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MAU MAU AND THE DECOLONISATION OF KENYA

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Introduction

The Mau Mau rebellion surprised the British government in 1952 by its ferocity and its initial success. Although the expectation of a speedy suppression of what appeared to be primitive and atavistic groups without firearms was frustrated, law and order was restored by 1955/6. The duration and protracted effort of the counterinsurgency beg an evaluation of its influence on the fate of Kenya as a colony. Yet, decolonisation did not arrive until nearly a decade later. Hence, the contention over the possible effect of the Mau Mau on the British retreat from Kenya.

In the discussion of Kenyan decolonisation, two main approaches can be detected. One, focuses on the processes in Kenyan society, the other on the British establishment. Within the first approach, opinion may range from the assertion that with decolonisation the Mau Mau won a belated victory to the statement that the nationalist struggle during the period of 1956-1963 constituted an alternative to the Mau Mau struggle.[1] The other approach looks for factors influencing imperial decision-making. Most of the research on the London scene looks for general factors that shaped the wider process of decolonisation and devotes but little space to Kenya itself.[2] The research dealing specifically with the decolonisation of Kenya is mostly a variation on

[1] B. A. Ogot, 'The Decissive Years 1956-1963', *Decolonization & Independence in Kenya 1940-1993* (London, Nairobi, 1995), p. 51; Keith Kyle, *The Politics of Independence of Kenya* (London, 1999) p. 87.
[2] Two obvious examples will suffice, J. Darwin, John Darwin, *The End of the British Empire: the Historical Debate*. (Oxford, 1991) and F. Heinlein, *British Government Policy and Decolonisation 1945-1963. Scrutinising the Official Mind* (London, 2002).

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former Colonial Secretary Oliver Lyttelton's explanation that it came about as a result of a general understanding that continuance of Britain's rule would entail a use of force unacceptable to the British public.[3] D. F. Gordon's was probably the first study in this vein.[4] He thought that as a result of the rebellion, the British realised the tenuousness of the European Settlers' hold on Kenya. According to this interpretation, the Hola camp incident, when 11 African detainees were killed during what turned out to be a matter of regular detainee-camp practice, was the decisive event on Kenya's path to independence. David Anderson's most recent study takes the same route, noting that after 1956, the British public were certainly aware that 'the campaign in Kenya was a dirty business'.[5] Enoch Powell's public indignation at the Hola killing proved that if he, a rising star of the Right, believed that Britain had no right to be there if she could not show moral leadership of the highest order, then the game of empire was up.[6]

None of these studies acknowledges the time that elapsed until the rebellion's influence actually took effect. Nor do they effectively explain why the same liberal tendencies failed to stop the dirty war the British conducted against the Mau Mau in Kenya while it was raging on. Likewise, a recent study suggests a theory whereby democracies lose small wars, yet Britain is conspicuously absent from the list that

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3 Oliver Lyttelton, *The Memoires of Lord Chandos*, (London 1962) p. .

4 D. F. Gordon, 'Mau-Mau and Decolonization: Kenya and the Defeat of Multi Racialism in East and Central Africa', *Kenya Historical Review*, lii,(1977), pp. 340-1.

5 David Anderson, *History of the Hanged. The War in Kenya and the End of Empire*, (New York, London, 2005), pp. 326-7. One of the most recent studies showing just how dirty: Caroline Elkins, *Imperial Reckoning. The Untold Story of Britain's Gulag in Kenya* (New York, 2005).

6 Anderson, loc. cit.

comprises France in Algeria, Israel in Lebanon and the United States in Vietnam.[7] Was the counterinsurgency such a shining success?

This article strives to show the influence of the Mau Mau rebellion on the timing of decolonisation in Kenya. It will argue that during the period 1956-1960 when active fighting was already over, a counterinsurgency concluded, and law and order restored, the Mau Mau ghost began to haunt London, just as it was vanquished in Nairobi. Racial relations, international power considerations, party politics, and strategic calculations are well-known factors in the decolonisation process. The Mau Mau ghost influenced each such factor, playing a part in constructing the 'liberal state of mind' that is said to have made the British leave Kenya. As a vanquished movement, the Mau Mau left behind a legacy of terror that proved more enduring than the actual struggle had been. It is a potent example of the influence of such a movement on policy changes beyond the armed conflict.

Mau Mau Discounted

The story we have to tell is quite extraordinary: it is the unusual phenomenon of a rebellion discounted when it happened, then subsequently built into a nightmare. From its start, the Mau Mau had great potential in throwing off the colonial yoke. It was the only African rebellion and it was directed against a tiny group of European settlers. It converged with another drawn-out confrontation with irregulars in Malaya and followed a great wave of decolonisation that showed the growing unpopularity of colonial wars. It

[7] Gil Merom, *How Democracies Lose Small Wars: State, Society, and the Failures of France in Algeria, Israel in Lebanon, United States in Vietnam*, (Cambridge, 2003). the British experience at counterinsurgency is alluded to in passing, especially the Boer wars..

also had a chance of being understood within the context of an exacerbating conflict between the West and the Soviet block.

Yet nothing of the above happened. There were several reasons for the equanimity with which the rebellion and the suppression were met. At first the rebellion was discounted because of the technical backwardness and inferiority of the combatants, which encouraged hopes for a swift defeat.[8] But even as the British found themselves plodding their way through the entanglements of an unknown African terrain, only the army came to regard the rebellion for what it was. Mau Mau was a military challenge with serious political implications. The army was the first to realise the Mau Mau challenge, especially under a colonial power completely unwilling to accommodate political aspirations.[9]

The government in London was little perturbed. Kenya never topped the cabinet's agenda, and the government was slow to grant reinforcements urgently requested by the military.[10] Similarly, deliberations with the Kenya government over footing the bill were carried out leisurely in spite of army warnings in February 1953 that they were holding up suppression activities.[11] Only in the later part of 1953 did the

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[8] Memo. By Oliver Lyttelton, Secretary of State for the Colonies, 14 Nov. 1952, C(52)407, PREM 11/472 The National Archives/Public Record Office (Kew)(PRO), Lord Alport, *The Sudden Assignment: Being a Record of Service in Central Africa, during the Last Controversial Years of Federation Rhodesia and Nyasaland* (London, 1965), p. 84.

[9] Maj. General W. R. N. Hinde, Brief for C-in-C – Historical Note on Mau Mau and the Emergency, 6 June 1953, Mss. Afr. s. 1580/3/12 RH. On the need for meeting the political challenge bu both Commanders in Chief: General Sir G. Erskine to his wife, 4 Oct. 1953 6/1/75/134 ERSKINE I[mperial] W[ar] M[useum]; Erskine, appreciation on Future Military Policy in Kenya, 1954, Jan. 1954, WO 216/863 PRO; also in an interview J. Cameron, 'Bombers? Kenya Needs Ideas', *News Chronicle,* 19 Nov. 1953, 75/134/5, ERSKINE, IWM; Lieutenant General G. L. Lathbury to CIGS, Jan. 1956, WO 216/892; Lathbury to Under-Secretary of State, War Office, 12 Dec. 1955, WO 276/8 PRO

[10] Erskine to prime minister, Sir Winston Churchill, 28 Aug., Antony Head, War Secretary, to Churchill, 31 Aug. 1953, PREM 11/472 PRO.

[11] Chiefs of Staff, 29th mtg., 27 Feb. 1953, p. 5, DEFE 4/60; Memo, Trafford Smith, 6 Feb. 1953, CO 822/477 PRO PRO.

government begin to realise that the rebellion was going to be a drawn-out annoyance.[12]

In the British government, the low military assessment of the groups it was fighting went hand in hand with a denial of the political character of the movement. Given the government's policy for Kenya, it was virtually impossible to accept the rebellion's political character. A positive response to demands for the return of lands and for passing power to the African majority was out of the question as long as the British saw the European community as the driving force of the colony. London had little intention of paying the insurgents the compliment of treating them as rebels, and denied the political aspect of the Mau Mau, considering them nothing more than atavistic, anti-modernist terrorists.[13] The swearing-in ceremony of Mau Mau adherents and members, for example, was considered proof of the barbaric character of the organisation; it emphasised a 'primitive' and 'magical' context, not to be mistaken for a politically binding commitment.[14] The British government was in fact doing a very good job of demonising the enemy, as Lyttelton's retrospective description of a shadow of a horned figure hovering over him when dealing with papers concerning Kenya makes clear.[15] Demonising the insurgents, while denying political ends to their struggle, went a long

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[12] Head to Lyttelton, 17 July 1953 CO 822/477, Head to Churchill, 31 Aug. 1953, PREM 11/472 PRO

[13] Sir Andrew Cohen, *British Policy in Changing Africa*, (London, 1959).

