offers a unique set up to identify the impact of large-scale aid programs on welfare and bureaucratic outcomes in conditions of low fungibility.[2]

In this paper I examine the logic of CDW fund allocation, namely who got what. In Section 2 I elaborate further on the origins of the program as well as the potential consequences for state building and the political mobilization of colonial subjects. In Section 3 I draw on original archival material to reconstruct the criteria employed by the Colonial Office (CO) and the Treasury to allocate funds. In Section 4 I test whether the factors discussed by CO officials and the Treasury are backed by hard data. To that end, I reconstruct the six allocations in the lifespan of the aid program and regress those on the criteria considered in the official discussions. Two factors emerge as most relevant to understand CDW fund allocation—population and revenue per capita—whereas results for public indebtedness depend on the model specification. Section 5 concludes with some final remarks. All these materials are preliminary.

2 The Origins of Imperial Aid

The interwar years were a hectic period in British politics: The Labour Party assumed power for the first time ever (briefly in 1924 and again in 1929), unemployment surpassed 20%, protectionist policy regained popularity, and national socialism and communism grew within established parties. In this context the British Parliament passed the 1929 Colonial Development Act, a bill granting imperial funds for developmental projects to colonies without self-government, namely all colonies and protectorates in Africa (except Southern Rhodesia), the West Indies, the Far East, the Middle East, and the Pacific Islands plus Malta and Ceylon (Sri Lanka), the only two qualifying colonies with some form of self-government.[3] The 1929 Act represented a major deviation from the Gladstonian *self-sufficiency principle*,

[2]The imposed nature of the program will raise legitimacy concerns that resonate with David Lake's (2016) statebuilder's dilemma.

[3]India was excluded for exceeding those limits.

which had governed the relationship between the metropole and the colonies to that date (Davis and Huttenback, 1988). Although punctual subsidies had been granted in the past to cope with natural disasters and budgetary aid had been occasionally given to some colonies at the price of financial control by the British Treasury, this was the first time that the metropole assumed that British taxpayer was corresponsible for the economic prosperity of the colonies (Constantine, 1984; Stammer, 1967).

The 1929 Colonial Development Act was a compromise among very different political traditions in British politics: the Liberals, who saw an opportunity to grow international markets in times of economic contraction;[4] the Labor Party and its many internal families, including the internationalists like Archibald Fenner Brockway, the paternalists (or camouflaged racists) like Viscount Milner, and the bread-and-butter trade unionists like Thomas Johnston, who saw an opportunity to secure cheaper inputs for British industry; and the Conservative Party with aid skeptics like Leo Amery (former Secretary of the State for the Colonies) and right-wing nationalists like Captain Ronald Henderson, who shared views with trade unionists on this matter.

The 1929 bill moved forward because it reconciled views of those in favor of promoting domestic interest and those sincerely committed to the wellbeing of the colonies. Sir Oswald Mosley (Labour), Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and leader of the Parliamentary negotiations, summarized the two goals of the Act as follows: "The Bill is to develop the Colonies agriculturally and industrially and to provide employment in this country" (House of Commons, July 18, 1929). The dual mandate was welcome across the aisle and passed unanimously five days after its first reading.

The Great Depression distorted international prices and liquidity, hence colonial economies. During a massive economic recession, the already stretched colonial service struggled to put together project applications for CDW funds. In the early years of the program, most imperial aid went to the West Indies, where a Comptroller General had been appointed early

[4]See, for instance, the Liberal Party Manifesto for the 1929 election.

on to coordinate scheme proposals in the region. In Africa, no such figure existed, a fact revealed in the small number of projects funded by the CDW program in its first decade of existence.

By 1940 it had become obvious that funds were too modest to enable truly transformative projects and that the original bill had missed an important aspect of development—namely education. In recognition, in June of 1940 the British Parliament passed the Colonial Development and Welfare Act, stipulating that developmental had to balance economic growth and the welfare of colonial peoples. The spirit of the 1940 Act changed 180 degrees in comparison to the one in 1929—it recognized that social welfare of native people was crucial for any metric of development. The letter of the law was supported by a fivefold increase in funds plus a shift in the balance between grant-in-aid and loan-in-aid from 50–50 before 1940 to 95% in grants afterwards.

Once again, the geopolitical circumstances prevented the articulation of the 1940 Act. Little funding was issued in the early 1940s, and the few projects that moved forward were related to war ends. In the spring of 1945, when the outcome of the war was clear, colonial development regained momentum. To certify it, the British Parliament passed the Colonial Development and Welfare Act of 1945. The new bill addressed many of the issues raised by its critics. It more than doubled the funds of the 1940 Act, from £50 million to £120 million over the course of 10 years, and it eased multiyear programming by allowing CDW funds to cover recurrent expenditures. Perhaps most importantly, the 1945 bill eliminated an earlier provision that obliged colonies to return any unspent balance by the end the fiscal year. Last but not least, the 1945 bill multiplied by five the colonial research funds, deemed a key pillar of the developmentalist agenda:

> For they [the colonies] are lands in which the conquest of problems of agriculture, health and climate are intimately connected with the problem of developing into modem self-governing states. These problems are being solved together; and that

is the true contribution of C D and W. (British Information Services, 1956, p.2)

