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A Comparative Study of French and British Decolonization

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INTRODUCTION

Despite the historical significance of European decolonization after the Second World War, there has been no serious interpretive account of it as an overall process. A number of excellent case studies exist analyzing specific policies or periods in the imperial capitals or in the colonial territories, and there are several chronologically complete surveys of the decline of European rule overseas. These have neither been directed nor followed, however, by studies attempting to conceptualize synthetically the entire period. In default of a wide-ranging debate over the character of decolonization as an historical movement, a kind of conventional wisdom has grown up attributing the differences in the British and French experiences to a combination of their respective imperial traditions and the governing abilities of their domestic political institutions. As yet, there has been no systematic attempt to separate carefully the chief variables to be analyzed, to assign them weights of relative importance, and to coordinate them in an historical and comparative manner. This essay hopes to open discussion of these questions.¹

While there were definite political options open to Britain and France in imperial policy after 1945, the historically conditioned realm of the possible precluded the adoption of certain courses of action. The material hardships following the Second World War combined with the clear ascendancy of the two 'anti-imperial' powers, the United States and the Soviet Union, and with the increased maturity of nationalist elites throughout Africa and Asia to force a decided retrenchment of Europe overseas. In retrospect, we can

I would like to acknowledge the assistance of the Lehrman Institute and the German Marshall Fund of the United States in the completion of this essay. An earlier version was presented at the Lehrman Institute in December 1975.

¹ In this essay, the word 'colony' will be used to refer to the variety of overseas possessions called, according to their status in international law, protectorates, trusteeships, and condominiums as well as colonies.

see that the truly important political decisions to be made by Paris and London after 1945 concerned not whether the colonies would be free, but rather which local nationalist factions they would favor with their support and over what piece of territory these new political elites would be permitted to rule. What would be federated, what partitioned, who should govern and according to what procedures, constituted decisive issues where the Europeans continued to exercise a significant degree of control. When the Europeans did not respect the historically imposed limits of their power, however, their policies were to meet with defeat. Thus, while the Suez invasion of October–November 1956 constituted a political crisis of the first order in Britain, it was the only occasion when colonial matters occupied such a position. In France, by contrast, the interminable wars in Indochina and Algeria cost not only the lives of hundreds of thousands of Asians and Africans but eventually brought the collapse of the Fourth Republic as well.

A comparative analysis of British and French abilities to withdraw from their empires after 1945 suggests four respects in which the British were favored. First, there was the legacy of the past in terms of ideas and procedures on imperial matters, precedents built up over the decades before the Second World War, which served to orient European leaders and organize their responses to the pressures for decolonization. On this score, the British proved to be ideologically, and especially institutionally, more fit than the French to cope with overseas challenges to their rule. Second, there was the international ‘place’ of Britain and France and especially the different relations maintained by the two countries with the United States. Third, there was the question of the domestic political institutions of France and Britain with their very unequal capacities to process a problem of the magnitude of decolonization. The French multi-party system with its weak governing consensus clearly was not the equivalent of the two-party system in Britain. Even had the French system been stronger, however, it is not evident it would have dealt more effectively with decolonization, for national opinion, and especially the ‘collective conscience’ of the political elite in France, was significantly different from that in Britain. The fourth variable to be analyzed directs attention from Paris and London to the character of the nationalist elites with whom the Europeans had to deal. Here, it will be argued that the situations in Indochina and Algeria presented France with serious problems that Britain was simply fortunate enough to escape (at least until Suez). The comparative study of European decolonization depends in important measure, that is, on the comparative study of colonial nationalism. Since this last factor is frequently neglected in favor of Eurocentric analyses of decolonization, the second section below will investigate it in some detail.

I

In terms of colonial ideology and institutions, the British experience prepared London remarkably well for the liquidation of empire after 1945. In a sense, one may mark the first phase of British decolonization as stretching from the Durham report of 1839 relative to Canada to the Statute of Westminster of 1931. By this series of measures, Britain created the Dominion system and institutionalized a procedure for gradually loosening control over her possessions. For a time, to be sure, the final character of the Commonwealth (as it came to be called after the turn of the century) remained in doubt. During the interwar years, however, it became clear that the sometime dream of 'Imperial Federation' whereby London would control the economic, defense, and foreign policies of the several allied Anglo-Saxon peoples would never come to fruition. Instead the measured progress from representative to responsible government and from there to Commonwealth status would culminate in the establishment of fully sovereign states. However grand in theory the ideas of a stronger federal structure may have sounded when proposed by men like Joseph Chamberlain, the experience of the First World War served instead to weaken the alliance. It was British entanglements, after all, which had involved the Dominions in warfare far from home at a cost of over 200,000 dead. It was wiser perhaps for them to imitate the United States and delay involvement in these 'foreign' affairs. Or better yet, the Dominions might make common cause with Washington, which emerged from the war appearing both militarily and economically better suited to lead the Anglo-Saxon world than London. Thus, the Balfour Declaration of 1926 only stated what had already been decided in fact: the sovereignty of the Dominions in all respects. The Statute of Westminster of 1931 served as a confirmation of the Declaration. Although the Ottawa Agreements inaugurating an imperial preference system were signed the next year, they failed to provide economic unity where political unity was lacking. The British Commonwealth of Nations was not to be a federal organization.

