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The British Policy of Indirect Rule in India: A Historical Perspective

ABSTRACT: When the British established a vast empire in Asia and Africa, they faced the basic problem, because they dominated over the existing political authorities. In most parts of their dominions, they had adopted a system of utilizing the pre-existing political authority, indigenous rulers or traditional chiefs, to carry out most of the processes of local government. This was the situation where an imperial power did not supersede the pre-existing political authority, but established its dominance over it, where traditional rulers were allowed to exercise as before in the local governance. This system is called "Indirect Rule", which stood for a Government through the pre-existing political authority. This was a well-established system of British colonial administration and was followed in Africa, Malaya States, and elsewhere. The British system of indirect rule was the exercise of determinative influence and exclusive political control over a nominally sovereign State, a control recognized by both sides. Under it, the administration of native State continued to exist under the aegis of the imperial power. But the traditional rulers, who continued to rule under the domination of the imperial power, had lost their independence and were subject to supervision and owed allegiance to the imperial authority. Under such conditions, the district Officers and Residents became the guardians of their power and authority. Not surprisingly, these local authorities came to be identified with the interests of the British. In fact, the British system of indirect rule was motivated by the basic principles of governing a large territory with minimum expenditure.

KEY WORDS: Dominions, indigenous, local governance, indirect rule, sovereign state, imperial power, Residents, and British and India.

INTRODUCTION

"Indirect Rule", as an exact term, was not current before the twentieth century, even in India where the practice developed. There, the officials used a variety of labels including "Paramountcy" or "Suzerainty" or "Native Administration" over princely State, or "Protected Native States", and so on. Much more consistently, however, other imperial administration, following British Indian pattern, commonly used the title "Resident" or "Commissioner" to designate their agent of indirect rule. This continuity suggested that the pattern of indirect rule, developed by the British in India, served as the model in the later colonial governments.

According to Lord Frederick Lugard, father of indirect rule in Nigeria, regretfully conceded in 1922, a reversion to more extensive use of indirect rule was no longer possible in the

twentieth century; it is, of course, now too late to adopt to any large extent the alternative of gradually transforming the greater part of British-India into native States governed by their own hereditary dynasties and extending to them the principles which have so successfully guided their relations with the native states in Indian itself, and in Malaya in the past (cf <http://countrystudies.us/nigeria/17.htm>, 24/1/2014).

INTELLECTUAL CONSTRUCTION OF INDIRECT RULE

Throughout the British imperial tenure in India, their Administrators described and categorized Indian legal practice, religious beliefs and rituals, social structures and customs, and languages and literatures. British Officials in India and in the metro pole used these data to construct a static,

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under developed India that legitimated British political dominance. These data and knowledge imbricate with political power.

According to C.A. Bayly (1990), the Indians participated significantly in the creation of the British information order, which remained contested and incomplete. Although these intellectual constructions and scholarship have focused on the directly ruled territory and the people of British-India, several subsumed the indirectly ruled domains and peoples of princely States. They included gazetteers that were compendia of geographical, historical, and statistical data; the great trigonometrically survey that supposedly provided a scientific skeleton for surveys, mapping, and an especial conception of India; and decennial censuses issued from 1871 (Cohn, 1987). After 1858, Colonial knowledge specifically targeted the Princes and their States.

British EIC (East India Company) was concluded treaties depending on the exigencies of war, financial need personal inclinations of men on the spot, internal politics of the Company, and a States relationship to the Mughal Empire, or other indigenous political entities. The relationship between Company and indigenous rulers was helped to understand from few documents like collection of treaties or other legal documents such as *Sanads* and letters (Ramusack, 2005:88).

On the Treaty System. Although British indirect rule is sometimes called the treaty system, no more than forty Indian States actually signed a treaty with the Company or its successor, the British Crown (Ramusack, 2005:51). The Company extracted vast amounts of capital from each State, either through tribute or subsidy payments by the rulers or else through the manipulation of trade. The Company reduced the size and effectiveness of the armies under the control of the Indian rulers, banning these armies from employment outside of the State, and additionally limiting their use by the ruler for internal purposes such as revenue collection.

