

RIVALRY OF COLONIAL POLICIES

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*Whatever happens, we have got
The Maxim gun and they have not.*

HILAIRE BELLOC

THIS couplet typifies how the white peoples of the world have been able to keep in subjection their duskier brethren.

The first historical application of white superiority of equipment, surmounting both the disadvantages of vast distance from the home base and those of numerical inferiority, was in 1537 when the Portuguese fleet vanquished the combined Javanese, Macassanese and Bandanese fleets in the Banda Sea. From that time on, the white peoples of the world have never doubted their ability to keep a non-white people in subjection if they so desired. At the same time they have realized that other European nations would prove the stumbling blocks in the acquisition and maintenance of any colonial empire. This, then, is the common link between colonial empires—fundamental belief of each in the superiority of the white man, but doubt and distrust among the various groups of white men. Each colonial system, resting on the innate superiority of the white man, has been conducted in accordance with the different underlying reasons for its acquisition.

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The Dutch have been the most intellectually honest. They have not attempted to confuse the economic motive for their colonial empire by either flag waving or moaning about the *White Man's Burden*. The United East Indian Company of the Netherlands was originally chartered in 1602 to combat the exclusion of Dutch vessels from Spanish and Portuguese ports, and it was with real regret that the East Indian Company later discovered it would have to assume the chores of government if it was to continue to enjoy the economic profits. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, the Company became enfeebled because of reckless financial administration, its failure to preserve the monopoly, and the penurious treatment of its employees. The Netherlands Government was forced to withdraw its charter and assume directly the burden of government in the Netherlands Indies, in order to restore the financial structure and to continue the flow of profits to the mother coun-

try. In fact, half a century later, in 1851, the Government memorandum of explanation, issued at the time of the first bill for a new organic act, declared the accepted principles of East Indian administration to be those which "give the greatest guarantee that, in the first place, the Netherlands authority shall be able to maintain itself in that conquered territory by pacific means, and that secondly, preserving the welfare of the native population, conquered territory shall continue to furnish the Netherlands *the material advantages which were the object of the conquest.*"¹

In contrast to this frankness of the Dutch, we have the varying attitude of the other colonial powers towards their acquisition of colonial empire. The English nobly talked about the responsibilities of Europeans to their less fortunate fellows, and lectured us in the words of Rudyard Kipling *à propos* of the Philippines:

Take up the White Man's Burden—
 Send forth the best ye breed—
 Go, bind your son to exile
 To serve your captives' need;
 To wait in heavy harness
 On fluttered folk and wild—
 Your new-caught sullen peoples,
 Half devil and half child.²

Rarely did the English admit the true two-fold economic and strategic basis for their colonial empire. Thus, when the economic profits did not come up to expectation in recent years, the English have retained their colonies with the same tenacity as previously, because of strategic considerations. It remained for Captain A. T. Mahan, of the American Navy, to formulate the fundamental rule that had always guided the English in their colonial considerations: "Colonies attached to the mother country afford, therefore, the surest means of supporting abroad the sea power of a country."³ And the British realized that their country depended upon sea power for its preservation and its power.

1. Amey Vandenbosch, *The Dutch East Indies*, p. 60—a footnote quoting Colijn, *Staatkundige hervormingen in Neaerlandsch-Indie*, p. 12.

2. Grayson Kirk, *Philippine Independence*, p. 22—quoting Rudyard Kipling in *McClure's Magazine* for February, 1899.

3. A. T. Mahan. *The Influence of Sea Power upon History*, p. 83.

The United States had no logical reason whatsoever for their acquisition of a colonial empire. It was purely "expansion by accident".⁴ Yet President McKinley attempted to rationalize our retention of the Philippines by saying:

(1) That we could not give them back to Spain—that would be cowardly and dishonorable; (2) that we could not turn them over to France or Germany—our commercial rivals in the Orient—that would be bad business and discreditable; (3) that we could not leave them to themselves—they were unfit for self-government and they would soon have anarchy and misrule over there worse than Spain's was, and (4) that there was nothing left for us to do but to take them all, and to educate the Filipinos, and uplift and civilize and Christianize them, and by God's grace do the very best we could for them, as our fellowmen for whom Christ also died.⁵

How strangely similar these words sound to the present British explanation of rule in India! Even Elihu Root spoke of his "work of applying to some ten millions of people, in Cuba and Puerto Rico and the Philippines, the principles of American liberty."⁶

The French colonial empire resembled the American in being an accidental creation:

*Ce résultat n'est pas le fruit de desseins délibérés: les circonstances, le plus souvent, nous ont lancés dans une voie que beaucoup de nos hommes politiques repugnaient à suivre. Néanmoins aujourd'hui, en présence du fait accompli, nul ne songe à repudier des conquêtes chèrement acquises.*⁷

France was economically sound, and did not need a colonial empire for strategic reasons; yet she listened to Prevost-Paradol's insistence upon colonization as "the activity which decides the future of the human race"⁸, and to Leroy Beaulieu's treatise upon the desirability of colonies. She listened so hard that soon she was one of the world's great colonial powers. But even the logical French could not rationalize their colonial empire. At moments, too, they rode upon the White Man's band wagon, as when one of their colonial authorities said:

4. Alleyne Ireland, *The Far Eastern Tropics*, p. 266.

5. Kirk, *op. cit.*, p. 17—quoting Olcott II, pp. 110, 111 as cited in *Christian Advocate*, 22 January, 1903.

6. Elihu Root, *The Military and Colonial Policy of the United States*, p. xv of Preface.

7. A. Billiard, *Politique et Organization Coloniales*, p. 1.

8. P. S. Reinsch, *Colonial Government*, p. 9—quoting a letter of 10 December, 1865, from Prevost-Paradol.

*La question est en effet de savoir si un gouvernement européen en pays colonial ne vaut pas mieux pour les populations autochtones que l'absence de tout gouvernement.*⁹

France did not admit that, while accident and adventure had resulted in her acquisition of colonies, she was forced to preserve them purely because of national prestige.

The Dutch, by not confusing the profit motive of their colonial empire, have been more nearly able to reach their goal of obtaining "the material advantages which were the object of the conquest". Article One of their Constitution may read "The Kingdom of the Netherlands comprises the territory of the Netherlands, Netherlands India, Surinam and Curacao",¹⁰ yet the fact has always been squarely faced that the territories outside the Netherlands exist for the benefit of the Netherlands proper. There is, perforce, a certain identity of interest since, as Thorbecke said at the close of the debates about a new East Indian Government Act in 1854, "The interest of the overseas population is the interest of the mother country".¹¹ The Dutch are realistic enough to realize that in recent times their colonies have been more of a liability than an advantage. They know that 1872 was the last year the colonies showed a net profit to the mother country; that, in 1905, an outright gift of forty million florins was made to the Indies, and that another gift of twenty-five millions was made in 1936. While 1880 may have been the last date when the European countries found that "private profits roughly equalled government losses"¹² from their colonies, this date must be advanced in the instance of the Netherlands. In addition, the States General has always looked upon the economic losses incurred recently from their colonies as purely a temporary occurrence, and expected that, in due course and under successful management, all would soon be well again.

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When the Dutch, British, French and American colonial policies are compared, a great historical similarity is found between the first two. They were both founded for economic

9. Bernard Lavergne, *Le Principe des Nationalités et les Guerres*, p. 71.

10. Vandenbosch, *op. cit.*, footnote on p. 76.

11. A. D. A. DeKat Angelino, *Colonial Policy*, p. 19.

12. Grover Clark, *The Balance Sheet of Imperialism*, p. 3.

reasons at the beginning of the seventeenth century by chartered East India companies, of which the British one was chartered in 1600 and the Dutch one followed two years later. In both cases there was a continual necessary infiltration of government activities into the original commercial ventures until the Dutch charter was withdrawn in 1798. The British East India Company lasted sixty more years, but it lasted only because the British structure was sufficiently supple to allow the company to become practically a government in itself, with its own fleet, troops and plenipotentiary authority. In the course of this time, the British colonies were assuming their strategic aspects. On the other hand, with the exception of Martinique, Guadeloupe and Reunion, the French colonial empire is entirely a nineteenth century creation, with little economic foundation. Our own colonial possessions are even more recent, since they did not come until the turn of the present century and have no economic foundation at all.