[14] Even by liberal minds like Thomas Askwith who did see social and political aspects in the rebellion but not in the oath, C. Elkins, 'The Struggle for Mau Mau Rehabilitation in Late Colonial Kenya', *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, xxx, 1, (2000), pp. 36-37. He was backed by professionals. L.S.B. Leakey, the European authority on Kikuyu lore, in both his books held a similar opinion: L.S.B. Leakey, *Defeating Mau Mau* (London, 1954), 77-93, L.S.B. Leakey, *Mau Mau and the Kikuyu* (London, 1952), ch. 9 likewise, Dr. J.C. Carothers, an ethnopsychiatrist with significant African experience highly praised Askwith's plan - Dr. J.C. Carothers, *The Psychology of Mau Mau* (Nairobi, 1954).

[15] Lyttelton, *The Memoirs of Lord Chandos*, pp. 394-395. D. Kennedy, 'Constructing the Colonial Myth of Mau Mau', *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, xxv, no. 2 (1992), p. 253; F. Cooper, 'Review Article: Mau Mau and the Discourses of Decolonization', *Journal of African History*, xxix (1988) pp. 316-317, 319-320, D. Throup, *Economic and Social Origins of Mau Mau 1945-1953* (London, 1987), pp. 42-3.

way toward calming the British official mind and reassuring it of the eventual success of the suppression.

Although the colonial establishment denied any political attributes of the Mau Mau movement, KAU, the African political movement, was proscribed as an alleged cover organisation, to the great satisfaction of the settlers. This move was in full accordance with the warning issued by the prominent settler leader Michael Blundell: 'People are beginning to question whether all Africans however soft spoken and educated are not just the same and whether they are wise to talk about any future relationships with them other than on the basis of strict discipline and control'.[16]

It was fortunate and probably inevitable that the proscription also matched the European readings of the African political map. After all, the counterinsurgency was deeply indebted to the European settlers' effort. Their knowledge of the country and its language was indispensable in guerrilla warfare. Co-operation with the settlers further improved with the creation in 1954 of a war cabinet consisting of three members: the Governor, General Sir G. Erskine, and a minister from the settlers – Blundell. The feeling that the settlers were people to be reckoned with lingered on.[17]

The rebellion also reinforced feelings of sympathy towards the settlers as 'kith and kin', and as partners in a common European civilisation. The suppression of an insurgency in a place where overwhelming European technological superiority was manifest did nothing to convince anyone that the Africans had the qualifications to run a viable modern state. The more demonic the Mau Mau were made out to be, the more

[16] Blundell to Hugh Fraser MP, 2 May 1953, Mss. Afr. s 746/12/3, BLUNDELL, R[hodes]H[ouse] Elkins, 'The Struggle for Mau Mau Rehabilitation', pp. 29, 33.

[17] J. O. Morton to H. P. Hall, 14.8.1953, CO 822/697; Min. of mtg. of Kenya Intelligence Committee, 25 March 1953, 15/7/1953, WO 276/62 PRO, Erskine to his wife, 7 March 1954, ERSKINE 1/7/ 75/134 IWM

convinced the British were that Kenya's stable future depended on European leadership and guidance.[18] African demands for political advancement, let alone political equality, merited little but disdain.[19]

The rebellion also fitted badly into the anti-communist hysteria. There were no communists in Kenya. The Kenyan administration had to make do with a visit of Jomo Kenyatta, the alleged leader of the Mau Mau, to Moscow to hint at the political colour of the troublemakers.[20] The only expression of East-West tensions came in the well-expected tirade against Britain from countries like the Soviet Union, India and Egypt.[21] Britain bore it quite stoically.

Although the British public was informed, the severity of the suppression left them unperturbed for a long time. While the fighting was going on, there was little indication that the days of Empire were coming to an end. Anti-imperial periodicals and politicians were vocal against the detainee policy from early on and provided the platform where criticism against the Mau Mau counterinsurgency or its implication was kept alive. The *Daily Mirror* that thought the suppression brutal and self-damaging also agreed that Mau Mau were guilty of 'beastly atrocities'.[22]

As early as December 1953, the Kenya Committee for Democratic Rights for Kenya Africans organised a day of national protest against the 'growing massacre' and

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[18] And American also: Address by J.C. Satterthwaite, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, before the Western Regional Assembly, Lake Arrowhead, 9 Oct.1958, in *Documents on American Foreign Relations[DAFR], 1958*, P.E. Zinner(ed.), N.Y., 1959, p. 389

[19] 'a poor lot', was what Lyttelton called them, Teleg. Lyttelton to PM, 15 March 1954, PREM 11/ 696 PRO.

[20] Memo by Security Liaison Officer to the Kenya Intelligence committee, 2 March 1953, WO276/62 see also a paper that traverses the history of Communist contacts with Kenya, M.C. Manby, director of Intelligence, 28 Nov. 1962, Mss. Afr. s. 2159 box 2/2, RH

[21] Mau Mau in Soviet press 2 March 1953 WO 276/62 30 June 1953 FO 371/102562 and also 1957 CO 822/1227 PRO.

[22] "'Daddy Wouldn't Buy Me a Mau Mau', The British Popular Press & the Demoralization of Empire", *Mau Mau & Nationalism*, E. S. Atieno Odhiambo and John Lonsdale (ed.)(Oxford, Nairobi, 2003), pp. 238-241.

called for an end to the fighting.[23] In 1955, when the film *Simba* was released, the Kenya Committee took care to correct the pictorial image of the African struggle and the African public. The *African Bulletin* and the *African Digest* were even sharper, speaking of '1,250,120 Africans killed or detained' since the declaration of the state of Emergency. The committee was surely aware that the number detained was far greater than the number killed but combined the numbers for political effect. In a similar vein, one leaflet cited a clergyman's revulsion at the harsh conditions in the detainee camps: 'Can we agree to British Belzens in Kenya?'[24] To be sure, these voices were not very numerous, and sometimes as critical of the Labour Party's too-timid reactions as of the government.[25] The small and politically contained criticism also marginalised it. The virtual silence of the general public was evidence of how widely the government's view of the rebellion was accepted.[26]

Mau Mau Reconstructed

The Mau Mau turned out to be a qualified success, however, if only because the combatants refused to admit defeat. Mau Mau and other Africans believed that the mere survival of the movement was a sign of victory. M'thenge, one of the forest leaders, told his soldiers that even one single soldier could bring the entire British army to its knees by his perseverance.[27] Needless to say, the British failed to share his opinion. In late

[23] Circular, by F. Laski, chairperson, 17.3.1954, G 531 ANTI SLAVERY SOCIETY, RH.
[24] African Bulletin, Vol. 2, No. 11, Nov. 1955, p. 20, Mss. Brit. Emp. s. 22, G 539, ANTI SLAVERY SOCIETY, RH; circular, 15 Sept. 1954, Mss. Brit. Emp. s. 22, G 531, see also Leaflet, Feb. 1955, Mss. Brit. Emp. s. 22, G 534, ANTI SLAVERY SOCIETY, RH
[25] Draft of an article and a letter by Commander T. Fox-Pitt to Editor of *New Statesman and Nation*, 10 March 1956, Mss. Brit. Emp. s. 22, G 537, ANTI SLAVERY SOCIETY
[26] Elkins, *Imperial Reckoning*, pp. 307-308
[27] D. L. Barnett and K. Njama, *Mau Mau from Within. Autobiography and Analysis of Kenya's Peasent Revolt* (London, 1966), pp. 423-424.

1955, Lieutenant General G.L. Lathbury felt sure enough of supremacy to reduce the army forces to almost pre-Mau Mau levels.[28] Nevertheless, he warned that a renewal of the state of Emergency should never be considered a long shot and therefore recommended leaving the remaining forces under War Office administration.[29]

From this point on, something rather peculiar began to happen. The Mau Mau became an ever-lurking threat. It became a ghost haunting the colonial government in Kenya and, through them, the British cabinet. It became the yardstick, a paradigm, for future trouble – something to be dreaded when dealing with other colonies and other disorders. It hovered like a shadow that might be return elsewhere and require a similarly "dirty" suppression.