Freed from war efforts, the colonies responded to the 1945 bill by submitting myriad scheme proposals, ranging from infrastructure to health care to education. To match demand, the British government expanded the funds in 1949 and 1950 with new bills and again in 1955, 1959, 1963, and finally 1965. Table 1 offers a summary of the sectoral distribution of schemes funded with CDW allocations between 1940 and 1969. Education was the sector receiving the largest share of CDW funds over the entire duration of the program. Preliminary evidence confirms that most of these resources were invested in the education of native populations in Africa and the West Indies.[5]

Table 1: Imperial Aid by Sector, 1946-1969

Sector	Total (mil.£)	%
Education and Culture	77	23.8
Civil infrastructure	75	23.1
Agricultural and Industrial Development	74	22.9
Public Health and Welfare	67	20.8
Administration, Cadaster, Surveys	22	6.7
Miscellaneous	9	2.7
Total	325	100

Note: The list includes all territorial schemes to all participant colonies. The data excludes research and centrally managed schemes. Data source: Foreign & Commonwealth Office (1971).

In 1970 following a wave of independence declarations, the CDW program was terminated, and the remaining bilateral foreign aid was merged into a general category of bilateral overseas assistance.[6] After independence, the former colonies received aid from the British government but in lower quantities and in loan-form as opposed to grant-in-aid (The Overseas Development Institute, 1964, Table 29).

[5]Drawing on archival materials, I am assembling an original dataset on enrollment in primary, secondary, and tertiary education in Africa from 1940 until independence, differentiating between white settlers and the African population to examine who the beneficiaries of CDW funds were.

[6]Colonies lost access to the CDW funds as soon as they gained independence, explaining the gradual decline of the program size during the 1960s.

By 1970 London had transferred £362 million in CDW funds to the colonies (94% in grant form) divided in 1,600+ developmental schemes in 54 colonial territories. Relative to the British economy, the CDW program represented about 0.9% of the island's GDP at the beginning of the program and 0.6 by the end of it.[7] For the recipients, CDW funds represented on average 11% of annual colonial revenue, and they exceeded 50% in smaller colonies like Bechuanaland (Botswana) and Gambia.

2.1 The Consequences of Imperial Aid

A study of the CDW program (and the French equivalent, FIDES, inaugurated in 1945) cannot reveal how nations in the Global South would have fared in the absence of colonial rule—that counterfactual is most interesting but impossible to study. Instead, I seek to identify the causal effect of imperial development aid on fiscal capacity and the political empowerment of native populations given colonial rule, initial conditions, and fund allocation size.

First, the fiscal infrastructure of colonies received close attention by the program designers: As stated in the text of the CDW Acts, colonies were expected to participate in the funding of the projects receiving aid. And so they did: about one third of all CDW projects were funded with local resources. To meet this financial challenge, colonies were pushed to expand their tax base, train an army of tax bureaucrats (for instance, using CDW scholarships to train native officers at the Internal Revenue Service Headquarters in London (CO 1025/104)), and adopt modern tax types and budgeting techniques.

Second, the CDW program prioritized the expansion of primary to tertiary education and built more than one dozen university campuses in the West Indies and Sub-Saharan Africa. In addition to educating the future generation of nationalist leaders, starting in 1940, CDW funds required the legalization of trade unions, a major win for the internationalist caucus

[7] For reference, the UK spent 0.5% of its GDP in aid as of 2021 (OECD Stat.).

in the UK Labour Party.[8] By equipping native leaders and labor organizations, the CDW plausibly sped up constitutional transformations in late colonial years (Lee and Paine, 2019).

Before I study the impact of imperial aid on state capacity and political mobilization in depth, in this paper I examine the distribution of CDW funds to colonies, namely which colony received what. To this end, I will focus on all six allocations of funds in the lifespan of the CDW program. As I elaborate below, these allocations established the total CDW funds that each colony were entitled to spend during a predetermined period of time. Decided between the CO and the Treasury, allocations were tailored to each colony given its circumstances. The allocation criteria is fundamental to account for selection issues in any posterior analysis of the consequences of CDW.