By transferring military power from the armies of the States to "Subsidiary forces" (paid for by the State but under control of the Company), the Company made many

of the rulers powerless to oppose it openly (Fisher, 1997:5). Through intervention in the internal affairs of the State, in such matters as the succession of rulers, appointment of Officials, judicial authority over the rulers' subjects, and management of Government, the Company eventually established indirect rule over all the Indian States which did not immediately annex. In the case of Awadh and Hyderabad were compelled to sign new treaties upon their accessions to the Gaddi. The interpretation of these treaties became arenas of manouvere and negotiation among British Political Officers, Indian rulers and their Minister, and British and Indian lawyers until the demise of the States in 1948 (Fisher, 1997:7-8).

The British issued large numbers of *Sanads* and Letters to Indian States more than treaties. *Sanads* were certificate of protection or recognition. The letters from British Government to Indian States formulated the relationship and British wanted to know the situation and condition of the States. The British also undertook mapping and survey expeditions based on post-enlightenment techniques of measurement and visual representation to create scientific, rational, and uniform geographic archive (Edney, 1997:33).

The British maps came to define visually their indirect rule over Indian States for British and Indian audiences. As Matthew H. Edney has argued as follows:

[...] boundaries were no longer vague axes of dispute (frontiers) between core areas of Indian politics, but were configured as the means whereby those core areas were now defined. Political territories were no longer delineated with respect of the physical features that characterized or bounded them; nor were they defined by the complex feudal interrelationships of their rulers (Edney, 1997:33-34).

Appointed British Residents in Princely States. The British EIC (East India Company) sometimes sent their Officers to conclude the treaty, and sometimes became diplomatic agents of the Indian States. The Agents always tried to build-up the good relations between the Indian States and British, and they became involved in the internal administration

of States and extended British control in myriad ways. Maps and surveys, revenue settlement reports, ethnographic reviews, and genealogical accounts contributed to the colonial intellectual construction of Indian society in areas of indirect as well as direct rule. Besides being used by the British to conquer and control Indians and to legitimate their own policies and actions, these texts influenced Indian intellectuals, administrators, and rulers of Indian States in their constitution of political reality (Fisher, 1997:6-7).

Durbars, the formal occasions when the princes met with British representatives either local political Agents, the Viceroy, or more rarely Members of the Royal family encoded British ideas about their relationship with Indian Princes. As *durbars* became more frequent with easier transportation by railway, their protocol became more precise. Regulations evolved about where a prince greeted the British Official upon arrival, how many Officials accompanied the British official and the prince, seating arrangements, and appropriate dress. These rituals were most elaborate for the highly coveted status symbol of a visit by a Viceroy or a Member of the British Royal family to an individual princely State. British government wanted to maintain good relationship to the princely State and they went to the princely State for pig-sticking, polo, and tiger shooting (Brook Williams, 1922:22). Bernard S. Cohn has argued that after 1858, the British enunciated as follows:

[...] two divergent or even contradictory theories of rule: one which sought to maintain India as a feudal order, and the other looking towards changes which would inevitably lead to the destruction of this feudal order [...]. If India were to be ruled in a feudal mode, then, an Indian aristocracy had to be recognized and/or created, which could play the part of "loyal feudatories" to their British queen (Cohn, 1983:166).

During the time of Company regime, the East India Company appointed officers to work after the commercial and the administrative branches and later on revenue collection, judicial work, and relations with Indian States came under their supervision. Those who negotiated with Indian States were called foreign or political officers as

required. Michael H. Fisher has outlined the appointment of political officer of three presidencies.

[...] three broad phases in the development of the political service under Company rule. From 1764 to 1797, Residents and political agents were diplomatic agents negotiating between equals. By 1840, there were 116 political officers who exercised increasing hegemony *vis-à-vis* the princes. From 1841 to 1856, their number contracted to fifty one as fewer political officers were posted to Indian States (Fisher, 1997:54-59).

In 1843, the government of India organized a "Foreign Department" that oversaw relations with frontier areas and external States, such as those in the Persian Gulf as well as the princes. In 1914, this entity was renamed as the "Foreign and Political Department".

British policies about when and how to intervene in the princely States had long vacillated. In the early 1800s, the Court of Directors in London, desiring cheap administration, enjoined its servants "not to interfere in the internal affairs of other States". It's Officers in India often thought otherwise. In 1825, Charles Metcalfe, then Resident at Delhi and proposing intervention in a disputed succession at Bharatpur, claimed "we are continually compelled to deviate from this rule, which is found untenable in practice".¹

During the 1830s and 1840s, the British remained ambivalent. In Rajputana, the British alarmed by the influence of militant Nath ascetics over Maharaja Man Singh II of Jodhpur, actively pursued the expulsion of the Naths (Lorenzen ed., 1995:120-132). However, they refused to mediate in the more isolated States of Jaisalmer and Bikaner. This oscillation between intervention and *laissez-faire* continued after 1857. Which they assumed a less overt profile in princely States affairs, the British argued that they retained the right and responsibility to mediate to ensure good government.