In Kenya, the ill-fated identification of the Mau Mau with the political movement ensured its comeback to bedevil and rob the British of the fruits of the counterinsurgency's success. Thus, a successful act of political protest was a clear sign for those on the lookout for Mau Maus. In 1958, the boycott against the buses and against cigarettes and beer (27–29 May) called by Tom Mboya, general secretary of the Kenya Federation of Labour, proved successful. Although this and other boycotts were not violent and carried out 'with little or no intimidation', intelligence reports related the success at least in part to memories of the Mau Mau and Mau Mau–enforced discipline. According to M.C. Manby, director of Intelligence, 'the African, as a result of Mau Mau, is still very conscious of the possible consequences of not being "anti-Government"'. Once resemblance to Mau Mau was supposedly established, intelligence officials

[28] Defence Committee 11th Meeting, min 3, 19 Oct. 1955, DC(55), CAB131/16 PRO.
[29] Lathbury to the Under Secretary of State WO, 12 Dec. 1955 WO276/8 PRO.

expected the boycotts to be followed, like in the first rebellion, by civil disobedience, arson, and sabotage.[30]

Colonial Secretary, Allan Lennox-Boyd thought it was primarily a war of nerves. Furthermore, he assessed the incidents themselves as 'minor in character'. However, they assumed a threatening quality in a post-Mau Mau context: He considered them 'strikingly reminiscent of incidents which were taking place before the Mau Mau rebellion broke out'.[31] Not only was he upgrading the Mau Mau posthumously to a rebellion, but it also became the yardstick against which other possible disturbances were measured. Lennox-Boyd, determined believer in the multiracial solution that he was, became convinced that continuation of the status quo was explosive, even if he was confident that Kenya could 'deal with a serious threat to order'.[32] There was a lurking fear that troubles in one colony would set off disturbances in another, either because they were co-ordinated by African Nationalists "aimed at subverting British authority in both Central and East Africa" or because there were "potential threats to order arising from the domestic political situation in each". Troubles in Tanganyika would set off demonstrations in Nairobi.[33]

The Hola camp incident and Nyasaland Emergency also contributed to the further building up of the nightmare. To the cabinet, the latter especially conjured memories of the Mau Mau as a dreaded uprising that would involve a counterinsurgency – drastic times calling for drastic measures – much like the Indian

[30] Manby, Brief for COPCON 28, 1 Feb. – 30 May 1958, p. 3, and Memo and Annex on Positive Action in Kenya, 12 Nov. 1958, Mss Afr. s. 2159, MANBY, box 2/2, RH.

[31] Memo. by A. Lennox-Boyd, Colonial Secretary, 'Security Measures in Kenya', the 5 March 1959 C(59)42, CAB 129/96 PRO.

[32] Memo by Lennox-Boyd, on the Future Policy in East Africa, 10 April 1959, CPC(59)2, p. 3, para. 7, p. 4, para. 8-9 CAB 134/1558, PR; Also memo by Colonial Office to the Africa Official Committee, on the Prospects for the African Territories for Which the Colonial Office is Responsible, para. 6, Jan 1959 AF(59)5, CAB134/1353, PRO.

[33] Memo by Lennox-Boyd, "Possibility of Disturbances in East Africa", 12 March 1959 C(59)56 CAB 129/97 PRO.

mutiny long before. Thus, it was hoped that the strict criticism of the Devlin report on the Nyasaland Emergency would be deflected by a comparison with previous experiences. So the cabinet mused: 'a comparison might be drawn with the Mau Mau Insurrection in Kenya and possibly with the Indian Mutiny'.[34] The connection between the two emergencies was already 'thought convenient' when the Devlin report, the report on the disciplinary proceedings following the incident at the Hola camp, and a related dispatch from the Governor of Kenya were published together.[35]

The idea thus conjured was not relinquished until the last days of colonial rule. During 1960, a nervous colonial establishment discovered another 'resurgence of Mau Mau' in the 'Kenya Land Freedom Army'. This time the resemblance lay also in the name that Dedan Kimathi had used before when he had tried to set up a co-ordinating body for the Mau Mau. The colonial administration considered the new organisation neo-Mau Mau and as militant as its precursor. There were alarming predictions of forest fighting and inter-tribal unrest. In spite of the similarities, true and imaginary, the alarms again proved unsubstantiated: the organisation was broken up during a brief operation (26 March to 30 April 1963).[36] London became more alarmist than Kenya: It was Eric Griffith-Jones, the Attorney General and acting governor, who reassured the colonial

[34] Cabinet conclusions, 20 July 1959, CC(59)43 CAB 128/33 PRO.

[35] Cabinet conclusions, 16 July 1959, CC(59)42 CAB 128/33 PRO. Popular press also had similar associations: Daily Mirror, 4 March 1959, cit in Joanna Lewis, "The British Popular Press", p. 243.

[36] Manby in a Circular for Special Branch, 17 May 1962, Mss. Afr. s. 2159 Box 1/3 MANBY; see also, reports by Manby, between 9 Sept.1960 to 31 May 1963, *ibid*, box 2/3, Report, 1 Feb.-31 Aug. 1962, *ibid*, box 2/1, John Stonehouse, MP, called for a scientific enquiry if indeed the movement was "a resurgence of Mau Mau". Mss. Brit. Emp. s. 22, G 546, ANTI SLAVERY SOCIETY, RH. T. Kanogo*, Squatters and the Roots of Mau Mau* (London, 1987), pp. 164-169; D.A. Percox, 'Internal Security and Decolonization in Kenya, 1956-1963', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, xxix pt 1 (2001), pp. 99-100.

office.[37] Even when intelligence revealed the difference between the original and the new groups and occurrences, the name Mau Mau stuck.[38]

Small wonder then, that by 1961, “Mau Mau” was as good as an independent concept. When Prime Minister Harold Macmillan was contemplating the drawbacks of holding back independence for Kenya as compared to the drawbacks of moving ahead, he was not thinking of any particular disturbances, let alone any specific anti-British movement. And yet he believed that 'if we hold on, it will mean a long and cruel campaign – Mau Mau and all that.'[39]

The British Official Mind Divided

The alarming view of the security situation in Kenya had more to do with past perceptions than with present facts. It is hard to establish the fact of a real worsening of the security situation at the end of the 1950s, mostly because instability was a built-in condition in Kenya, the Mau Mau simply an outstanding upsurge. Be that as it may, the establishment's repeated reference to memories of the Mau Mau created the Mau Mau ghost in the colonial mind.[40]

In 1990 John Lonsdale joined a long list of scholars who strove to assess the Mau Mau from the political as well as the military point of view. However, he limited his research to the period of the rebellion itself. He clearly expressed this parameter by

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[37] Percox, 'Internal Security', pp. 108-9

[38] M.C. Manby, director of Intelligence, regionalistion and Maintenance of Law and Order, Last Review, Aug. 1963, on the difference. Within the same review a circular for Special Branch, 17 May 1962, names "neo Mau Mau" an intelligence target. Mss Afr. s. 2159, MANBY, box 1/3, and in four reports between 9 Sept. 1960 to 31 May 1963, checking resurgences of Mau Mau, ibid, box 2/3, RH.RH

[39] Macmillan’s diary entry for 19 Dec. 1961 cit in his memoirs, Macmillan, *At the End of the Day, 1961-1963* (London, 1973), p. 291.

[40] The opposite case is made by Percox, "Internal Security", throughout the article, but he also shows that these phenomenon were easily overcome.

disavowing any attempt to explain the connection between the Mau Mau and decolonisation in his study. The fact that the two subjects cannot be entirely divorced is proved by the recurring references to the decolonisation period in that same article.[41]

Just as the original phenomenon engendered different 'Mau Maus of the mind' (Lonsdale's term) according to the political beliefs and goals of the various parties who were involved, so did the ghostly threat. Different political purposes underlay perceptions of the Mau Mau apparition. The Kenya Europeans and even the colonial government had different purposes than those of Britain. The ideas of Macmillan, and Iain Macleod as Colonial Secretary differed from those of Lennox-Boyd. The Foreign Office and the Commonwealth Relations Office had a different view of the world than that of the army.

For those who supported the idea of a multiracial society in Kenya or in London, the reappearance of the Mau Mau was easily predicted. Until 1959 a multiracial society was the goal of British policy in Kenya, although Lennox-Boyd was aware that this position was not quite acceptable to the extremists among the settlers. He also thought that the constitutional changes of 1957 had 'the virtues of placing a barrier on the creation of further communal constituencies and closing the door to the racialist advance of African numbers'.[42] A continuation of the proscription of the KAU and any other national African organisation was part and parcel of this policy.

The alarm at the Colonial Office and in the Kenya government mainly reflected the process of radicalisation that the African public was experiencing. This process is

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[41] J. Lonsdale, "Mau Maus of the Mind: Making Mau Mau and Remaking Kenya", *The Journal of African History*, xxxi pt 3 (1990), pp. 393-421. especially, p. 405.

[42] Memo. By Lennox-Boyd, 13 Nov. 1957, C(57)266 CAB 129/90, p. 2. A Colonial Office official emphasised: 'What we really want to do is to ensure that the minorities obtain not proportionate but disproportionate representation in executive and in legislature', quoted by, Kyle, *The politics of Independence* , p. 69.

best demonstrated by the initial acceptance of the principle of multiracialism in 1952 by the elected African representatives to full rejection of it by 1959.[43] It made the British realise that after Mau Mau, the challenge was no longer a matter of achieving African participation in the governance of Kenya but instead dealing with African domination of it.