3 Allocations

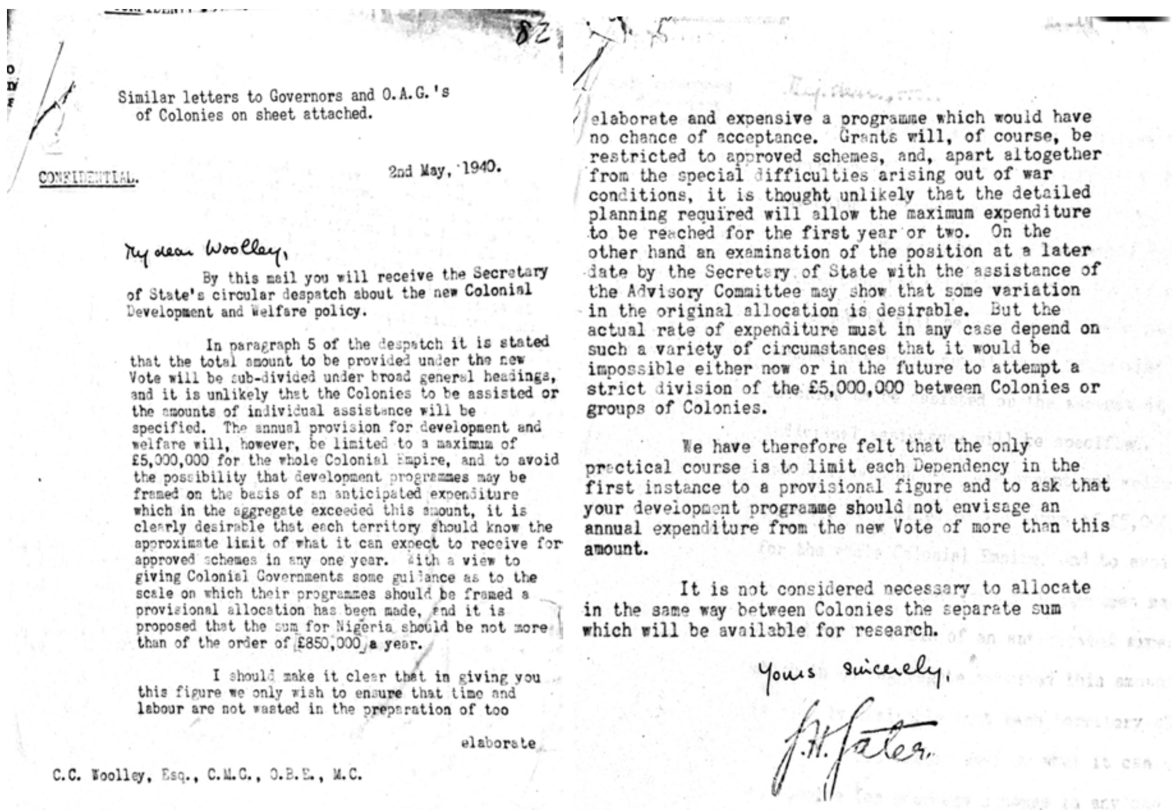
Before 1940 access to CDW funds worked on a self-service logic. Plans or "schemes" were submitted and evaluated on an individual basis by the Colonial Development Advisory Committee (CDAC) based in London. The Committee criticized some schemes for adding up to nothing because they were not part of a comprehensive plan. The Committee and the region-specific West India Royal Commission recommended the replacement of a system of atomized scheme applications for a new one in which schemes were proposed as part of long-term development plan delineating the priorities of each colony (Morgan, 1980, p.57).

The recommendations were heard by the CO, and a new approach to developmental funds was drafted by the Secretaries of State for the Colonies (the maximum authority in the CO) in the white paper *Statement of Policy on Colonial Development and Welfare* (Cmd 6175, Feb 20, 1940). This memorandum, presented to Parliament in February 1940, set the foundations of the 1940 Colonial Development and Welfare Act and established that Colonial

[8] I am assembling a dataset of trade union creation date, sector, and membership to examine the relationship between imperial aid and trade union growth in the British Empire.

Governments should prepare comprehensive developmental programs for a period of ten years (Cmd 6175, p.8). The preparations of the 1940 bill went so smoothly that the Secretary of State for the Colonies had a circular telegram sent on May 2 of that year, giving each colony a provisional "allocation of funds" to start preparing the ten-year developmental plans. A copy of the telegram (See Figure 1) to the Nigerian delegation follows as an illustration:

Figure 1: 1940 Allocation to Nigeria, Official Communication



Similar letters to Governors and O.A.G.'s of Colonies on sheet attached.

CONFIDENTIAL.

2nd May, 1940.

My dear Woolley,

By this mail you will receive the Secretary of State's circular despatch about the new Colonial Development and Welfare policy.

In paragraph 5 of the despatch it is stated that the total amount to be provided under the new Vote will be sub-divided under broad general headings, and it is unlikely that the Colonies to be assisted or the amounts of individual assistance will be specified. The annual provision for development and welfare will, however, be limited to a maximum of £5,000,000 for the whole Colonial Empire, and to avoid the possibility that development programmes may be framed on the basis of an anticipated expenditure which in the aggregate exceeded this amount, it is clearly desirable that each territory should know the approximate limit of what it can expect to receive for approved schemes in any one year. With a view to giving Colonial Governments some guidance as to the scale on which their programmes should be framed a provisional allocation has been made, and it is proposed that the sum for Nigeria should be not more than of the order of £850,000 a year.

I should make it clear that in giving you this figure we only wish to ensure that time and labour are not wasted in the preparation of too elaborate and expensive a programme which would have no chance of acceptance. Grants will, of course, be restricted to approved schemes, and, apart altogether from the special difficulties arising out of war conditions, it is thought unlikely that the detailed planning required will allow the maximum expenditure to be reached for the first year or two. On the other hand an examination of the position at a later date by the Secretary of State with the assistance of the Advisory Committee may show that some variation in the original allocation is desirable. But the actual rate of expenditure must in any case depend on such a variety of circumstances that it would be impossible either now or in the future to attempt a strict division of the £5,000,000 between Colonies or groups of Colonies.

We have therefore felt that the only practical course is to limit each Dependency in the first instance to a provisional figure and to ask that your development programme should not envisage an annual expenditure from the new Vote of more than this amount.

It is not considered necessary to allocate in the same way between Colonies the separate sum which will be available for research.

Yours sincerely,

J.H. Gater.

C.C. Woolley, Esq., C.M.G., O.B.E., M.C.