The occasion for such interference from three clusters: succession, especially when adoption or minor rulers were involved; disputes between princes and their nobility;

¹See, for example, an article entitled "Minute by Sir Charles Metcalfe, 1825" in *Sever Documents*, Vol.1, p.145.

and rationalization of a State's administration. The British methods of intervention included "advice" to a ruler, participation in a minority administration, the education of young Princes, and "suggestions" about the appointment of Minister (Lorenzen ed., 1995:106-107).

The British government published the *Sanads* in 1862 and Princes of different States received the *Sanads*, which permitted the adoption of children according to Hindu and Muslims laws. But adoption *sanads* were a double-edged boon. While they assured the preservation of princely dynasties, "they also proclaimed that the British government would recognize and confirm any adoption of a successor made by himself or by any future chief of her State".²

ADAPTATIONS POLICY

The British government gradually claimed that no succession, whether or not adoption was involved, would be valid without their assent. A State might not lapse, but the British could exert significant influence at the crucial transfer of power from one generation to another. One succession case occurred in Cooch Behar State. When Maharaja Harendra Narayan died, Sibendra Narayan, the eldest son, became the king of the State. But, his accession to the throne was challenged by his younger brothers, particularly Brojendra Narayan and Yogendra Narayan; they took the cue from their late father, Harendra Narayan, who never wanted his eldest son to become his successor.

Macleod, Scott, and Jenkins (Commissioners of Cooch Behar State) informed the British government at different times about the unfavorable attitude of Harendra Narayan towards his eldest son, Sibendra Narayan. In 1824, British government did not give ear to their allegations and Sibendra Narayan's succession to the throne was recognized by the government (Anonymous, 1882:132). So, the British government always wanted to recognize their favourable person when the question of accession to the throne arose.

The adoption cases occurred in different

princely States in Indian context. The adoption case in Baroda, a commission of inquiry was investigating changes of misgovernment and attempted assassination against Gaekwad Malhar Rao, Maharani Jamnabai, the widow of Malhar Rao's predecessor, was "allowed to adopt [...] (any one) whom the government of India 'may select' as the most suitable person" (Gaekwad, 1984:41).

The British, desiring to rationalize the administration and the Maharani, was wanting to delay any challenge to her authority, both preferred to have a minor adopted. Other adoptions that would set precedents included those at Kolhapur in 1871; Udaipur in 1874 where the Maharani and the State Council selected the heir, the Maharana Sambhu Singh having died without adopting and heir; Aalwar in 1874-1875; Dhar in 1890; and Jhabua in 1893 (Neogy, 1979:110).

About the Minority Administration.

According to K.M. Panikkar (diplomat historian), the British Governor-General (1869-1872), Lord Mayo, established the practice of forceful intervention during minority administration (Panikkar, 1963:56). The British officials frequently degenerated local appointees to Councils of Regencies as motivated by self-interest (Panikkar, 1963:76-77).

In this situation, Councils gradually rationalized princely administrations according to British models that furthered British economic and political interests. They tried to reorganize administrative structures and judiciaries, State managed, forests, and, most importantly, land revenue settlements. These settlements measured land, defined those who were responsible for land taxes, the major source of State income, the set rates. They always maintained economic and social hierarchies in the princely States, where agriculture was even more dominant than in British-India.

In western India, the peak year of 1876-1877, almost half of the total princely area was under minority administration.³ Under minority administration of Baroda (1875-1881), the British government controlled

²See also an article entitled "Coming to Hindu Rulers" in *Sever Documents*, Vol.I, p.245.

³See, for example, an article entitled "Copland" in *British Raj*, pp.138, 300, and 316.

the economy policy and also the whole administration.

In Hyderabad, Mir Mahbub Ali Khan succeeded to the *Gaddi* in 1869 at the age of 2 and was only invested with full powers in 1884. Although Salar Jung, the *Dewan*, and Nawab Shams ul-Umra Amir-i Kabir, a prominent noble were to be co-administrators, the *Dewan* recognized the British right to associate themselves with the education of the Nizam and the mode of administration of the State during his minority (Bawa, 1986:52).