Yet this radicalisation did not stem from Mau Mau adherents or from Mau Mau political success. Instead, the explanation can be found in traditional theories connecting rising national sentiment with a growing bourgeoisie. The African bourgeoisie had been growing as a result of economic and social changes since World War II, and further efforts and investments made during the counterinsurgency only accelerated it. An alternative theory finds radicalisation connected to the new sense of power that the Mau Mau brought to Africans but without a continuation of violence.[44] Although radicalisation was not proof of the dreaded renewal of Mau Mau, tangible proof was there for those who looked for it. Even when active fighting was over, Mau Mau hardly disappeared. The large number of detainees provided constant proof; many Kikuyu were detained just to decrease the hostile population.[45] In reaction against the government's policy of control and discipline, these camps became new venues for the Mau Mau struggle. Hola camp was one of several detention camps working according to the Cowan plan of rehabilitation by work – a plan by which seventy thousand

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[43] Press Communiqué by African Members, 14 April 1956, G 544, ANTI SLAVERY; Kenya Federation of Labour, 13 Feb. 1956, in Mss. Brit. Emp. s. 365, 120/1 FCB; Executive Committee of the Africa Bureau, 'Policy for Kenya', upon the Conference on Kenya held by the Africa Bureau on 12 May 1956, Mss. Brit. Emp. s. 22, G537 AFRICA BUREAU, RH, Elkin, *Imperial Reckoning*, p. 357 assesses that the struggle against the detainees 'shaped power just as much as British Power shaped their resistance'.

[44] B. A. Ogot and T. Zeleza, 'Kenya: The Road to Independence and After', *Decolonization and African Independence. The Transfers of Power, 1960-1980* (London, 1988), pp. 402-8. Maina-Wa- Kinyatti, 'Mau Mau: The Peak of African Nationalism in Kenya', *Kenya Historical Review*, v, 2(1977), p.100. Executive Committee of the Africa Bureau, 'Policy for Kenya', upon the Conference on Kenya held by the Africa Bureau on 12 May 1956, Mss. Brit. Emp. s. 22/ G537 *Africa Bureau*, RH.

[45] Particularly during operation Anvil: Erskine, Confidential Annex to COS(54)11th Meeting Min., 4, 3.2.1954, DEFE 4/68 PRO.

detainees were processed, leaving one thousand "hardcore" who moved the Mau Mau struggle into the camps. As long as the struggle was treated as a malady to be cured rather than a political struggle, the camps were bound to endure as centres of resentment.[46]

Continuation of the camp system kept the Mau Mau going – for British, Kenya-European and Africans alike. Colonial officials at all levels were continually struggling to 'rehabilitate' and make over the Mau Mau members into individuals who cooperated with the government, but they created their own nemesis instead. They were aware of the on-going Mau Mau struggle behind the barbed wire, yet they were also aware that it would not appear credible to others. The detainee camps were violations of the Human Rights Convention as well as the ILC Forced Labour Convention of 1930. Ostensibly the grounds for these violations were that the British believed that trouble could build up in a moment despite the seeming tranquillity in Kenya. [47]

On the outside, it was no better. Adherents were never caught to the last man. Special Branch monthly assessments of the falling number of Mau Mau terrorists still free showed neither accuracy nor any sign of disappearance.[48] Thus on Jan. 1958, a report on Mau Mau oathing ceremonies in the Meru District in locations previously unaffected was considered extremely serious because they went on continuously during 1957, picked up greater speed later in the year, and were 'typically Mau Mau with local Meru embellishments'. But even then the report was kept at a lower official

[46] Elkins, *Imperial Reckoning* , pp. 192-232.
[47] D.G. Gordon-Smith, on behalf of H. Steel, CO to F.A. Vallat, Deputy Legal Adviser, FO, 24 April 1957; Vallat to Steel 28 May 1957, CO 822/1167 PRO.
[48] Special Branch headquarters to Senior Superintendent of Police 5 Jan to 6 Dec. 1956, WO276/529

level.[49] Later in December a memorandum by the European minister without portfolio warned against a forthcoming deterioration in inter-racial relations and suggested alerting the Home Guard in order to avoid a repetition of the experience 'during the Mau Mau' when the build-up of the system took such a long time.[50]

Kenya sent these statistics on to the Ministry of Defence. Occasionally, when trouble seemed to brew more seriously, the information would be sent on to the Colonial Office. Little attention was paid; there is no evidence that they reached the secretaries of state of either department. This may have provided shadows but not the ghost. In spite of all the anxiety that was building up, by mid 1959 the colonial administration could not envisage independence for Kenya before 1975.[51]

Indeed, these latest threats were nothing like the original Mau Mau rebellion. If there had been a real threat, surely the army would have been the first to sound the alarm. The reason the country's armed forces had been left under War Office command was to ensure a quick alert and organisation in case of an emergency.[52] Moreover, just as politicians were becoming worried that African aspirations might lead to a renewed bloodbath, the army was considering the building of a new base. Indeed in 1958, the army's plans reflected a renewed recognition of the necessity of placing part of the Central Strategic Reserve close to the main theatres of action: the Middle East and the Persian Gulf.[53] By December 1960, the chiefs of staff described Kenya as vital for

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[49] Special Branch report sent by major E.W.M. Magor Ministry of Defence, to J. F. L. Buist(East Africa Dept), in the Colonial office, 25 Jan 1958, CO 822/1254.

[50] Memo. by European Minister w/o Portfolio to the Security Council advisory to Governor, 9 Dec. 1958, forwarded by Major Magor to Buist in East Africa department Colonial Office CO 822/1254.

[51] C. Douglas-Home, *Evelyn Baring: the Last Proconsul* (London, 1978), p. 283.

[52] Lt. General G.L. Lathbury to Under Secretary of State, War Office, 12 Dec. 1955, WO 276/8.

[53] A. Buchan, 'Britain's Defence Problem', *Observer Foreign Service*, 23 Jan. 1957. *Report on Defence: Britain's Contribution to Peace and Security* (London, 1958), pp. 6-7. *Memorandum of the Secretary of State for War Relating to the Army Estimates*

policing not only Africa but also the Middle East. They assumed that owing to Kenya's increasing geo-strategic importance, Britain should retain control for as long as possible, adding this warning: 'If this is thought to be over-optimistic or unrealistic, a radical change in our strategy will be necessary'. [54] The Kenya Land Freedom Army did not seem a severe enough threat to be considered a new Mau Mau, or the chiefs of staff were over-optimistic, or what is most likely, they were far more interested in the prospect of losing the 'last permanent foothold in Africa'. [55]

The new Mau Mau myth resonated with the Foreign Office's views on the effect of a possible deterioration of the situation in Kenya. In the second half of the 1950s, the Mau Mau could no longer be expected to remain an isolated Kenyan phenomenon. Unlike the first time around, if it reappeared in Kenya or elsewhere, the ramifications for Britain's foreign relations, particularly with the United States, would be devastating. The Foreign Office was well aware that anti-colonialism, combined with an urge to appease Afro-Asian agitators, did not bode well for the continuation of a British Empire in Africa. Even past voting records at the United Nations showed the United States in closer affinity with India and Liberia than with the UK.[56]

Kenya's interracial tensions made her particularly vulnerable to Soviet infiltration. Thus, Kenya, the Foreign Office feared, would become a destabilising force for the whole of Africa – undermining the continent's ability to withstand communist interference. British colonial policy in East and Central Africa, particularly anything that

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1957-58 (London, 1957), Cmd. 150, p. 10; *Statement on Defence, 1955*, p. 3; annex to memo, COS, 25 Sept. 1957, COS (57)214, DEFE 5/78 PRO.

[54] Report by N. Brook, Chairman of the Official Committee on Colonial Policy on Future Constitutional Development in the Colonies, 6 Sept. 1957, CPC(57)30 (revised), p. 7, CAB 134/1556; memo, Chiefs of Staff committee, 'Strategic Facilities in British Territories Likely to Achieve Independence', Sept. 1957, COS (57)214, DEFE 5/78 PRO. Citation from Report, COS, 30 Dec. 1960, COS (60)371, DEFE 5/109 PRO.

[55] 30 Dec. 1960, Annex to COS(60)371 , op. cit., pp.3-4 DEFE 5/109 PRO.