It is, perhaps, because of their age and experience that the British colonial policies parallel somewhat closely those of the Dutch. This is especially apparent in the question of deciding which procedure will be adopted—that of assimilation, of expanding one's own way of life and culture to include the indigenous peoples, or of association, of allowing the indigenous peoples to pursue untrammelled their own culture and forms of government, their religion and their language. This latter policy was the one followed by the builder of history's first great colonial empire, Alexander the Great, of whom Montesquieu said:

*Alexander résista à ceux qui voulaient qu'il traitât les Grecs comme maîtres et les Perses comme esclaves. Il ne laissa pas seulement aux peuples vaincus leurs mœurs, il leur laissa encore leurs lois civiles, et souvent même les rois et les gouverneurs qu'il avait trouvés. Il respecta les traditions anciennes, et il voulut tout conquérir pour tout conserver.*¹³

This same policy, while followed at varying times and to varying degrees by all the colonial powers with the exception of the United States, was practised to its greatest extent by the Dutch. They realized its wisdom and, at the same time, recognized that one of the first requirements in laying the foundations of a colonial policy is the careful study of the ethnical character and culture patterns of the people with whom they

¹³. Andre Maurois, *Lyautéy*, p. 84. This passage was underlined by Marshal Lyautéy.

come in contact.¹⁴ The Dutch made a great point of studying the varying cultures of the Netherlands East Indies. Courses in anthropology and native languages were given at the two seats for training colonial officials, the Universities of Leiden and Utrecht. Dr. Snouck Hurgronje was employed by the Dutch Government as their adviser on Moslem affairs. Missionaries were discouraged by the provisions of Article 177 of the revised constitution of 1922 (previously it had been Article 123 of the East India Government Act of 1855) specifying that all missionaries must obtain special permission and licensing from the Governor-General before being able to carry on their proselytising activities.¹⁵ In fact, they were completely excluded from the Atjeh and Bantam peoples and the island of Bali. Finally, a careful study and codification of adat law was undertaken as a result of the efforts of such men as Muntinghe in the last century and Snouck Hurgronje and van Vollenhoven in more recent years. All told, "The Dutch are not a hasty people. Unlike the Americans in the Philippines, who moved in after driving out the Spanish and immediately started a general reform of government, education, and social life, the Netherlands proceeded very slowly in their islands. They retained so far as possible the traditional forms of government, tried scrupulously to avoid interference in native life, and left the peoples of the Indies almost as uneducated as they were when the first white man appeared there".¹⁶

The British have, to a certain extent, followed the same policy of practising the minimum of interference with the native ways of life. However, while their general policy has been the same as the Dutch, they have not carried it to such an extent. This difference of degree is shown particularly in two respects. First, there is virtually no study of the native languages and culture. No colonial culture course are offered in the Oxford and Cambridge University Catalogues, and consequently the examinations for future colonial administrators are based more upon a sound knowledge of England, its language and its history, rather than upon that of their destination. In fact, Macaulay's Report on Education resulted in an effort to establish English as the common language of India. Secondly, there is less tendency to leave the villages, the kampongs of Malaya for

14. P. S. Reinsch, *Colonial Administration*, p. 22.

15. Vandenbosch, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

16. Raymond Kennedy, *The Ageless Indies*, p. 112.

example, as independent units; but, in order to facilitate administration, there is an effort made to lump them into some sort of artificial federation that may be either under a native ruler or directly under the British.