At that time, British secured substantial economic concessions during this period. One of the most important things was to have Hyderabad underwrite at ruinous financial terms the construction of a broad-gauge railway connecting it with the great Indian peninsula. Railway, along a route that, served the British military strategy and not the economic growth of the State (Ray, 1984:45-59).

Minority administrations in Rajputana and the Punjab States, extensive British involvement raised other issues. During the minority of Mongal Singh in Alwar from 1874 to 1877, Alfred Lyall, the agent of Governor-General for Rajputana, said as follows:

The natural tendency of a system, which makes the political agent necessarily responsible for good government during a minority, is, I think, to draw the whole conduct of affairs more and more within his personal control. This tendency should, if possible, be to a certain degree guarded against, in order that the transfer of power at the end of the minority should not involve a radical change of system (cited in Haynes, 1989).

According to Colonel P.W. Powlett, the political agent, interpreted this warning as a good reason for developing a State bureaucracy that would continue the British influenced system inaugurated during a minority.

Patiala State had minority administrations in 1860 to 1910. Ajit Kr. Neogy (historian) discussed how the British felt that Indian members of the Regency Council during the minority of Mohindra Singh, during the 1860s, had ruined the character of the ruler and the quality of the administration (Neogy, 1979:76). During the minority of Maharaja Bhupinder

Singh, the British government controlled over subsequent Council of Regency; and Major F. Popham (political agent) revised the land settlement in 1901, and J.O. Warburton (political agent) recognized the police department (Nath Ray, 1918:95).

Cooch Behar State had minority administration from 1790–1801, 1866–1883, and 1923–1935. During the minority of Harendra Narayan from 1790–1801, successive British Residents managed the Cooch Behar State or Commissioners, like Henry Douglas, Andrew Bruce, Towers Smith, Richard Ahmuty, and Henry Wagner.⁴ The administration of the State by the British agents during the minority of Harendra Narayan was on the whole commendable.

Henry Douglas, and successive Commissioners pioneered land reformers, streamlined revenue administration and revived the moribund economy of the State (Chaudhury, 1903:320-321). During 1864–1883 and 1923–1935, Regency Council managed the administration. The British government always wanted to give good administration, because they had their own interest to capture the mind of princes and their peoples indirectly.

Tripura's position among the princely States was a unique one, in the sense that it was conquered but not annexed, nor any treaty was concluded between the State and the English authority in India to brace the former in the status of protected ally. On the other hand, the State enjoyed at least technically an "independent *Tipperah*" in official parlance, in so far as the Hill territory was concerned (Aitchison, 1862:77). The authoritative version of C.U. Aitchison's "a collection of Treaties, Engagements, and *Sanads*" underwent many changes in its successive editions, the last edition being in 1929, particularly in connection with the social status of the Tripura ruling family. But the independent status of Hill territory remained practically the same as in the first edition of 1862 (Aitchison, 1862:79).

⁴As cited by Jaynath Munshi (n.y.). Available [online] also at: https://archive.org/stream/coochbeharstatei00chaurich/coochbeharstatei00chaurich_djvu.txt [accessed in West Bengal, India: 25/12/2013].

The Memoranda on the Indian States published under the authority of the imperial government in 1940, recognized the sovereign status of the State in the following words: “the British, on assuming charge in 1765, took settlement of these *Zamindaries* (styled Roshnabad) leaving the hills independent” (Anonymous, 1940:104). This admission in the authoritative version of the government merely implies the theoretical basis, which the government could hardly refuse to recognize. But, it is the practical status that determines the theoretical one and not vice versa.

In 1866, the word “independent” was scrapped off without making any reference to the Durbar (Mackenzie, 1884:272). And “Hill” was substituted for it. Thus, the State came to be known as “Hill Tippera” till 1920. Only after an exchange of protest notes over years, the Raj could salvage the ancient name of “Tripura” as the official title of the State. Yet, the appellation of independent Tipperah appeared in the official correspondences in the reign of Birchandra up to 1882 (Anonymous, n.y.), and also in successive regions.