[56] Minute by P. E. Ramsbotham, to Sir F. Hoyer Millar, 4 June 1959 FO 371/143671 PRO.

could appear to maintain 'white supremacy,' was crucial in determining the attitude of Africa towards the West.[57] The British believed that Africa had to develop peacefully with maximum internal stability and to remain in friendly relations with the West. That meant that in the colonial areas, the rate of political advancement for the Africans would have to be fast enough to satisfy their immediate desires.[58] To put it in a nutshell: anything reminiscent of a recurrence of the Mau Mau would be detrimental to the West's interests in Africa.

The Foreign Office understood the different view that the army was taking and also the need for facilities in Kenya and strategic communications with the Arabian Peninsula and the Far East. They were willing to concede that there was a conflict between Britain's interests in Africa per se and their interests in the wider context. The Foreign Office insisted on a comprehensive – not merely military – evaluation of such a development.[59] It was clear where their recommendation would go:

> If our primary strategic interest in Kenya is as a base for our strategic reserve, this reserve must retain its mobility. The disorders provoked by the application of the policy recommended by the Colonial Office could involve the reserve local tactical commitments and thus vitiate its primary function.

They were sceptical of the military's ability to quell disturbances, given the past response to similar occurrences: 'the Algerian, Malayan, Cypriot and other examples are not encouraging.' [60]

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[57] Note by the Foreign Office to the Africa Official Committee on "Africa South of the Sahara: the Future of the Foreign Territories", AF(59)3 12 Jan.1959, CAB 134/1353.

[58] Note by the Foreign Office on Africa South of the Sahara: The Nature of British Interest in the Foreign Territories, 12 Jan. 1959, AF(59)4, CAB 134/1353, PRO.

[59] Ibid.

[60] Both citations: Comments on the Colonial office memo. By the Foreign Office, on the prospects for African Territories for which the Colonial Office is Responsible, 26 Feb. 1959, AF(59)22, CAB 134/1354.

In Kenya, such a counterinsurgency would be interpreted by international opinion as a last-ditch attempt to perpetuate white supremacy. Thus, they were most concerned by the likely international implications and indeed the political ramifications at home. As the number of independent African members increased, the pressure in the UN over Kenya would be no different than that over Uganda and would also increase. Disorders on anything like the Algerian scale would lead to a rift with the United States, due to the growing importance of its Negro vote and its wish to stop the Africans from turning to the Soviet Union for leadership. As the Soviets were bound to try and take advantage of any dissident activity in East Africa, this in turn would increase the anxiety of Britain's friends and their opposition to its policy.[61]

A destabilisation of Kenya would resurrect American anti-colonialism with a vengeance. As Sir Andrew Cohen put it, '[I]n a cold world some in the United States find anti-colonialism a comfortable blanket'.[62] Within the context of the cold war, the United States would not be able to afford to stand by Britain and would soon turn against it if a counterinsurgency developed. It was common wisdom in America as well as Britain that Soviet infiltration in any country would be the immediate follow-up to economic or social instability. Yet what an anti-communist colonial policy meant in practice was usually far from self-evident, [63] except in cases like Kenya, where it was clear that disturbances had to be avoided at all costs.

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[61] Comments on the Colonial office memo. Ibid.

[62] Sir A. Cohen, *British Policy in Changing Africa* (London, 1959), p. 85. *Statement on Defence, 1955* (London, 1955), Cmd. 9391,p. 6 para. 14.

[63] Cold war considerations as a factor in decolonisation see also Ronald Hyman, 'Winds of Change: The Empire and Commonwealth', cit in Philip Murphy, "Decolonisation under Macmillan – introductory Essay", *Macmillan Cabinet Papers, 1957-1963, on CD-ROM and on-line* co-editor (1999).

By the late 1950s, the United States was more convinced than ever that colonialism was a matter of the past. In his address to the UN General Assembly in 1961, President John Kennedy announced clearly that the growing wave of independence had the full sympathy and support of the United States.[64] In other words, anyone expecting a recurrence of the Mau Mau would have to accept also that it would be detrimental to Britain's relations with the United States. Britain would be particularly vulnerable after 1960, when she would become the only target of anti-colonialist feelings; hence – the urgent need to shore up British policy in Kenya. The United States could accept the delay of Kenya's independence only while the country remained peaceful. However, the British nightmare of a recurring Mau Mau was a far cry from that picture.[65]

The importance of the relationship with the United States had become a strategic axiom for Britain after the Suez crisis, as she became painfully aware of her diminished status and particular vulnerability with regard to America. The impact of the United States on British decolonisation is well accepted in decolonisation studies.

The fear of the impact of a recurring Mau Mau uprising on relations with Washington is a good vantage point for understanding how the desire for good relations with the United States and for keeping the Communists at bay worked even when no actual friction occurred. Therefore even when the United States was not exerting direct pressure, the pre-emptive action of hastened decolonisation to prevent a counterinsurgency could be construed as such influence.

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[64] Address by Satterthwaite, 9 Oct. 1958, in *DAFR, 1958*, p. 389. Citation in Address by G. Mennen Williams, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, 8 Jan. 1959, *DAFR*, *1962*, p. 30.

[65] Address by J. Wayne Fredericks, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, 18.7.1963, DAFR, 1963, p. 329.

There was no American pressure over Kenya when the decisive moment came along. During talks in December 1959, the American and Canadians expressed anxiety about South Africa and the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland – but not Kenya. In the case of the Federation, the Americans clearly warned that in 'an impossible situation' pressure would mount. Neither the American nor the Canadians had better ideas to offer except 'a greater speed of advance'.[66] Of course, one could assume a similar reaction in case public order broke down in Kenya.

Indeed, this very question was tackled earlier in June 1959 in a Foreign Office paper on the future of Anglo American relations, with the assessment that 'in Africa the danger of our falling out is much more distant. But it exists.' If anti-colonialist sentiment were to be directed against the UK, even in a case of mere association as that of the Central African Federation, 'Americans will regard the UK as being, malgré lui, one of the obstacles to the achievement of US aims in Africa: the creation of a solid, pro-Western bloc of independent states or, at least, of stable and benevolently neutral countries which can stand up to Communist penetration.' Unjust as it seemed to the Foreign Office, this sentiment would result from a combination of inborn American distrust of colonial rule and the expediency of appeasing Afro-Asian agitators. The British cynically mused that the Americans might look the other way if they considered British friendship indispensable, but they were rather pessimistic on that score – France and Western Germany's growing importance as military and perhaps nuclear powers as

[66] Mr. Ross, FO, Mr. Fastwood, CO, Mr. Hunt, CRO, Report on a Visit to Washington and Ottawa, to discuss African Affairs (Africa: the next ten years), Nov. 1959, 10 Dec. 1959 FO371/137974; see also, the address of , assistant secretary of state for African Affairs before an assembly of the Chautaqua institution, 20 August 1959, FO371/137967

well and the dwindling down of British colonial territories would diminish Britain's importance.[67]

In the end, the special relationship rested on the speculation that the British could convince the Americans that they were a greater power than they really were. For that they had to avoid 'unnecessary pinpricks' and live up to the Americans' conception of a reliable senior partner.[68]

How could a protracted counterinsurgency, and a dirty one at that, help such an 'over-assessment' or prove the 'common political inheritance' upon which the relationship was supposedly founded? Macmillan considered the problems of the French in Algeria and the British in Kenya and Rhodesia comparable and a basis for common sympathy. Consequently, like-minded people must have been worried when John Kennedy was elected president in 1960 after calling for the French to withdraw from Algeria during his election campaign and planning drastic cuts in military aid to the France.[69] Mboya on his visit to the States in 1959 was had tried to convince Richard Nixon, then vice president under Dwight Eisenhower, and Kennedy, then senator, of the same idea. The British policy in Kenya and Northern Rhodesia, and French policy in Algeria (and Russian policy in Hungary for that matter) were all equally condemnable. And he was getting a much more favourable hearing than the British liked.[70]

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[67] P.E. Ramsbotham, 'The Future of Anglo-American Relations', 4 June 1959 FO371/143671 the Americans appreciated the British ability to provide facilities within easy reach all over the world. Matthew Jones, '"Maximum Disavowable Aid': Britain, the United States, and the Indonesian Rebellion", *The English Historical Review*, cxiv, no. 459 (1999), p. 1215.

[68] Ramsbotham, ibid.