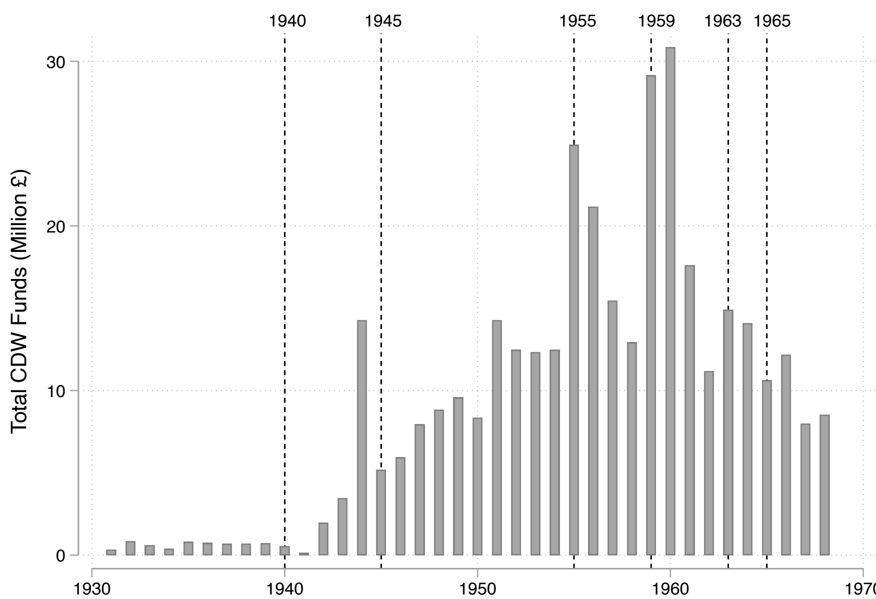
Note: Provisional yearly allocations under the 1940 Act. A circular telegram sent by Sir George Gater, the Permanent Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, to Charles Woolley, the Chief Secretary of the Governor of Nigeria (CO 859/40/6).

The evacuation of Dunkirk occurred between the second and third reading of the 1940 bill, diluting all the plans. On June 5 a new circular telegram was sent to the Colonies to lower expectations about the new Act. Given the grave circumstances in Europe, only schemes related to war efforts would be considered. Colonial development would need to wait for "happier times" (Secretary of State in House of Lords, 2 July 1940). In practice this meant that the little money that had been spent before 1940 persisted in the first years of the

Colonial Development and Welfare Act.

Despite the lack of financial resources, development programs were drafted and approved by the CO during the war years. When the war tensions eased in the Western front, a first wave of scheme proposals followed. Figure 2 shows the distribution of total funds spent on approved schemes over the lifetime of the imperial aid program. Under the 1929 Act, the program was relatively small in the number of schemes and funds. Circumstances changed in the mid-1940s and peaked in the late 1950s; funds gradually dried up in the late 1960s as fewer colonies remained in the empire.

Figure 2: The Life Cycle of the Colonial Development and Welfare Program



Note: The figure shows the yearly total spending in CDW schemes (gray bars) and the CDW allocation years (dotted lines). Sources: Yearly Abstract Accounts (from 1930 to 1940) of the Receipts into and Issue out of the Colonial Development Fund; Yearly Reports on the Operation of the CDWA from 1941 to 1945; and Yearly Return of Schemes made under the CDWA from 1946 to 1969. See Appendix for data sources.

To match the financial requirements of new CDW applications, fresh territorial allocations were made in 1945, 1955, 1959, 1963 and 1966.[9] Colonial Development Programs were

[9]The 1950 CDW Bill increased the funds reserved for use by the CO at its own discretion but did not allocate funds to the territories.

updated on a regular basis offering a flexible framework to apply for developmental schemes.[10] Allocations established a maximum amount of developmental funds that a given colony could spend in a period of time, varying from 10 years in the first allocation to 5 in the last. Occasionally, the allocation was augmented to account for an unexpected event. All colonies that qualified for the program, that is, all colonies without self-government, were allocated CDW funds at some point and a majority of colonies received funds in all six allocations.

3.1 Allocation: Actors

Allocations were of two types: centralized and territorial. The former refer to those funds that the CO reserved for itself for schemes that benefited more than one colony (e.g., the Basutoland-Bechualand-Swaziland University) and for schemes involving population and terrain surveys. The vast majority of CDW funds were allocated to the individual territories (therefore, "territorial").

The allocations were decided by the CO and the Treasury in a quite hermetic way. The Departments of the CO were organized territorially and they elevated proposals to the undersecretaries of the Office. For the West Indies the Comptroller General (see above) was consulted in the allocation discussion. The CO was very aware that allocations were a major cause of grievance between colonies (CO 852/589/11) and to avoid "political" interference they kept Colonial Governors in the dark until they made a decision. The records of the correspondence between CO and the Treasury remained classified for 30 years.

3.2 Allocation: Criteria

To understand the allocation criteria I studied in depth the internal correspondence between the CO and the Treasury about the preparations of the 1945 Act, arguably the most ambi-

[10] Native populations had limited direct but mostly indirect influence in the configuration of Colonial Development Programs and scheme proposals. Most of this work was initiated and elevated by the Colonial Service, that is, colonial public servants. I elaborate on native agency in development planning elsewhere.

tious of all. Under the 1945 CDW Act, imperial aid grew from £50 million to £120 million, recurrent spending was recognized as a qualifying expense; and colonies were allowed to keep unspent funds for future years, all of which eased long-term planning.