The *Robkaries* (royal proclamation) appointing the Yuvaraj bear testimony to it (Datta & Banerjee eds., 1976:37 and 41). If independent Tipperah was practically dropped in official correspondences with the government, it occupied its rightful place in all State papers. Of course, it was no compensation for what was lost in the curb imposed upon the Raj by the appointment of the political agent to the State in 1871 and conferment of the title “Maharaja” in the imperial Durbar of 1877.

In 1761, the British appeared on the scene of Tripura. They also made and unmade king like the Mughals, sometimes through they're under hand mechanizations and sometimes in their law courts, when rival claimants of the royal family would start litigation over the *Gaddi* (royal cushion – throne). Since the time of Durga Manikya, every successive *Rajah* had been required to pay the *Nazar* or tribute fixed by the Britishers on this succession.

The independent status of Tripura in the Hills, though unrestrained by the absence of treaty obligation and given an added meaning by the momentous decision of 1838, had

hardly been immured from the roughshod of the Britishers. The de-stabilization created by the ruling clique, resulted in the appointment of the assistant political agent as the State Minister. The subsequent dismissal of the Minister by the *Rajah* gave the government a rise to intervene in the state affairs. The *Comilla Durber* was shrewdly organized to wring concessions and to bring the State to a position hardly tenable with the concept of independent status.⁵

During the minority regime, the British government took the responsibility to educate the princes for their own style. The princes had grown up in British cultural heritage and subjects became a panacea. When regency came to an end, the British government motivated the rulers to continue the reforms and practices, which was started by the British in the minority period. Here, the British followed two methods: one was the approval of British tutors for the princes if education within the State; but another method was Princes education depended under the guidance of British Residents and Viceroys (Ramusack, 2005:114).

In 1870s, the British decided that princes might be better educated as “traditional” rulers and partners in the imperial enterprise in the Indian equivalent of a British public school. So, many colleges were established all over India to give the Western education for the indigenous princes as well as Britishers.

SOCIAL REFORMS BY BRITISH GOVERNMENT

During the eighteen century, the relationship between a Prince and the British paramount was dynamic. They were very much involved about intervention or *laissez-faire* pervaded its promotion of social reform and efficient administration in the princely States. After 1857, the British officials claimed that the Indians themselves would have to reluctant social reform and the imperialists continued to exhort Princes to take action on certain issues. For example, in 1861, the British government stipulated its jurisdiction

⁵See, for example, *The Englishman* (Calcutta, India: 5th February 1894); and *The Indian Mirror* (Calcutta, India: 1st July 1894).

in prohibiting the *Sati* vigorously, which was still practiced in Raj Putana.

If a Prince neglected his duty, the British government threatened to consider the propriety of reducing the number of guns with which the chief of the State saluted; to demonstrate the displeasure of the Queen's government (Ramusack, 2005:115). So, it was clearly indicated that the British government always against *Sati* system.

After 1857, the British government interested to give good government to the Princes. John Lawrence, Governor-General, who energetically proclaimed the gospel of public works and Lord Mayo, his successor, fostered greater State control through modernizing institutions. The desired reforms include milled roads and railways, public health measures, especially piped water, vaccination campaigns and medical dispensaries, and elementary schools. Although some subsequent Viceroys were more low-key, Lord Curzon, Viceroys from 1899 to 1905, epitomized British intrusion in princely administrative affairs and personal lives (Ramusack, 2005:117).

Lord Curzon and many British officials were racist in their desire to have the princes confirmed to British constructions of paternalistic and hard-working rulers, and in their disdain for Prince who challenged the self-image of the British as the only progressive administrators in India (Ramusack, 2005:117-118). During the period of 1905-1910, when Lord Minto became Viceroy and he announced that the British government did not interfere in any field of Durbars of princely States. According to British political officers, it was seen that reforms within the States saw it as an unwise constrain.

In the words of S.R. Ashton, non-interference permitted "a rapid deterioration of administrative standards in the States" and made them "wholly unreliable allies" since there no longer had the support of their subjects (Ashton, 1982:197). But, he ignored the fact that popular expectations of governments changed dramatically from 1910 to 1940s and that in 1947, many State subjects still respected and supported their rulers (Ashton, 1982:198).