[69] Anthony Clayton, *The Wars of French Decolonization* (New York, 1994), p. 167; the comparison Prime Minister's Discussions with French Prime Minister, 9-10 March 1959 was circulated as AF(59)30, p. 2, CAB134/1355 PRO

[70] *P. Godffrey Okoth, United States of America's Foreign Policy Toward Kenya, 1952-1969 (Nairobi, 1992), pp. 45-48. Mr. Ross, FO, Mr. Fastwood, CO, Mr. Hunt, CRO, Report on a Visit to Washington and Ottawa, to discuss African Affairs (Africa: the next ten years), Nov. 1959, 10 Dec. 1959 FO371/137974*

On the one hand, the Foreign Office, knew of the Americans' awakened interest in Africa and in Kenya's vulnerability. On the other hand, it had not quite given up on Britain's role in the continent and rejected the idea of her being tarnished by anti-imperialistic 'ganging up' with the French.[71] Yet her status as a liberal power was endangered by Kenya's racial tensions. In the Foreign Office's view, British influence depended as much on its international image as it did on power relations.[72] Britain's defence of a multiracial establishment that upheld of white supremacy in Kenya could endanger her stand in West Africa, exposing her as a hypocrite in her relations with Africans.[73]

Once the newly independent states of Africa joined the UN, there would be no prospect of commanding the necessary votes in the General Assembly to block a two-thirds majority when the 'anti-colonial' group was solidly ranged against an administering power.[74] Therefore, apprehension as well as hope made the Foreign Office less than keen for up-holding European supremacy in Kenya. Time was of the essence.[75] Yet, at the beginning of 1959 when the Foreign Office was writing papers – trying to re-write British policy in Africa – 20 years were still considered a fair time limit for independence for most of Africa. Macmillan and Macleod would soon find even this too sanguine, however.

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[71] Minute by J. H. A. Watson, 26.6.1959, FO 371/137965, FO 371/137966 PRO.

[72] "Africa: The Next Ten Years" as presented to the Americans, 30 Oct. 1959, AF(59)41, CAB 134/1355, PRO.

[73] Draft for opening Speech for Ambassador Sir H. Caccia in Discussions with U.S., 18.11.1959, FO 371/137970, PRO; cit in Note by the Foreign Office, on the Political Scene in Tropical Africa, 20.1.1959, paras. 6,12, AF(59)8, CAB 134/1354, PRO.

[74] This part was later to be deleted form the brief. A. O. Ross to CRO, Draft Brief for Discussions in Washington on the Effect on the Western Position in the United Nations of the emergence of new independent African States, 18 Nov. 1959 FO371/137970 PRO.

[75] Africa: ... to the Americans, AF(59)41, p. 16, para. 56, CAB 134/1355, AF(59)6th Meeting, 2.3.1959, pp. 1-3, CAB 134/1353, F. Furedi, 'Creating a Breathing Space: The Political Management of Colonial Emergencies', in R. Holland (ed.), *Emergencies and Disorder in the European Empires after 1945* (London, 1994), pp. 94-104.

The Commonwealth Relations Office under Lord Home shared the Foreign Office's anxieties and was bolder at prophesying. Although the former in January 1959 could not picture independence for East Africa before 1964, it believed that by 1969, 'it cannot be ruled out that demands for complete independence will be voiced in one or more of the territories'.[76] Furthermore, the Commonwealth Relations secretary was fully aware that Nkrumah was demanding 'one man one vote' immediately and that the Labour Party was acceding to the principle, even if they were prepared to wait longer. Yet he warned that even the arrangement of an African majority built on a limited franchise would soon end in African majority rule.[77]

Macmillan and Macleod

The part Macmillan played in the decolonisation process and the influence of Macleod in its acceleration are a well-covered subject frequently cited in discussions of decolonisation. There were four fundamental goals of the Macmillan government that actually affected the transfer of power: the protection and promotion of Britain's economic interests; the construction of a cost-effective defence policy for the nuclear age; the containment of the global influence of the Soviet Union; and the reconstruction of the 'special relationship' with the United States. It is interesting however, to view Macmillan's (and Macleod's) decolonisation policy in Kenya through a different prism: the Mau Mau of the mind.

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[76] Note, Commonwealth Relations Office, 'The Next Ten Years in Africa', AF(59), 9 Jan. 1959, CAB 134/1353 PRO. Ritchie Ovendale, 'Macmillan and the Wind of Change in Africa, 1957-1960', *The Historical Journal,* xxxviii, 2 (1995), pp. 465-67. R. Shepherd, *Iain Macleod* (London, 1994), pp. 158, 160.

[77] Note for the Record of a meeting of the PN with David Stirling and the Commonwealth Secretary, 11 June 1959. PREM11/2583 PRO.

Macmillan's lukewarm attitude towards Kenya had a longer pedigree than his 'Wind of Change' speech on 3 February 1960 to the South Africa Parliament. Even as early as 1942, Macmillan had expressed grave doubts about Kenya as a 'White man's country'.[78] Then, on 28 January 1957, a fortnight after he took office, he asked the colonial policy committee to assess the advantages and disadvantages of holding onto Britain's colonies.[79] Two months later, in his opening speech at the Bermuda conference in March 1957, he noted the change in international relations that had made the United States and the Soviet Union into superpowers, but he also marked the revolution in the relationship between 'whites' and the African and Asian peoples.[80] Macmillan and Macleod, his colonial secretary, were positive about the modernising process and saw decolonisation as a part of this process. Imperial policy along the old lines was passé for political and international as well as ideological reasons.[81]

Yet such an attitude could hardly form his policy towards colonies made up of 'kith and kin'– that is, those in East and Central Africa – which still commanded special allegiance in the Conservative Party. With some party members – Lord Salisbury was a prominent example – it was not just a matter of loyalty to British (European) citizens but also one of paternalism toward the Africans as well as the British electorate. Lord Salisbury believed that the British electorate at home and the Africans preferred to be

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[78] John Windham, his private secretary attests to it, Lord Egremont, 'The Wind of Change Myth', *The Sunday Times*, 10 May 1964. Macmillan's speech before the houses of parliament in South Africa 3 Feb. 1960, N. Mansergh, *Documents and Speeches on Commonwealth Affairs 1951-1962* (London, 1963), pp. 347-349. On the revolutionary aspect of the speech, Kilmuir, *Political Adventure*, pp. 314-15. On Kenya in 1942 Macmillan, *The Blast of War, 1939-1945* (London, 1967), p. 177; Macmillan, *At the End of the Day*, pp. 289-290.

[79] Macmillan to Salisbury, 28 Jan. 1957, CPC (57)6, CAB 134/1555; Ovendale, 'Macmillan and the Wind of Change …', p. 459. Macmillan's request, 28 Jan. 1957, CPC(57)6, the response on the economic aspects, Note by the Colonial Office on The Future Development in the Colonies: Economic and Financial Considerations, 26 July 1957, CPC(57)28, and the final summing up, Brook, 6 Sept. 1957, CPC(57)30(Revise), CAB 134/1556 PRO.

[80] A similar speech was given in Bedford earlier, Macmillan, *Riding the Storm* 1956-1959 (London, 1971), p. 252, D. Horowitz, 'Attitudes of British Conservatives Towards Decolonization in Africa', *African Affairs*, lxix, 274 (January 1970), p. 16.

[81] Horowitz, *ibid*., pp. 22-26.

ruled by political elites rather than rule. Besides, European settlers' control was also a bulwark for British interests and efficient governing.[82] Other members lobbied for the strengthening of British influence in Africa in the Joint East and Central Africa Board. Macmillan was convinced that Kenya was an even more difficult problem than the Central African Federation. Lord Salisbury, who had resigned from the cabinet over Cyprus along with Lord Lambton could easily assemble a serious lobby for the settlers. Kenya settlers had a more aristocratic and upper-middle-class air, as well as social, business, and political ties to London.[83]

What was needed to convince the bulk of the party was acceptance of the danger that Kenya posed to their accepted principles and political interests. Macmillan was well aware of the pessimistic views the Foreign Office and the Commonwealth Relations Office shared. He had long been convinced of the importance of the 'special relationship' with the United States, and after Suez he believed it had to be rehabilitated without delay. At the time of his election as prime minister in 1957, he believed the two countries inseparable because the life of the free world depended on it, and he had the Conservative Party well behind him.[84]

Furthermore, he was just as aware of the politically changed atmosphere at home. Small wonder that Lennox-Boyd was impressed that Macmillan, from a publishing family, felt that the empire was a closed chapter and that the country had to

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[82] cit in I. Macleod ,'Trouble in Africa', *The Spectator*, 31 Jan. 1964.

[83] Macmillan, *Pointing the Way* 1959-1961 (London, 1972), p. 16, Macmillan's diary entry for 20 Jan. 1961 in Macmillan, *At the End of the Day*, p. 290. *Parl. Debs.*, House of Lords, 28 March 1960, vol. 222, col. 305-419. A. Horne, *Macmillan: 1957-1986*. Volume One of the Official Biography (London, 1989), pp. 183-185, Shepherd, *Iain Macleod*, p. 158-161, Kyle, *The Politics of Independence*, p. 99.