The method to allocate the 1945 funds was long debated in the CO and the correspondence among the heads of department reveal the lack of political instructions to accomplish the task. On February 2, 1945, O.G.R. Williams (Assistant Secretary of the CO) admitted to Sir Sidney Caine (Assistant Under-Secretary of Finance, Production and Research) that their superior (the Secretary of State) had "disavowed in this speech on the Second reading of the Colonial Development and Welfare Bill any idea of detailed planning in the Colonial Officer" and that for the time being they would rely on a memorandum made by Frederik J. Pedler at the Finance Department of the CO in December 1944 (CO 852/589/11).

In that memorandum Pedler had explained his train of thought in much detail: He had first allocated the £120 million based on the colonies' population, but he was not happy with the outcome. Pedler discussed various criteria to justify cuts to the population-based allocation: The ability to float loans at home or in London was an important one to him. For instance, "Nigeria's credit ought to be good for loans" (p.2)—a sufficient reason to cut CDW funds by 20% relative to the £34 million that Nigeria would have received if they had only followed the population rule. Fiscal surplus was another factor justifying an allocation cut. Gambia, which had experienced a fiscal surplus for five years in a row, 1939–1944, was considered by Pedler in less need of CDW funds than its per population figure suggested. Pedler advocated for a cut in aid also for colonies that had barely used the funds granted in the previous allocation of 1940 (e.g. Bermuda) and for territories affected by war (e.g., Malaya and Hong Kong) because conditions there were not apt for developmental investment. Last but not least, Pedler considered the colony's "capacity to spend"—a criterion that did not seem to follow any objective metric—as a limiting factor in the amount of CDW funds to be allocated. Citing Somaliland to support his argument, he asserted that despite having much need for funds, the population-corresponding £2 million were more than Somaliland could handle given its weak government machinery.

Pedler considered other criteria that justified allocation increases. The territorial area was one of them: smaller territories were assumed poor, calling for larger allocations, all else constant. Regional grievance was another criterion in his view. For instance, "it would not be possible to restrict Uganda to half of Kenya's share," and allocating little funding to Northern Rhodesia [because of its many resources and surplus, as that] "would be a crisis" (p.5).

The allocation drafted by Pedler established a focal point among the departments in the CO over the next months. In the official allocation that followed, most colonies received less than Pedler suggested because he allocated little funds to the centrally administered schemes, which were expanded during the internal debates in spring 1945. His memorandum, nonetheless, granted the population considerable leverage in the allocation of funds, continuing a practice initiated in the 1940 allocation (CO 859/40/6).

Deviations from the population rule required lengthy justifications from the heads of the CO departments involved in the negotiations. The preference for this criterion was not unanimous and several officials aired their frustration. For instance, J.B. Williams in a meeting with the Secretary of State on March 7, 1945, denounced that the population rule for ignoring the resources of each colony.

The discussions extended over the next months. The correspondence among the heads of the departments showed some improvisation particularly in the allocations of poorer colonies. That of Aden, for instance, was described as "a wild guess" on the funds needed by the territory (CO Correspondence, January 17, 1945). Some dismay was also perceived in the discussions; for instance, Sir Arthur Dawe, Deputy Under-Secretary of State at the CO, admitted on January 22, 1945 that

> the difficulties in finding any reasonably 'scientific' basis of the allocation are obvious. I am not sure that all the relevant factors [discussed in Pedler's mem-

> orandum] have been brought into this picture or that the right weighting has been given to those which do appear. I am inclined to think that the population factor, although tempered by the other considerations mentioned by Pedler, has been rather too prominent.

Other officials involved in the negotiations would have preferred to pause allocations and wait for all developmental plans to arrive, but they understood that option was not "politically" feasible (CO Correspondence, March 3, 1945).

Despite the many considerations and idiosyncratic circumstances mentioned in the internal CO correspondence, the Department heads tried to follow objective criteria that could be measured and compared. Consistently, population, revenue, and debt were often mentioned in the correspondence. A statistical compendium was put together and widely circulated in the final stages of the negotiation. The compendium was "prepared for giving details of population, revenue surpluses and public debts, the financial assistance already given or promised under the 1940 Act and the estimated amounts outstanding as being unexpended" and was shared by the Comptroller General F. Stockdale (May 30, 1945, letter for discussion with Assistant Under-Secretaries of State) ahead of the last meeting with department heads where a final recommendation to the Secretary of State for the Colonies was made. An excerpt of the compendium is reproduced in Figure 3.

Agreed on at a meeting on June 5, 1945, the final allocation recommendation by the Deputy Under Secretary of State (second in command), the assistant under-secretaries, the heads of Department, and the Comptroller General of the West Indies, was elevated to the Office of the Secretary of State on June 12, 1945. CO records on the CDW allocation turned sparser in the following months and debates occurred around specific colonies. For the most part, the internal communications between June and November, when allocations were made public, dealt with how to deliver the news to the colonies in order to avoid grievance and misunderstanding.