On the whole during the period after 1858, the system of indirect rule achieved the goals set for it by the British Government. In its more stable from and after the Mutiny, the Residency system became a model for much of the rest of the Empire (Fisher, 1997:458). John Malcolm's prescription for the efficacy of the Residencies (1820), thus, proved remarkably acute as a prophesy:

[...] [a] new and different species of rule is to be tried which is to control clusters of states and communities, and to preserve them in temper and in peace without interfering with their internal administration or arrangements [...] [y]ou have the choice between this and an intent upon Hertford college (Haileybury, the company's civilian training center) and Addiscombe (military seminary) for one thousand writers and five thousand cadets, and *Feringy Raj* (foreign, i.e. British rule) all over India [...]. The consequence of the establishment of our direct authority – that our [...] Should last fifty years; but if we can continue to keep up a number of native states without political powers, but as royal instruments, we shall, I believe, exist in India as long as we maintain our naval superiority in Europe (cited in Fisher, 1997:458-459).

Thus, use of royal instruments developed over time in India, indeed, held the empire together until the close of World War II (1939-1945). India stood as the foundation for the British empire, the base upon which British imperialism built elsewhere in Asia and in Africa. Expansion in India occurred during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries; in contrast South East Asia and East and West Africa came under British control from the late nineteenth century onwards.

Ideologically, as well as chronologically and economically, India served as the basis for further British advances (Coen, 1971:125). As the proving ground for British use of indirect rule, India was believed by the British to have produced the models that were later consciously adopted elsewhere in the empire. Further, India served as the training ground for many of the officials – both in London and in the field – who directed or carried out later British expansion, India often proved to be the arena in which they received their first, formative experience with shaping or governing non-European cultures and political system.

Table 1:
 Ratio of European Officials, in Terms of Local Population Direct and Indirect Rule, in Africa and India

Colony or Local State	Type of Rule	European Officials	Estimated Population	Year	Ratio Nearest 100
British Kenya	Direct	164	31,000,000	1930	1 : 18,900
French West Africa	Direct	526	14,500,000	1921	1 : 27,600
Belgian Congo	Mixed	316	11,000,000	1936	1 : 34,800
British Nigeria and Cameroon's	Mixed	386	20,000,000	1930	1 : 51,800
India (all)	Mixed	950	253,900,000	1881	1 : 267,300
Awadh	Direct	38	11,220,000	1872	1 : 295,300
Princely India	Indirect	107	94,000,000	1947	1 : 878,500
Hyderabad	Indirect	2	10,668,000	1872	1 : 5,333,000
Awadh	Indirect	2	11,000,000	1856	1 : 5,500,000

Source: Michael H. Fisher (1991:8-9).

Colonial administrators often seem to have clung to the memory of their first Indian accomplishments throughout the rest of their careers. India provided the guidelines and precedents, although the process of adaptation to local environments in Africa and South East Asia later shifted some of the terms and forms of imperialism there. Despite this adaptation, both the models and the experience gained in India proved to be vital for virtually all subsequent British expansion and colonial administration (Coen, 1971:130).

The European imperial administrations, indirect rule held a number of apparent benefits. Foremost among them, indirect rule implied reduced cost to the colonial administration, in terms of both civil and military budgets and manpower. The table compares the number of European officials employed in administration for selected African and Indian examples of direct and indirect rule.

CONCLUSION

The British in India introduced two ways of imperial control: direct and indirect. Under the former, British officials brought Indian territory under their immediate administration; and in the latter form, the British recognized the sovereignty – variously defined at different times – of numerous indigenous rulers, subject to higher British authority, British political advisors, entitled “Residents” at the courts of these rulers provided the meanings of indirect rule.

As the system of indirect rule evolved from the 1760 onward, Residents tried to induce Indian rulers an official to conform to British expectations and to implement British policy. Residents both helped formulate British policy and more, significantly, endeavourer to enforce it through Indian rulers. These Residents played a particularly crucial role in the establishment and expansion of British rule over India.

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British Established a Vast Empire in Asia and Africa

(Source: www.google.com, 4/2/2014)

Many historical empires from Pharaonic Egypt onward have employed indirect rule to extend their influence over disparate peoples with a minimum expenditure in material and human resources. When the British established a vast empire in Asia and Africa, they faced the basic problem because they dominated over the existing political authorities. In most parts of their dominions, they had adopted a system of utilizing the pre-existing political authority, indigenous rulers or traditional chiefs, to carry out most of the processes of local government. This was the situation where an imperial power did not supersede the pre-existing political authority, but established its dominance over it, where traditional rulers were allowed to exercise as before in the local governance. This system is called "Indirect Rule", which stood for a government through the pre-existing political authority.