In these circumstances, the Government of India Act of 1935 must appear as the first major step in the decolonization process which began in earnest after 1945. For although the Act itself fell far short indeed of according independence to India, it was now undeniable that the 'white' Dominions would eventually be joined in their informal alliance by peoples of other racial stock. To the Indians, of course, this was scant satisfaction since not only the time of their independence but, more important, the politically most crucial features of their emerging state seemed to be outside their ability to control. But in London the Act was in many ways decisive. It reconciled the majority of popular and elite opinion to the eventual independence of this 'crowning jewel' of empire, considered along with the

British Isles themselves to be the other 'twin pillar' of Britain's international rank. Of course there is the mistake, encountered in the works of Britishers especially, of seeing in retrospect a grand design for decolonization that in fact did not exist. Closer inspection commonly reveals the British to have been following Burke's sage counsel to reform in order to preserve: London made concessions more usually to subvert opposition to British rule than to prepare for its demise. So, for example, to see Indian independence in 1947 as necessarily following from the Government of India Act of 1935 which in turn unerringly confirmed the intentions of the Government of India Act of 1919 (itself the natural product of the Morley–Minto reforms of 1909) assumes a British gift for foresight which a detailed examination of the historical record makes difficult to sustain. What is lacking in these accounts is a sense of the conflicts, hesitations and uncertainties of the past and of the attempts to reinterpret or renege on the promise of eventual independence for India.

Nonetheless, the British *did* establish a tradition of meeting colonial discontent by reforms which associated the subject peoples more closely with their own governing. The prior evolution of the Dominion system *did* exert an important influence on the style of British policy towards India. And the ultimate decision to grant India independence and to permit her to withdraw if she wished from the Commonwealth *did* constitute a momentous precedent for British policy towards the rest of the colonies.

How limited, by contrast, was the French experience in handling political change within their empire. When in January–February 1944, a group of colonial civil servants met in Brazzaville, capital of the French Congo, to draw up proposals for imperial reorganization in the aftermath of the war, the many worthwhile recommendations they made—the end of forced labor and special native legal codes, the creation of territorial assemblies and their coordination in a 'French Federation', the representation of colonial peoples at the future French Constituent Assembly—failed to deal with the truly central problem, the possibility of a colonial evolution towards independence.² That is, the French are not to be criticized for failing to provide complete and immediate independence to their colonies, but rather for their steadfast refusal to consider even eventual separation a viable political option. As the conference report preamble put it:

The ends of the civilizing work accomplished by France in the colonies excludes any idea of autonomy, all possibility of evolution outside the French bloc of the Empire; the eventual constitution, even in the future of self-government in the colonies is denied.³

² For a discussion of the conference, see D. Bruce Marshall, *The French Colonial Myth and Constitution-Making in the Fourth Republic* (Yale, 1973), pp. 102–15.

³ *Brazzaville: 30 janvier–8 février 1944*, published by the Ministère des Colonies, 1944, p. 32.

Nor were matters to improve with time. Despite the rapid enactment of a host of unprecedented reforms proposed by the Conference over the next two years, there was no thought of conceding political advantages to colonial nationalists which might lead to independence. By the summer of 1947, this had been made clear on successive occasions to the Indochinese, to the Tunisians and Moroccans, to the Malagasies, to the blacks of West and Equatorial Africa, and to the Algerians. Indeed, the matter had become fixed by the Fourth Republic's Constitution in the terms providing for the 'French Union' in its Title VIII.⁴

Experts in jurisprudence have convincingly pointed out the ambiguity and contradictions with which the final text establishing the French Union abounds. Its one central feature stands out clearly enough, however: the authority of France over the Union was beyond dispute. Neither in the immediate present nor in the future would there be a partnership among equals within this 'federation'. The only significant power whatsoever conferred on the Union was that of pooling members' resources for the common defense (article 62). But it was 'the Government of the [French] Republic [which] shall undertake the coordination of these resources and the direction of the policy appropriate to prepare and ensure this defense'. In legislative matters, the Union was totally subordinate to the National Assembly (articles 71–2). Nor could foreign nationalists convert the Union into a platform from which to dislodge France from her overseas possessions, for its key institutions (the Presidency, the High Council, and the Assembly) were safely under metropolitan control (articles 62–6 and 77). What the Union assured, in essence, was that the peoples of the Empire would be neither French nor free.