	I AREA	II POPULATION	III REVENUE			IV DEBT	V SURPLUS	VI ASSISTANCE ISSUED	VII ASSISTANCE OUTSTANDING (a)	VIII 1940 ALLOCATION x 10	IX FURTHER PROMISES	X COMPREHENSIVE PLANS COST	ASSISTANCE REQUESTED	ASSISTANCE PROMISED	XI POPULATION PROPORTION	XII SUGGESTED ALLOCATION
	'000 sq.miles	'000	£.'000	£ per sq.mile	£. per head	£.'000	£.'000	£.'000	£.'000	£.'000	£.'000	£.'000	£.'000	£.'000	%	£ ~~[illegible]~~
West Africa																
Gambia	4	185	357	89	2	39	196	30	120	800		1,410(5)	1,410(5)		0.3	~~800,000~~ 1,000,000
Sierra Leone	28	1,799	1,544	55	1	1,370	712	207	416	1,200					2.7	~~[illegible]~~ 2,500,000
Gold Coast	92	3,960	4,958	54	1	10,400	2,756	92	157	2,300		5,000(5)	1,000(5)	4,000([illegible])	6.0	3,500,000
Nigeria	373	21,261	9,857	26	0.5	24,765	2,250	423	7,090	8,500		40,000	27,000		32.6	~~[illegible]~~ 24,000,000
Margin for Readjustments																~~3,000,000~~ 2,500,000
Total West Africa	497	27,205	16,716	34	0.6	36,574	5,914	751	7,783	12,800					41.6	34,000,000
East Africa																
Somaliland	68	347	175(1)	2	0.6	236 (11)	nil	nil	316	350					0.5	750,000
Kenya	220	3,661	4,818	22	1	17,581	2,500	276	755	2,300		17,000	5,000	-	5.6	~~4,750,000~~ 5,000,000
Uganda	80	3,931	2,352	49	0.6	2,850	3,650	23	1,283	2,300		4,800(6)	2,300(6)	2,300(6)	6.0	3,000,000
Tanganyika	359	5,418	3,501	10	0.6	7,556	500	365	-	3,200		12,000	9,600		8.3	~~6,750,000~~ 7,500,000
Zanzibar	1	250	477	477	2	nil	nil	14	88	350					0.4	750,000
Margin for Readjustments																1,500,000
Total East Africa	708	13,607	11,323	16	0.8	28,223	6,650	678	2,442	8,500					20.8	18 ~~17,[illegible]00,000~~
Central Africa																
Nyasaland	38	1,676	931	25	0.6	3,610	430	38	309	1,000					2.6	2,500,000
Northern Rhodesia	290	1,385	2,888	10	2	2,347	2,000	19	20	1,000					2.1	2,000,000
Margin for Readjustments																500,000
Total Central Africa	328	3,061	3,819	12	1	5,957	2,430	57	329	2,000					4.7	5,000,000
South Africa																
S.A.H.C.(Gen.)																
Bechuanaland Protectorate	275	266	282	1	1	nil	144								0.4	
Swaziland	7	156	200	29	1	nil	6		$\left.\right\}$ 1,500		2,000				0.2	2,000,000
Basutoland	12	562	515	43	1	nil	403						319(5)		0.9	
Total South Africa	294	984	997	3	1	nil	553								1.5	

(a) These totals are too low in some instances, as the previous column includes payments made under C.D.F. schemes, totalling £561,000

(1) 1939 Revenue

Parl

Figure 3: Excerpt of the statistical table prepared for the draft of the final recommendation to the Secretary of the State for the Colonies for the 1945 allocation. Source: CO 852/589/11.

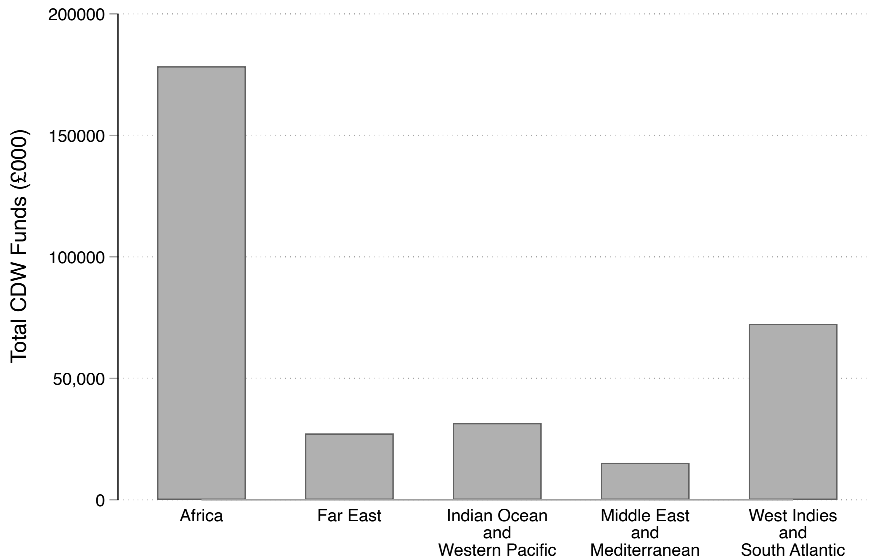
The definitive 1945 allocation, published in the Despatch of Nov 12, 1945 (Cmd. 6713), deviated only slightly from the recommendations elevated to the Secretary of State in June of that year. The two series correlate at 0.99. In general, deviations occurred downward because the CO decided to keep a reserve of 10% for unexpected expenses. In the next section, I run a simple statistical test to examine whether the six allocations followed the objective criteria used by Pedler, Stockdale, and other top-rank CO officials in 1945.