[84] S. Lloyd, *Suez 1956: A Personal Account* (New York, 1978), cit on p. 252, pp. 252-259. Macmillan, *Riding the Storm*, p. 196; D. R. Devereux, *The Formulation of British Defence Policy Towards the Middle East, 1948-1956* (London, 1990), p. 195. one example for the close relationship established is the cooperation over the suppression of the Idonesian rebellion, Matthew Jones, "... Indonesian Rebellion", pp. 1179-1216, esp. p. 1193 mentioning that the co-operation may have been based entirely on the wish to accommodate the Americans.

move on to the next.[85] Both he and Macleod believed that in a clash with the United States over a colonial conflict, not only would Labour turn lustily against the government but so would the progressive wing of the Conservative Party. Admittedly, a wide process of decolonisation could also show weakness, which in turn could adversely influence Britain's economic position.[86] But surely, after Suez, it is debatable whether Macmillan still thought of the empire in such terms.

The outcry over the declaration of a state of Emergency on 3 March 1959 in the Central African Federation following disturbances in Nyasaland and later over the Hola camp incident gave public utterance to the threat of instability in East Africa, and particularly in Kenya, which until then had been discussed only in official papers, leaving the Conservative Party hitherto practically untouched. The political atmosphere was just ripe.[87] Both crises were the climax of a process that began with the Suez debacle in the mid 1950s, when the empire was losing ground, colonial policy was becoming politically contentious, and counterinsurgencies were extremely unpopular.[88]

Kenya had been perhaps one of the least contentious fields between the colonial secretaries of Labour and the Conservatives – multi-racialism was promoted by both parties. But the Labour Party went from support of multi-racialism to scepticism in 1955, to a promise for early decolonisation in 1959.[89] Labour could not win elections on this question, but the subject made the Conservatives uncomfortable with the 'opinion

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[85] Kyle, *The Politics of Independence of Kenya* , p. 99.
[86] F. Heinlein, *British Government Policy and Decolonisation*, p. 162.
[87] Alport, *The Sudden Assignment*, p. 84, *Times*, 15 Oct. 1959, J. Darwin, 'The Central African Emergency, 1959', R. Holland (ed.), *Emergencies and Disorder in the European Empires after 1945* (London, 1994), pp. 221, 230, 232.
[88] C. Townshend, *Britain's Civil Wars: Counterinsurgency in the Twentieth Century* (London, 1986), p. 206.
[89] Lyttelton, *Memoirs of Lord Chandos*, p.356.Hugh Gaitskell in *Observer*, 7 Aug. 1955, One of the sharpest expressions by Callaghan, *Parl. Debs.*, House of Commons, 4 June 1957, vol. 571, coll. 1085-1211, Finer et al. *Backbench Opinion*…, pp. 125-127. *Times*, 25 Sept. 1959.

formers – academics, commentators, journalists.'[90] University audiences were electrified by the African leaders and unlike in France, British academics had a history of close contacts with and influence on colonial policy.[91] The parliamentary change was the culmination of former protests by such organisations as the Movement for Colonial Freedom, the Kenya Committee, the Africa Bureau, and the Anti-Slavery Society. For several years, these organisations had been providing African leaders, such as Tom Mboya, with access to the British press and the British public. They successfully infused the British political system with the need to take the governed into consideration by establishing 'an accountability by proxy'.[92] Popular criticism since 1955 against the detainee camps had been constantly growing in volume, starting with specifically anti-imperialist organisations and moving to such publications as the *Observer*, the *Daily Mirror*, and the *New Statesman*.[93] The pandemonium that broke out after 3 March 1959 when 11 detainees were killed and 20 others wounded at the Hola camp under forced-work conditions finally brought general disgrace to the entire detainee camp system.[94] The tumult in Parliament during the debate on 27 July 1959 included even government seats. Had a vote of censure been taken, Conservatives might have joined in. The fact

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[90] Macleod to Macmillan, 25 May 1959, PREM 11/2583 PRO Shepherd, *Iain Macleod*, pp. 98, 1,113-121

[91] John Lonsdale, "**African Studies, Europe & Africa**", Revised version of Plenary Lecture given to the AEGIS conference on African Studies at the School of Oriental and African Studies, London, on 30th June 2005, http://www.nomadit.co.uk/~aegis/downloads/lonsdale.doc; Laurie A. Brand, **"Scholarship in the Shadow of Empire** (2004 MESA Presidential Address)", *Middle East Studies Association Bulletin*, Vol. 39, No. 1 (Summer 2005).[http://fp.arizona.edu/mesassoc/Bulletin/Pres%20Addresses/Brand.htm]

[92] S. Howe, *Anticolonialism in British Politics: The Left and the End of Empire, 1918-1964* (Oxford, 1993), p. 327. Request for regular information, unsigned, from Fabian Bureau to Tom M'boya 10 Aug. 1954, Mss. Brit. Emp. s. 365/116/1, FCB. Correspondence between James Johnson, MP, May – July 1957, Micr. Afr. s. 586 JAMES JOHNSON, RH.

[93] *Observer*, 9 Oct. 1955; B. Castle, 'Justice in Kenya', *The New Statesman and Nation*, 17.12.1955, also a series in *Daily Mirror*, 7 Dec.1955, 9 Dec. 1955, 10 Dec. 1955, Mss. Brit. Emp. s. 22, G 539, ANTI SLAVERY SOCIETY, RH.

[94] *Record of Proceedings and Evidence in the Inquiry into the Death of Eleven Mau Mau Detainees at Hola Camp in Kenya,* London, Cmnd. 795, pp. 135-139, in his inquiry the judge has arrived at the conclusion that labour enforcement was illegal however part of the beatings were lawful disciplinary action, W. H. Goudie, *Documents Relating to the Deaths of Eleven Mau Mau Detainees at Hola Camp Kenya* (London, 1959), Cmdn. 778, pp. 4-5, 14-15. *Parl. Debs.*, House of Commons, 27 July 1959, vol. 610, col. 231, C. Townshend, *Britain's Civil Wars*, p. 206, Elkins, *Imperial Reckoning*, pp. 311-354, esp. p. 351 in Barbara Castle's speech on Hola in the Commons.

that the storm was inflated by the proximity to a general election was of little solace to the government.[95]

The importance of Hola as a watershed in allowing a radical change in British policy in Kenya is fully accepted. As the existence of detention camps was deeply embedded in a colonial policy that strove to enforce on the African majority a multi-racial state, such incidents were bound to recur. This meant, that Hola could be repeated.[96] What is less argued is how conflated both crises were as a realisation of fears that for years had been dividing the British official mind on policy while ripening it for change. Small wonder, that Macmillan tied both together by using the Mau Mau ghost to deflect criticism from the Nyasaland Emergency state. The revived memory of the horror of one crisis was to bring sympathy for the other, and the outcry over the other could pave the way to the solution of both. Otherwise, it seems hardly plausible that the long row of 'isolated incidents' that had raised mostly resentment against the protesters as Mau Mau sympathisers suddenly initiated reform.[97] It is too simple to put it down merely to the scale of these particular upheavals. The Central African Emergency brought the Devlin report and the denunciation of the 'Police State', and Hola brought the Fairn Commission. The commission's findings brought a considerable reduction in the governor's Emergency powers to arrest and detain without trial after the state of Emergency in Kenya was lifted in 1959.[98] But seeds of change for a long-entrenched

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[95] Macmillan's diary entry for 5 March 1959, in Horne, *Macmillan*, p. 175. E. Powell, *Parl. Debs.*, House of Commons, 27 July 1959, vol. 610, cols 232-237, Macleod, *Parl. Debs.*, House of Commons, 2 Nov. 1959, vol. 612, cols., 668-670.

[96] Cabint conclusions, 11 June 1959, CC(59)34 CAB 128/33 PRO.

[97] Anderson, *History of the Hanged*, pp. 307-311; includes the citation from Lyttelton's memoirs referring to the "isolated incidents".

[98] *Parl. Debs.*, House of Commons, vol. 601, col. 217-218, 3 March 1959. Horne, *Macmillan,* pp. 180-182. Monson (CO, London) to Renison, , 28 Oct. 1959, CO 822/1335, PRO

policy can best be found in the Mau Mau nightmare that the government so unwittingly sowed.

By April 1959, Macmillan was expressing open pessimism about the future of colonial rule over East Africa and was convinced of the urgency for change. During a meeting of the Colonial Policy Committee over a memorandum by the Colonial Office, democracy was mentioned as a possibility. In May 1959 his Secretary for Labour and National Health was mouthing the same words – though to be postponed to an unknown future.[99] This was not a solution the party could stomach at the time. Hola and a successful election facilitated the change.