A variety of reasons may be adduced to explain the French failure to develop before 1945 any mechanism which might have served as a bridge for the transfer of power to their colonial subjects after the War. The most popular explanation has been to assert that the French blindly trusted to their policy of 'assimilation' whereby the colonies would eventually be one with France. Recent scholarship has tended to suggest, however, that the notion of 'association', with its connotations of the eventual separate development of the colonial peoples, had grown increasingly important in French policy circles in the twentieth century.⁵ Or again, one might argue that the British experience with 'informal empire' had bred an aversion to direct rule abroad which the French, given their weaker international position, were not able to follow, forced by the logic of things into

⁴ Tony Smith, 'The French Colonial Consensus and People's War, 1945–1958', *The Journal of Contemporary History*, October 1974.

⁵ See Hubert Deschamps, 'French Colonial Policy in Tropical Africa between the Two World Wars', William Cohen, 'The French Colonial Service in West Africa', and Leonard Thompson, 'France and Britain in Africa: a Perspective', in Prosser Gifford (ed.), *France and Britain in Africa: Imperial Rivalry and Colonial Rule* (Yale, 1971).

annexationist/protectionist policies. But were this a decisive determinant of postwar behavior, one might expect to find the British insistent on maintaining direct rule after 1945, since they no longer enjoyed the power position which made the rhetoric of 'burden of empire' a possibility. The most crucial difference in the British and French imperial traditions would rather appear to lie in the long-established procedures by which London dealt with colonial discontent: progressively representative government tending towards eventual independence. Institutional practices, not ideological penchants, best explain the advantages Britain held over France in terms of the legacy of colonial traditions to handling the problems of empire after 1945.

Prewar theory and practice did not alone decide postwar imperial policy, however. That the United States emerged after 1945 as the world's dominant power clearly helped the British accept their decline in international affairs more easily than it did the French. Thus, wartime cooperation in the development of the atom bomb had extended into an important place for Britain within NATO where the British held five of the thirteen principal command posts, with seven reserved for the Americans and one for the French. But the most salient aspect of the difference in Washington's relations with Paris and London emerges perhaps from an analysis of the quality of the bonds linking Franklin Roosevelt to Winston Churchill and to Charles de Gaulle. While Roosevelt held Churchill in high esteem, 'He hates de Gaulle with such fierce feeling that he rambles almost into incoherence whenever we talk about him', Cordell Hull reported in the summer of 1944.⁶ With the North African landing of November 1942, and the assassination of Darlan a month later, the Americans moved to make General Henri Giraud, and not de Gaulle, head of civilian administration there and commander-in-chief of the surrendered French army of several hundred thousand men. Despite de Gaulle's ability in 1943 to rally behind him the National Liberation Committee (CFLN) and the support of certain resistance groups operating inside France, the Americans continued to oppose his leadership. Even at the moment of the liberation of France, Roosevelt refused to recognize the General's authority, insisting instead that a military administration run the country until the wishes of the population were made known by elections. It was the end of October 1944 before the United States finally recognized de Gaulle's provisional government.⁷

Certainly more than personality factors were at play. For the features of de Gaulle's personality that the Americans and sometimes the British

⁶ Cited in Gabriel Kolko, *The Politics of War: the World and United States Foreign Policy, 1943-1945* (Random House, 1968), p. 83.

⁷ A. W. DePorte, *De Gaulle's Foreign Policy, 1944-1946* (Harvard, 1968), chaps. 2 and 3. Also *ibid.*, chap. 4.

found so antipathetic had to do with his determination not to let France be absorbed by her allies during the war and relegated to a satellite role deprived of all initiative thereafter. So, early in the struggle, he had protested the manner in which the British occupied Diego Suarez on Madagascar and conducted operations against the Vichy troops in Syria. Similarly, the General had intimations of Roosevelt's plans for the French Empire: that Indochina or Morocco might be made trusteeships of other powers; that British or American bases might be permanently established on New Caledonia or at Bizerte and Dakar; even that a new buffer state might be created between France and Germany, to be called Wallonia and to run from Switzerland to the Channel. De Gaulle's sharp reaction to such considerations was in perfect accord with his ambition to regenerate France as a nation. As he told Roosevelt:

I know that you are preparing to aid France materially, and that aid will be invaluable to her. But it is in the political realm that she must recover her vigor, her self-reliance and, consequently, her role. How can she do this if she is excluded from the organization of the great world powers and their decisions, if she loses her African and Asian territories—in short, if the settlement of the War definitively imposes upon her the psychology of the vanquished?⁸

This wartime experience was to leave a permanent mark on French attitudes towards the United States whenever colonial questions arose. All shades of French political opinion suspected American moves in North Africa after the Allied landing there in November 1942, believing Washington wished to expell the French in order to move in itself. British efforts to pry the French out of the Levant at the end of the war were similarly believed to depend on American support. And the jealousy with which the French tried to protect their monopoly over affairs in Indochina after 1946, despite their reliance on ever-increasing American aid, serves as yet another instance of their suspicion of American designs.⁹ One need only reflect on the welcome London gave to American involvement in Greece and Turkey in 1947, and in Iran in 1953, to appreciate the importance of the difference relations with Washington made in the overall process of European decolonization.

Certainly, at times, the British had reason to find the relationship most frustrating. To many, it appeared that the United States would have its own way at every turn, insistent on its rights but reluctant to honor its obligations. America's power, geographic isolation and (as the sentimental

⁸ Charles de Gaulle, *The Complete War Memoirs of Charles de Gaulle* (Simon and Schuster, 1967), p. 574.

⁹ Anti-Americanism flared in France each time the dependent role became evident: over the Marshall Plan, the E.D.C., the 'nuclear shield', and American funds for the Indochinese War. See, among others, Georgette Elgey, *La république des illusions* (Fayard, 1965), pp. 101, 133, 139–41, 248; and Alfred Grosser, *La politique extérieure de la V^e République* (Seuil, 1965), pp. 17, 47 ff.

liked to feel) immaturity in foreign affairs combined to produce this mixture of righteousness and irresponsibility the British found so taxing. But it was only a minority who argued, as some radical American historians do today, that Washington's moves were in fact premeditated efforts to sap British power in a design to replace her in international affairs. These observers could point, however to American carping during the interwar period at imperial and Commonwealth arrangements which favored the United Kingdom economically as the prelude to a move after 1945 to replace the British in the Mediterranean and the Middle and Far East. Max Beloff nonetheless portrays the dominant mood when he writes 'The degree to which British statesmen and diplomats expected a natural sympathy for British policy to exist in the United States and equated any hostility to or criticism of Britain with treason to America and not merely to Britain can be abundantly illustrated.'¹⁰ Surely the confidence with which Britain relied on American power to fill the vacuum left by the end of her formal and informal spheres of control around the globe is remarkable, especially when contrasted with the French experience. So, to cite but one example, Gabriel Kolko may picture Anglo-American relations over Middle East issues as one of unrelieved antagonism. But Anthony Eden's own account of how he wooed Washington's intervention in Iran against Prime Minister Mossadegh and his evident relief that a consortium arrangement could be worked out which preserved British interests in the area (however much it may have furthered the ambitions of the Americans in the process) makes it difficult to agree that all was cynical maneuvering for advantage between the two Anglo-Saxon powers.¹¹

The third of the major differences in the respective abilities of the British and the French to decolonize takes us from international considerations to an analysis of their domestic political institutions. Britain had a 'loyal opposition', a stable two-party system, and a strong executive. France, to the contrary, was plagued by disloyal opposition from both the Right and Left, by a multiparty system, and by a notoriously weak executive. Hence the French were not so able as the British to process a problem the magnitude of decolonization.

To an observer with a background in French domestic politics, surely the most striking thing about the British political system during this period is the manner in which its institutions seemed to function more effectively during crisis. Faced with a challenge to its authority from abroad, the system organized its responses as ranks closed and hierarchies of command asserted themselves. This resilience of British institutions was highlighted

¹⁰ Max Beloff, 'The Special Relationship: an Anglo-American Myth', in Martin Gilbert, ed., *A Century of Conflict, 1850-1950: Essays for A. J. P. Taylor* (Hamish Hamilton Ltd., 1966), p. 156.

¹¹ Anthony Eden, *Full Circle* (Houghton-Mifflin, 1960), chap. 9.

especially at the time of the invasion of the Suez Canal Zone, the single occasion when matters related to empire focused the concerned attention of the British public and its leaders. It is not a question here of whether the policy was a colossal blunder or whether the fault for its failure lay with Eisenhower and Dulles. The point is simply, as Leon Epstein demonstrates in his careful study of British politics at the time, that the system performed remarkably well.¹²

Not that there was always unanimity. As the most thorough study of party politics during decolonization suggests, imperial issues were perhaps as much a matter of serious bi-partisan dispute during the 1950s as at any time in modern British history.¹³ But the discipline of the parties, the institutional strength of Government leadership, and the way partisan conflict tended to increase party solidarity (rather than create centrifugal struggles as was so often the case in France), meant that from the mid-1940s until the mid-1960s, British imperial policy was characterized by coherence, consistency and strength.