4 Data

The 1945, 1955, and 1963 allocations were published in separate dispatches presented by the Secretary of State for the Colonies to Parliament: Nov. 12, 1945 (Cmd. 6713), April 26, 1955 (Cmd. 9462), and Nov. 18, 1963 (Colonial No.357). As far as I know, the allocations for 1940 and 1959 were never published. I discovered these allocations in the internal communications between the Colonial Office and the Treasury, which are kept at the National Archives at Kew (London). The allocations for 1940 were communicated separately to each colony on the Circular Telegram of May 2, 1940 (CO 859/40/6), and the 1959 allocations were communicated in the Circular Despatch of July 21, 1959 (CO 1025/109).

I gathered allocations for 48 territories, a total of 209 colony–year observations. The 48 figure is slightly smaller than the total nonself-governing colonies (54) because I collapsed some units (e.g., St. Helena and Ascension) and dropped the case of Palestine and Transjordan (these territories were pooled together in some allocations, and I could not locate covariate data for the Transjordan) and the case of Malta, which received in 1959 a vast allocation of £20 million for idiosyncratic reasons. The sum total of allocations in this period was £324,902 million, thus matching the aggregate official statistics published by the Foreign & Commonwealth Office in 1971 (see Table 1). The resulting panel is unbalanced because colonies stopped receiving funds upon gaining independence (e.g., the Gold Coast past 1957) or under foreign occupation (e.g., Singapore in 1942–1945).

Figure 4: Total Allocation of CDW Funds by Region, 1940–1965



Note: N=48, divided as follows: **Africa:** Basutoland (Lesotho), Bechuanaland (Botswana), Gambia, Gold Coast (Ghana), Kenya, Nigeria, North Rhodesia (Zambia), Nyasaland (Malawi), Sierra Leone, Somaliland (Somalia), Swaziland (Eswatini), Tanganyika (Tanzania), Uganda, Zanzibar. **Far East**: Hong Hong, Malaysia, North Borneo, Sarawak, and Singapore. **Indian Ocean**: Ceylon (Sri Lanka), Mauritius, Seychelles. **Western Pacific**: Solomon Islands, Fiji, Gilbert and Ellice Islands. **Middle East**: Aden and Protectorate. **Mediterranean:** Cyprus and Gibraltar. **West Indies:** Antigua, Bahamas, Barbados, Bermuda, British Guiana (Guyana), British Honduras (Belize), Cayman Islands, Dominica, Grenada, Jamaica, Montserrat, St. Kitts, St. Lucia, St. Vincent, Trinidad, Turks and Caicos Islands, British Virgin Islands. **South Atlantic**: Falkland Islands and St. Helena.

The regional distribution of CDW funds for the six allocations between 1945 and 1965 are Reported in Figure 4. The distribution suggests that wealthier colonies, generally located in the Far East and West Indies, received relatively little funding, whereas poorer colonies, generally located in Africa, received most of the funds of the program.

In order to test the relevance of the factors discussed in the allocation of 1945, I gathered data on population, area, revenue, fiscal surplus (=revenue expenditure), debt, and unspent balance for every allocation year. Population and Debt data are drawn from the *Stateman's Yearbook* (various years), the Area is taken from the *1929 Statistical Abstract of the Colonial*

Empire, and Revenue and Surplus for 1944–1959 are drawn from *The Colonial Empire* (various issues) and for 1963 from the *Stateman's Yearbook* of that year.[11] Statistical descriptives are Reported in Table 2.

Table 2: Summary statistics

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Total Allocation (£000)	209	1554.555	2438.799	0	23000
Population (th.)	209	1463.526	4012.192	2	34600
Revenue/capita	209	14.876	20.104	.089	173.39
Public Debt/capita	199	4.114	7.029	0	42.48
Surplus (£000)	209	163.965	1424.004	-7652	9896
Population Density	209	757.762	2191.648	0.356	12701.5
CDW Outstanding (%)	134	40.937	43.843	0	291.371

The internal debate in the CO in 1945 suggests that the colony population was a prime factor in the allocation criteria. In column 1 I run a simple bivariate model between CDW allocation and population and the resulting R-square is .57, confirming the relevance of this variable. In the second column I add a battery of allocation indicators and the population coefficient remains stable, suggesting no correlation between the size of colonial population and duration in the program. In column 3 I control for the Revenue per "head" or capita, which is listed in column 5 in the statistical compendium assembled by the CO to decide the 1945 allocation (Figure 3). This variable is negative and statistically significant. Based on this estimate, a one standard-deviation increase in total revenue per capita decreased average allocation by £214,805 or 13.8%. The negative sign suggests that colonies struggling to mobilize domestic resources were received more generous allocations.

In column 4 I consider fiscal surplus, also discussed in Pedler's memo. This variable is centered around zero. The null result holds if I normalize the surplus size by total revenue or by population. This result suggests that austerity policy was not rewarded by the CDW program, a clear deviation from old Gladstonian economics.

In the internal correspondence between the CO and the Treasury in 1945, countries that

[11] See Appendix for a detailed list of primary and secondary sources.