The acceleration to independence was still considered far from a foregone conclusion. Even at this point, Macmillan was convinced that two forces were capable of bringing about a civil war in Kenya: If Britain would 'move too fast with the extension of the franchise the more reactionary white people in Africa might try and join the Union. If we do not move fast enough, the Africans would lead the disturbances.'[100] Two opposing viewpoints, such as that of Dame Margery Perham a liberal historian and a friend of Africa, who believed in democracy and that of Lord Salisbury who believed in paternalism, both considered British guidance, as well as a body of trained senior administrators and officers in the armed forces, as necessary for independence and peaceful inter-racial co-existence.[101] Still, although everyone agreed by then that time was running short, it was far from unanimous just how short.

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[99] Colonial Policy Committee 1st meeting, 17 April 1959 Memo 10 April 1959, CPC(59)2; Memo Nov. 1959 CPC(59)18 CAB 134/1558 PRO.

[100] Record of a meeting between Macmillan and David Sterling and Commonwealth Secretary 11 June 1959 PREM11/2583, PRO. D. A. Low, *The Eclipse of Empire* (Cambridge, New York, 1991), p. 243.

[101] Margery Perham, Letter to the Editor, *The Times*, 10 Jun, 1961, p. 11; Salisbury, Letter to the Editor, *The Times*, 8 Jun, 1961, p. 15.

When Macmillan chose Iain Macleod to replace Lennox-Boyd he had a rate of acceleration in mind. He knowingly appointed the man who in May had already expressed to Macmillan that in Kenya as elsewhere, 'the rights of the individual should be secured to him by virtue of his position as a citizen rather than the colour of his skin or his membership of a particular community'. In Kenya this would mean an African majority in the elected councils. Ultimately, Macleod's vision of a commonwealth underwritten by majority rule ensured a hastening of African independence, as well as a head-on collision with the Conservative right wing.[102]

So Macmillan felt he had to move fast and yet slowly at the same time. It was to this tune that Macleod was singing when he agreed that the major aim in Africa was to go slowly but that action had to be taken as swiftly as possible. After all, he was deeply convinced that 'things are moving very fast in Africa'. That definitely made Kenya, 'the real problem for us'.[103]

Thus, colonial policy under Macmillan and Macleod had to answer to two apparently contrary needs. It had to move fast enough to prevent an African explosion, but slowly enough to carry along at least the moderate European settlers and thereby keep the Conservative Party intact. Therefore, the course of events from 1958/9 to 1963 reflects a compromise between conflicting courses, rather than a perplexity about the choice thereof.[104]

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[102] citation from: Macleod to Macmillan, 25 May 1959, PREM 11/2583. Macmillan seemed only to act interested in these issues at least to some - G. Brown, *In My Way: The Political Memoirs of Lord George Brown* (London 1971), p. 59, Horne, *Macmillan.,* p. 183. Shepherd, *Iain Macleod*, pp. 214-258, so much so Lord Robert Carr, for instance, suspected a Machiavellian intent on Macmillan's part in the appointment, *ibid*, p. 160

[103] Macleod to Macmillan 17 Feb. 1960 PREM11/3031 citation from: Macleod to Macmillan, reporting from his visit to Africa, 29 Dec. 1959, p. PREM11/2586 PRO.

[104] As Heinlein suggests, Heinlein, *British Government Policy and Decolonisation,* p. 197

Macleod was remarkably untouched by the Mau Mau ghost. He was indeed imbued by a feeling of urgency, but this was precipitated by a different logic altogether: 'the logic of the transfer of power in West Africa meant that it must come swiftly in East and steadily in Central Africa. Independence once given to the African in the Gold Coast could not for long be denied to his brother in Kenya'.[105] When Macleod had to use an analogy for a failed counterinsurgency, Cyprus was his choice, rather than Kenya.[106] The reason seems straightforward. The army considered the Kenya Emergency over and done with by 1955/6; it was a political ghost, not a military one. Macleod was not haunted by the Mau Mau because he was likewise not haunted by the 'one man one vote' principle to which Mau Mau had became a synonym. Already in 1954 in his contribution to the Research Study Group, Macleod had believed that 'something was missing in our colonial policy', something which he did not specify but which his biographer felt had to be in the humanitarian dimension. Furthering human rights and the fraternity of humankind were ideals Macleod had close at heart – a position perhaps better appreciated across the floor.[107]

Although the Lancaster House Conference did not decide on the democratic principle, its atmosphere was permeated by the presence of a colonial secretary who was known for his conviction that it had better come sooner than later. Macleod could use the threat of explosion in Africa as well as anyone but was obviously less convincing for his party's right wing. [108] He had at least one eye on the political context in the home market. So he advised the prime minister against seeing Group Captain

[105] Iain Macleod, "Britain's Future Policy in Africa", *Weekend Telegraph*, 12 March 1965
[106] Iain Macleod, "Trouble in Africa", *The Spectator*, 31 Jan. 1964
[107] Shepherd, *Iain Macleod*, pp. 98, 1,113-121.
[108] Macleod to Macmillan, 20 Feb. 1960, PREM11/3031 PRO.

Briggs, who headed the intransigent wing of the settlers, explaining that this group commanded no support in the London Parliament.[109]

But Macleod underestimated the unwillingness of the rest of the party to keep up with the pace he was setting. He also seemed to miss that a number of them were responding to fear rather then hope. In December 1961, his successor, Reginald Maudling, who considered 'tribalism' more explosive than 'racialism', notified the cabinet that the Nigerian demand to the United Nations for independence within 10 years suggested that more international support than was previously expected could be forthcoming for slowing down the pace in Kenya. Nevertheless, they were still afraid it could lead to an explosion.[110] Such was the legacy of the Mau Mau ghost that had been conjured since the suppression.

Conclusion

The influence of a rebellion or a terrorist movement should be assessed in a broader context than as a military confrontation, and within a longer span of time than the period of direct fighting. At its height, the Mau Mau insurrection was met with almost philosophical imperturbability in London. The total lack of sympathy with the rebels, and the calm with which the counterinsurgency was met in London, allowed the British a free hand in the suppression without any material change of policy.

But just as the fighting was over, the assessment of the Mau Mau began to change. Policy makers in London constantly worried that the Mau Mau were

[109] Macleod to Macmillan, 17 Feb. 1959, ibid.
[110] Cabinet Conclusion, 19 Dec. 1961, CC(61)75, CAB 128/35 PRO. David M. Anderson, "'Yours in Struggle for Majimbo'. Nationalism and the Party Politics of Decolonization in Kenya, 1955-1964", Journal of Contemporary History, xl pt. 3,(2005), pp. 548-9, 555.

reappearing. This second phase of assessment of the Mau Mau had but little to do with the security situation in Kenya. Rather, the ongoing pressure from Kenyan Africans – on a world power humbled both militarily and internationally while disciplining an ex-colonial insubordinate during the Suez conflict – resurrected the rebellion in a magnified form. Although this time it was truly only a 'Mau Mau of the mind', it was much more influential than the 'real' specimen. This new fear of a possible African uprising, political or military, had an important effect on the decolonisation of Kenya.

Was it then the Mau Mau who drove the British out? It is rather idle to speculate whether an earlier experience that the British could reconstruct into a new threat makes Mau Mau the ultimate victor. If so, the British were conspicuously unaware of the fact at the time. So, for that matter, were the Africans. On the other hand, the assertion that it was a 'Mau Mau of the mind' that left a far greater impression on the British than the Mau Mau of flesh and blood does not minimise the importance of the African political struggle, As a shaping factor of the Kenyan independent state, the nationalist struggle that continued during the period of 1956-1963 grew out of the Mau Mau struggle.[111] For the British establishment in the late 1950s – political as well as official – the two threatened to converge.

Withal, the change of policy came only after 1958/9 with a prime minister who, in Lennox-Boyd's words, was no imperialist and a colonial secretary who wished to be the last of his kind.[112] It was as much due to a changed political atmosphere. After the Suez debacle, the Foreign Office was as keen to observe, as Macmillan himself, the importance of American good will. The uproar over the Hola camp incident and the

[111] Ogot, 'The Decisive Years', p. 51; Kyle, *ibid*, p. 87.
[112] Lennox-Boyd quoted by Kyle, *The politics of Independence of Kenya,* p. 99 and Macleod's wish remembered by Peter Goldman quoted by Shepherd*, Iain Macleod*, p. 161.

struggles for racial equality reflected changed attitudes in Britain as much as cold war considerations. They also provided for the Conservative Party the materialisation of a ghost that had appeared mostly in official papers, helping to move them away from wholehearted support of the Kenya settlers and multi-racialism to acceptance of a free Kenya ruled by an African majority.

The transformation came partly for ideological reasons, partly for electoral reasons, and underlying all – a fear (not quite supported by fact) of a renewal of the Mau Mau, within this entirely altered political and international context. In this context, when counterinsurgency was more likely to be read as imperialistic suppression, African nationalism with any threat of violence became synonymous with Mau Mau.