The most delicate balance point at this time in British politics was the effort by the Conservatives not to let these issues tear them apart after they came to power in 1951.¹⁴ As David Goldsworthy documents, the Conservatives were the Party of Empire, tied to it emotionally in perhaps their most vital collective myth, the pride in empire, and connected to it concretely through settlers, business interests, and the Colonial Service, all of whom sought their place in its ranks.¹⁵ Yet despite Churchill's return to power, the single serious misstep under their leadership was Suez. A part of the reason for their success was surely that Labour had shown the way by granting independence to the several territories of south Asia and by preparing the road for the future independence of the Gold Coast. In addition, there was luck: Churchill was out of office after the spring of 1955 and so was not able to maintain the mistaken policies he had drawn up, paramount of which was the creation of the Central African Federation in 1953.¹⁶ Harold Macmillan (from 1957) and Iain Macleod (from 1959) proved themselves more realistic leaders. They were substantially aided in the pursuit of their policies by the logic of the British political system which made it quite difficult for the recalcitrant reactionaries in the Party—probably no more than 10–15 percent of its strength, though on specific issues they could rally greater support—to create enough instability in the system for concessions to be made to them. Try as they might, first over Egypt,

¹² Leon D. Epstein, *British Politics in the Suez Crisis* (University of Illinois, 1964).

¹³ David Goldsworthy, *Colonial Issues in British Politics, 1945–1961* (Oxford, 1971).

¹⁴ This point is made with particular clarity by Miles Kahler, 'End of Empire: Decolonization in the Politics of Britain and France', unpublished paper, Harvard University.

¹⁵ Goldsworthy, *op.cit.*, pp. 166 ff.

¹⁶ Patrick Keatley, *The Politics of Partnership* (Penguin, 1963), pp. 393 ff.

then over Cyprus, and finally over Central Africa and Katanga, they remained isolated and impotent.¹⁷

In contrast, if there is one point at which French Socialist politicians, academic observers, and right wing military officers are in agreement, it is that they all hold the manifold structural shortcomings of the governmental system under the Fourth Republic (pejoratively referred to as 'le système') responsible for the terrible trials of French decolonization. Charles de Gaulle expressed with characteristic bluntness the sentiments of many when he replied in 1948 to an interviewer who inquired how he would 'significantly modify the foreign policy of France' should he return to power:

I will not have to change the foreign policy of France since at present France has no foreign policy. Her regime does not permit it any more than it permits her to have an economic policy worthy of the name, a social policy, or a financial policy, etc. The truth is there is nothing. Thus I will not change this policy which does not exist, but I will make the policy of France.¹⁸

A general theory of the Republic's weakness could readily amalgamate the various criticisms of 'le système' into a unified explanation of its difficulties.¹⁹ Under both the Third and Fourth Republics, the root cause of political weakness was to be found in political division which, although not so serious as to prevent a governing center coalition for France, nonetheless habitually precluded the unity indispensable for effective government. We are told that this political division was the product of the simultaneous playing out of several historical conflicts wracking French society at large (Williams, Hoffmann), of the difficulty of governing against the cynical opposition of those who denied the entire system legitimacy (Aron), of French attitudes toward power which hindered the growth of effective authority relations (Crozier), all aggravated by a form of constitutional government which, with its multiple parties and weak executive, exacerbated these conflicts in the very seat of power (Wahl, MacRae, Barale), and so encouraged the irresponsibility of elected officials (Leites). Inability fed upon inability until the default of government authority reached such proportions that, at the first serious threat of military insubordination, the regime totally collapsed.²⁰

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, part 5; Goldsworthy, *op. cit.*, chap. 8 and pp. 352 ff; Rudolph von Albertini, *Decolonization* (Doubleday, 1971), pp. 245-7.

¹⁸ Charles de Gaulle, *La France sera la France* (F. Bouchy et Fils, 1951), p. 193.