The greatest vacillation with respect to the alternative policies of association or of assimilation has been shown by the French. They ask themselves the questions:

*Quel est l'intérêt poursuivi par les nations civilisées dans leur oeuvre d'expansion coloniale?—est-ce celui des populations conquises? Est-ce celui des colons émigrés? Est-ce celui de la métropole?*¹⁷

The first one of these three possibilities may be discounted along with the *White Man's Burden*. Although averred by many nations in their signature to Article twenty-three of the League of Nations Covenant prescribing "Just treatment of the native inhabitants"¹⁸ it has been practised by very few. French policy has veered between the latter alternatives of favoring their colonials or favoring the metropolitan country. As a result of the first flush of the French Revolution, "The inhabitants of the French islands are automatically French citizens; they are, like St. Paul, 'born free', and have not to acquire their privilege by merit as in Africa"¹⁹. In 1881, the French accorded *département* status to Algeria, which they had then possessed for fifty years and had assimilated into French culture. Throughout these early days of their colonial empire, the French followed a strict policy of assimilation. They attempted to adapt their subject peoples into their way of life, and were quite successful. They introduced the Napoleonic Code, Christianity and even a pseudo-Liberal government system into their territories. But the rush for colonies of the 1880's greatly enlarged the French areas of the world and, consequently, magnified the difficulties of colonial administration. It was found that assimilation was not practical for the vast areas that were now under French control. Governor-General Joseph de Lanessan in Indo-China, General Gallieni in Madagascar and Marshall Lyautey in Africa introduced a change in policy. Gallieni learned from his tutor, de Lanessan, who said:

17. A. Billiard, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

18. *The Colonial Problem*, p. 110.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 119.

*Dans tout pays, il y a des cadres. La grande erreur, pour les peuples européens qui viennent là en conquérant, c'est de détruire ces cadres. La pays, privé de son armature, tombe alors dans l'anarchie. Il faut gouverner avec le mandarin, et non contre le mandarin. L'Européen, n'étant pas le nombre, ne peut se substituer, mais contrôler.*²⁰

In turn, Lyautey added on to his tutor's, Gallieni's, practice the nicety of keeping the various indigenous peoples separated as he did with the Arabs and Berbers in Africa, and of adopting the policy to "*séparer la ville européenne de la ville indigène*".²¹ In addition, Lyautey was able to centralize both military and administrative powers, which was another keystone to his successful colonial administration. He was more fortunate than de Lanessan, who had been recalled from Indo-China before he was able to put his colonial system into successful operation, and so had left his teachings to be put into practice by his disciples, Gallieni and Lyautey. Thus, of recent years, France has found herself adopting the system proved by the Netherlands and Great Britain. France no longer attempts to force her culture upon native peoples. Neither does she force French citizenship upon them. In fact, she has abandoned her policy of assimilation for that of association.

The American, on the other hand, "believes that every race of man in every land and in every climate can become in time a creature of schools, ballot-boxes, and free political institutions"! "That is more than a political opinion bred in the school of experience; it is more than a political conviction born with the birth of the nation, it is a spiritual faith . . ." ²² Consequently, he has tended to force these blessings down the throats of all the native peoples with whom he has come into contact. In the Philippines, the English language was used throughout the school system. American legal procedure was introduced throughout the Islands. American health methods were introduced. Finally, there was a general prosperity which made the standard of living in the Philippine Islands the highest in South East Asia. It might aptly be asked at this point, "What did America get out of all this?" She got nothing, economically, but then it must be remembered that America differed from other countries in not having any basic economic motives for her original acquisition of the Philippines. But she

20. Maurois, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 253.

22. Alleyne Ireland, *op. cit.*, p. 277 - quoting *The Outlook* of 31 December, 1904.

did receive from them an entirely unexpected dividend, in that the Philippines were the only area of South East Asia that presented any opposition to the Japanese. President Roosevelt wrote President Quezon “. . . You and your people can rest assured that we will know how to re-establish that liberty which we founded”.²³ Apparently the Filipinos like our version of liberty well enough to risk their lives and often lose them for its sake, which is more than can be said of the Annamites, the Burmese and even the Javanese and other peoples of the Netherlands Indies.