Table 3: CDW Allocations 1940–1965

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Population	0.46***	0.46***	0.45***	0.45***	0.46***	0.45***	-0.33***	-1.15***	
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.12)	(0.15)	
Revenue/Cap			-14.44***	-14.45***	-11.99***	-9.74***	-18.09***	-25.63**	
			(4.02)	(4.05)	(3.89)	(3.53)	(5.91)	(10.39)	
Fiscal Surplus				0.01	-0.02	-0.01	0.03	0.11	
				(0.13)	(0.13)	(0.13)	(0.15)	(0.16)	
Public Debt/Cap					15.56	15.14	-39.27***	-53.89**	
					(12.63)	(12.44)	(13.91)	(21.27)	
Pop. Density						-0.06	-0.09	0.09	
						(0.05)	(0.14)	(0.12)	
Outstanding Balance									9.23*
									(5.12)
Constant	881.09***	303.63**	372.88**	374.67**	318.14**	345.59**	1,368.39***	3,397.89***	1,897.75***
	(123.05)	(146.21)	(147.80)	(148.78)	(140.65)	(143.04)	(203.13)	(219.02)	(621.73)
Allocation FE		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Colony FE							✓	✓	✓
Deflated values								✓	
# Allocations	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	5
# Colonies	48	48	48	48	47	47	47	47	34
Mean Allocation (£000)	1,582	1,582	1,582	1,582	1,582	1,582	1,582	1,939	1,582
Observations	209	209	209	209	199	199	199	199	134
Adjusted R-squared	0.57	0.58	0.59	0.59	0.61	0.61	0.73	0.80	0.71

Note: See text for sources. Standard errors clustered at colony in parentheses. *** $p<0.01$, ** $p<0.05$, * $p<0.1$

could easily float loans on the London Stock Exchange were recommended to receive less funding from the CDW program. In Column 5 I control for the outstanding public debt per capita. Most public debt was issued in London, but a few colonies had considerable domestic debt (e.g., Hong Kong). The coefficient for public indebtedness in column 5 is positive—against expectations—but is not statistically different from zero.

In column 6 I consider another variable discussed at the CO: Colony size. Because Area is a time-invariant variable, I include the ratio of population by square mile or *population density*. This variable is used to approximate economic prosperity prior to 1950, before GDP estimates were computed. Although the sign of population density is negative, thus consistent with the idea that wealthy colonies received lower priority in fund allocations, it is not statistically different from zero.

Column 7 offers a new perspective because it includes colony fixed effects and focuses on longitudinal variation within any given territory. The population coefficient flips, meaning that as population size increased, which would normally happen if the economy grew, colonies received less funding from the program. The revenue per capita remains negative and statistically different from zero while increasing its substantive impact. According to the new estimate, a one standard-deviation increase in revenue per capita, decreased average CDW fund allocation by £363,000 or 23.3%, all else constant. Interestingly, in this model the coefficient for public debt turns negative and statistically significant. This suggests that an increase in public indebtedness over time in a given colony was perceived as a signal of its capacity to access credit in private markets. The effect is substantial as well: a one-standard-deviation increase in public indebtedeness decreased average CDW allocation by 17.7%. The marginal effects of the other controls remain indistinguishable from zero.

So far I controlled for allocation fixed effects, which should correlate with price growth over time. To better adjust for inflation, in column 8 I deflate all monetary values and express them in 1955 £.[12] The new set of estimates in column 8 are substantively similar to those in

[12] Inflation data are drawn from Feinstein (1976).

column 7. Although the coefficients for population and revenue per capita increase, so does the average of the dependent variable.

In column 9 I consider the effect of any unspent balance, that is, the funds from the prior allocation that had not been spent by the time a new one was decided. I normalize the total funds unspent by the size of the previous allocation and multiply the resulting ratio by 100 for interpretation purposes.[13] In this model I consider no other covariate to avoid any endogenous controls. Likewise, the total number of allocations is reduced to five because that for 1940 had no precedent. Although Pedler was reluctant to be generous with colonies that had not exhausted the previous allocation, the results suggest that the official allocations did not discriminate against slow spenders. If anything, the opposite holds true.

In sum, the statistical analysis suggests two important considerations in allocation decisions: one was the population size; the other, the capacity to mobilize domestic revenue through taxation. Public debt plays a role but only when colony fixed effects are included in the model; and unspent balances did not reduce the amount of new funds. Altogether, the analysis suggests that CDW funds prioritized colonies with weaker revenue-generation capacity (via taxes or loans) and those that struggled to spend the funds (consistent with the lack of skilled staff in the poorest colonies).

5 Preliminary Conclusion

This is the first installment of a book-length project examining the causes and consequences of the Colonial Development and Welfare Act, the precedent of modern-day foreign aid. The CDW initiative will likely shed light on the historical origins of fiscal capacity and indebtedness in the Global South as well as on the relationship between imperial aid and nationalist movements pushing for independence. In this piece I examined the CDW fund

[13] This variable is larger than 100 for nine West Indian colonies in 1963 because some centrally kept funds were shared with the territories between allocations.

allocation criteria to be better equipped to address endogeneity questions in future work examining the consequences of imperial aid.

In the next iteration of the paper, I plan to examine the impact of labor strikes in the colonies prior to the 1940 allocation (Morgan, 1980) plus additional considerations related to the donor. In particular, I seek to evaluate whether colonies that purchased British exports or provided key industrial inputs were favored over others (Abbott, 1971); whether CDW funds were used to compensate colonies for the obligation to keep their sterling balances in London, namely, for monetary reasons (Cooper, 2019); and whether CDW funds followed the interest of British private investment (modern-day FDI) in the colonies.[14] Although the donor's interest may carry non-trivial weight, we should keep in mind that recipients' characteristics already explain over two-thirds of the variation of CDW fund allocation.

[14] Data to test for the donor's characteristics are being digitized.

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