¹⁹ The following comments are drawn from Smith, *op. cit.*

²⁰ Philip Williams, *Crisis and Compromise: Politics in the Fourth Republic* (Anchor, 1966); Stanley Hoffman (ed.), *In Search of France* (Harper and Row, 1965); Raymond Aron, *Immuable et changeante: de la IV^e à la V^e République* (Paris, 1959); Michel Crozier, *The Bureaucratic Phenomenon* (Chicago, 1964); D. MacRae, *Parliament, Parties and Society in France, 1946-1958* (St. Martin's Press, 1967); Jean Barale, *La Constitution de la IV^e République à l'épreuve de la guerre* (Librarie Générale de Droit et de Jurisprudence, 1963);

At first reading this seems to make good sense of the French experience and contrast meaningfully with the case of British domestic institutions. But on closer analysis this account shows serious problems, since it neglects to point up the stubborn colonial consensus which held from the Socialists to the Right and which contributed as much to the ineffectiveness of the political system as this, in turn, made a sound policy impossible to agree upon or implement. For as a review of the Indochinese policy of the Blum and Ramadier governments in 1946–7 and of the Algerian policy of the Mollet government of 1956–7 demonstrates, it was unity, resolution, and action which at these critical junctures of Socialist national leadership emerge as the hallmarks of the regime. What typified these truly decisive periods of Socialist leadership was not so much the shortcomings of the political system through which they had to govern as their own unrealistic, tenaciously held positions on colonial matters. Admittedly the French political system was a weak one whose divisions clearly complicated the reaction to colonial nationalism. But it is all too tempting to use the system as a scapegoat and so to forget the dedication of the Fourth Republic to an image of France which found its highest expression with de Gaulle: that to be internally stable, France required international greatness, and that to obtain this rank she must count on her empire since in this enterprise she had no certain friends.

Time and again throughout the history of the Fourth Republic, beneath the invective of political division, one finds a shared anguish at the passing of national greatness, a shared humiliation at three generations of defeat, a shared nationalistic determination that France retain her independence in a hostile world—all brought to rest on the conviction that in the empire they would ‘maintenir’. Thus the Socialists shared with most of their fellow-countrymen an image of France, a kind of collective conscience, born of the political paralysis of the thirties, the shame of the Occupation, the stern prophecies of General de Gaulle, the fear of domestic communism, and the initial expectations and ensuing disappointments of the Resistance. With most of their fellow-countrymen, they too experienced the loss of Indochina as the failure not of an historically absurd colonial policy first launched by de Gaulle but as the failure of a regime. They feared, then, that the decline of France to second-power status marked not so much an inevitable phase of world history, but the inner failing of a people. The charges of being a ‘bradeur d’empire’ raised more profound self-doubt in the National Assembly than did charges of ‘scuttle’ at Westminster.

It was, therefore, not only the political institutions of France and Great Britain which were dissimilar, but perhaps more importantly the national

Nicholas Wahl, ‘The French Political System’, in Samuel Beer and Adam Ulam (eds.), *Patterns of Government* (Random House, 1962); Nathan Leites, *On the Game of Politics in France* (Stanford, 1959).

moods or psychologies of these two countries. Where, for example, does one find in the annals of French leaders anything equivalent to the entry in the journal of Hugh Dalton, assistant to Lord Mountbatten in negotiating the independence of India, dated February 24, 1947? 'If you are in a place where you are not wanted and where you have not got the force, or perhaps the will, to squash those who don't want you, the only thing to do is to come out. This very simple truth will have to be applied to other places too, e.g., Palestine.'²¹

One may object that this analysis fails to disaggregate sufficiently the constituent forces in each country. How important was it, for example, that Labour was in power immediately after the war and so could set an example in Britain of how to deal with colonial nationalism? Doubtless the influence of the Fabian colonial bureau and the work of Arthur Creech-Jones as Colonial Secretary from late 1946 until 1950 had their positive impact. But it should be recalled that the Socialists led the government in France as well in the crucial years 1946-7, when the decision to fight nationalism in Southeast Asia was made. Thus, at the very time the British Socialists were deciding to hasten the withdrawal from India, the French Socialists were staging emotional appeals in the National Assembly in favor of supporting military action in Indochina.²² The leaders of both parties wore Socialist labels, but they were more clearly to be recognized by their national than their party memberships.

Nor is it convincing to argue that differences in civilian control of the military adequately explain divergences in French and British decolonization. For military insubordination in France was far more a reflection of the national crisis than it was the cause. That is, the French military came to see itself as an interest group with claims to make against the state only after the state had created the situations where these interests could be formed.

It is similarly difficult to argue that economic interests offer more than a partial explanation of the different patterns of decolonization. To be sure, settler interests weighed heavily in deciding policy in Kenya and Algeria, and there is evidence that mining interests initially made their voices heard in favor of efforts to keep the Central African Federation under European control. Elsewhere, however, business groups appear either divided (Morocco), disinterested (much of sub-Saharan Africa), or unable to stem the political tide (India). Of course it is possible to find the hand of business wherever one wishes in theoretically, if not historically, logical terms. So economic interests are damned if there is federation (in Nigeria, it is

²¹ Hugh Dalton, *High Tide and After: Memoirs 1945-1960* (Frederick Muller Ltd., 1962), p. 211.