Just as the Dutch were most frank about the economic motives for their colonial empire, so are their colonies the furthest advanced economically. One reason is that “The Netherlands East Indies is the only colony having a lucrative international commerce based upon free trade. Under this system the exports of Java increased twenty-three fold within two decades (1909-1929). The concept that trade must be dependent upon the mother country, as the French believe, has played no part in tariff-makings since 1874. As a matter of fact, Holland has entered into several economic agreements with European countries which are not profitable to the Indies”.²⁴ This statement must be qualified since, in recent years, the Dutch have tended to adopt an import and even an export quota system. While the Netherlands East Indies have never attempted to play the rôle of an entrepot as Singapore, there has nevertheless been a vast turn-over of goods in the Netherlands East Indies. Another reason for the economic advance of this area over the other colonial areas of the world is the use of home and foreign capital. The Agrarian Law of 1870 paved the way for the plantation economy that was to follow. Moreover, since 1908, there has been a general utilization of all available capital, which has resulted in the Netherlands being the greatest industrialized colonial area of South East Asia. Finally, whenever there was a lag in forthcoming capital or in private industry, the home government has filled the breach. It is for this reason that the tin mines of Singkep, Banka and Billiton have been primarily developed by the government, and that certain agricultural produce is primarily government produced.

Great Britain has made relatively little effort to advance her colonies economically. She thinks of them as being both her

23. *New York Times*, 16 November, 1943.

24. T. E. Ennis, *French Policy and Developments in Indo-China*, p. 5.

natural sources of raw material and, at the same time, her markets for finished products. It is for this reason that foreign concerns are not encouraged throughout her colonial empire either in the procuring of raw materials or in the setting up of plants. Likewise, colonial industry such as the textile industry in India is discouraged to prevent interference with the home economy. The Westminster Agreement of a little over ten years ago sought to put this policy into writing.

France has adopted a purely negative attitude as regards the economic development of her colonies. The French concept that trade must be dependent upon the mother country has already been mentioned. But even this concept is not pushed very hard. For instance, in 1936, the French had only 70,087,-000,000 francs invested in all her colonies, of which two-thirds was in North Africa. At the same time, France has passed every regulation possible to limit the entrance of foreign capital. Yet, while deriving no benefit from her colonies and while making scant effort to remedy the situation, she has spent vast sums upon administration and defence. One-third of the general and one-half of the local budgets of Indo-China are spent exclusively for the maintenance of French officials.²⁵ In Africa, there is often a standing army of over a hundred thousand stationed there for protection and the maintenance of order.

Finally, the United States has done perhaps more to upset the economies of her colonies than have any of the European countries. We developed the Philippines into practically a single export crop, sugar, country throughout the forty years she has been under our tutelage. Then, as the time grew near for the Philippines to out her ties with the mother country, it was seen that this single economy was unnatural and liable to lead the Philippines to financial ruin once she had achieved her independence. We discouraged the entrance of the foreign capital which might have diversified her economy by stringent land laws and, at the same time, invested only one per cent of our foreign investments in the Philippines. While our cultural and intellectual contribution to the Philippines has been large, our total economic contribution has been nil.

In summation, we have seen that the Netherlands acquired her colonies for purely economic motives; that Great Britain originally did likewise, but later found herself with strategic reasons for their retention while simultaneously confusing the

25. Ennis, *op. cit.*, pp. 4-7.

issue by harping upon her civilizing mission; that France had her colonial empire because of national prestige; and that the United States became a colonial power without intent and yet with a missionary belief in the superiority of all American institutions. Consequently, these differences of reasons for the existence of colonial possessions resulted in the differences of policy that have been developed in this paper.