²² For the very different attitudes of Prime Ministers Attlee and Ramadier, see the excerpts of parliamentary debates of 1946-7 reprinted in Tony Smith, *The End of European Empire: Decolonization after World War II* (D. C. Heath, 1975).

sometimes alleged, this allowed for more rational exploitation by outside groups) and equally damned if there is decentralization (in French West Africa, so one hears, these same interests would balkanize to divide and rule). But so long as colonial nationalists were not communists or, unlike Mossadegh in Iran and Nasser in Egypt, did not appear to represent threats to basic European overseas economic concerns, leaders in Paris and London could realistically hope to count on the pressures of economic development to create a working arrangement with European business. Indeed, in some instances a strong, leftist nationalist was to be preferred to a compliant but incompetent collaborator.

In short, disaggregation of the 'nation' into its constituent political forces offers insights into specific periods or cases but does not appear to have conditioned the overall pattern of European decolonization. For the factors of general relevance, it is aggregate national characteristics which emerge as the most decisive. But as the last point above suggests, an important determinant of the style of European decolonization had to do not so much with political structures and considerations in London and Paris as with the character of nationalism in the overseas empire.

II

However thorough a comparison might be made between the policies of Paris and London, such an approach focuses the study of decolonization too narrowly on the imperial capitals, neglecting the decisive role played by the peoples of Asia and Africa in their own liberation. For it is possible to trace the history of decolonization not in terms of European, but of Asian and African, developments. The victory of Japan over Russia in 1904; Lenin's rise to power in 1917 and his subsequent aid to national elites striving to reduce European influence in their countries; the triumph of Mustafa Kemal in Turkey after the First World War; the rise of Gandhi to leadership of the National Congress Party of India in 1920; the increasing importance of Cairo in Arab affairs following the defeat of efforts at Arab unity in the First World War and the emergence of modern Egyptian nationalism under Saad Zaghlul Pasha; the rapid growth of colonial economies during the interwar period with corresponding shifts in local social and political structures; the Japanese conquest of European colonies east of India and the hardships suffered by colonial peoples in all other parts of the globe during the Second World War; Kwame Nkrumah's return to the Gold Coast in December 1947; Mao Tse-tung's entry in Peking in January 1949—all these developments offer an alternative way of charting the course of history and analyzing its decisive movements. From this perspective, concentration on the formal boundaries of empire or on events deemed significant at the time in European capitals risks obstructing

our vision of those determining processes of history which occurred silently within colonial territories giving a local pedigree to nationalism, or which took place regionally without respect for imperial frontiers on the basis of communication among Asians or Africans. Looked at from this angle, history ran by other clocks whose timing mechanism synchronized only occasionally with the pacing of events in Europe. In order to form a just appreciation of the colonial problem facing Paris and London, our attention must turn from these capitals to Hanoi and Delhi, to Cairo and Algiers, to Accra and Abidjan.

Where comparative analyses of colonial nationalism have been undertaken, they generally tend to advance typologies of nationalist leadership ('liberal-separationist', 'traditional-nativist', 'extremist-radical' and the like), to compare them to their local opponents (the 'liberal-assimilationists' and 'traditional-collaborationists'), and then to analyze the content to the various ideologies of nationalist mobilization (indigenist, religious, or socialist). Unfortunately for comparative purposes, such constructs show serious problems on closer inspection. Any effort to propose ineluctable stages or types of nationalist development must fail given the variety on historical record. Thus the drive for national liberation may be preceded (Tunisia), accompanied (Morocco), or followed (Nigeria) by the political predominance of traditionalist leaders and ideas. Or again, the same man (Ferhat Abbas) or movement (the Indian Congress Party) may be successively advocates of assimilation, separation, and revolution while in other cases these various positions may be assumed instead by rival men and groups (Algeria). Or again, the same movement may contain quite heterogeneous members spanning the liberal-traditionalist-radical spectrum (the Indian Congress Party) or the same individual may alone espouse the whole gamut of ideological appeals (Sukarno with his mixture of nationalism, Islam, and communism officially proclaimed as *NASAKOM*). Such typologies only give us a false sense of security which even casual reference to the historical record must easily disrupt.

We are on surer ground when we turn from a study of values and the penchant for ahistorical categories to an analysis of structure, and see that the decisive question in the comparative investigation of colonial nationalism has to do with the character of the rural-urban alliance. For whatever their values, what Bourguiba, Ataturk, Sukarno, Nkrumah, Nyerere, Ho Chi Minh, Gandhi and Houphouet-Boigny all shared was their leadership at the moment of national independence over groupings both traditional and modern in values and structure with a scope so broad that the split between the countryside and the city was overcome. Obviously such nationalist alliances varied enormously among themselves depending on the interests represented, the solidity of the party apparatus aggregating anti-colonial forces, the relative power of local groups outside the

nationalist fold, and the international dangers which a young independence movement had to face. But it is, I believe, through an analysis of these forces that we can best elaborate a typology of colonial nationalism and so understand the contribution of the peoples of Asia and Africa to the character of the decolonization process.

A comparison of reactions in Black Africa and Madagascar to postwar French colonial policy with those of nationalists in Algeria and Indochina offers a good illustration of the importance of local conditions in determining this historical movement. For it is important to emphasize that *French policy was essentially the same throughout the empire*: political reforms were granted only so long as they could be seen tending to preserve French rule. Demands for change which might ultimately destroy the French presence were immediately to be squelched. De Gaulle was the chief architect of this plan and he made its terms clear to the Vietnamese by his Declaration of March 25, 1945, which his successors in power reaffirmed in their negotiations with Ho Chi Minh at Fontainebleau in the summer of 1946. The Second Constituent Assembly adopted the same stand with the Algerians, and the first legislature of the Fourth Republic confirmed it in the terms of the Statute of Algeria voted in the summer of 1947. General Juin took the message to Morocco after having delivered it in Tunis. Marius Moutet, the Socialist colonial minister, was relying on the same view when he called for a boycott of the extraordinary conference called at Bamako, Soudan by the Black Africans under French rule in October 1946.

The French subsequently demonstrated the seriousness of their resolve. In November 1946 they shelled the port of Haiphong, taking the lives of several thousand Vietnamese in their determination to rid the city of the Vietminh. In March–April 1947 they responded to a nationalist raid on an army base on Madagascar with a repression which by official estimates killed 86,000 natives. Since the Sétif repression of May 1945 had momentarily cowed the Algerians, rigged elections commencing in the spring of 1948 kept the peace in North Africa. But shortly thereafter, the French felt obliged to launch a concerted repression south of the Sahara against the Africans of the Rassemblement Démocratique Africain (RDA).

If the policy was the same, the results were not. Within a month of the French attack on Haiphong, the Vietminh had replied by an attempted coup in Hanoi. While the Sétif repression effectively fragmented the Algerian political elite for a time, a revolution willing to give no quarter finally broke out in 1954. But in Black Africa the policy succeeded. A closer analysis of the situation there and a review of the variables mentioned earlier may suggest why: the ability of a nationalist party to buckle together the alliance of the forces it represents; the relative strength (actual or potential) of this party's local opponents; the need of such a party for aid from the international system to maintain its local predominance. Thus to

understand the process of European decolonization means to put some order into the variety of colonial situations which it concerned, since a French policy anachronistic in certain areas proved well suited to master the events in others. Why did French policy succeed so well in Africa when it failed so totally elsewhere?

Immediately after the Second World War, African nationalism in the French territories found its most advanced expression in Senegal and the Ivory Coast. But as we shall see, it was the Ivory Coast which was quickly to emerge as the key territory in French policy south of the Sahara. Here the leading political formation was Houphouët-Boigny's Parti Démocratique du Côte d'Ivoire (PDCI) which was founded on the base of the coffee and cocoa planters' voluntary association, the Syndicat Agricole Africain (SAA). As President of the SAA, Houphouët had been elected to the French Constituent National Assembly, and there, in the spring of 1946, had proved instrumental in passing the legislation which ended the bitterly hated forced labor regulations in effect throughout French Africa under the Third Republic and intensified under Vichy. By this legislation, Houphouët was able in one stroke to secure a decisive blow for his own class against the European planters in coffee and cocoa (who could not compete with the African without the help of cheap, requisitioned labor) and to enlist the support of the great mass of the territory's inhabitants who were subject to these terrible regulations. So Houphouët-Boigny, the largest planter in the Ivory Coast, became in the words of Ruth Morgenthau 'a hero and liberator. This achievement was the beginning of a myth around Houphouët, the first truly national Ivory Coast tradition.'²³ By October 1946, the PDCI had 65,000 members and was the largest party in French tropical Africa.

At the very time the Ivory Coast was securing an initial measure of national unity behind Houphouët, the country was finding itself in increasing turmoil with the French administration. The economic aspect of the problem was familiar throughout the postwar world: shortages and inflation. But it was aggravated in the Ivory Coast by the sharp decline in world market prices for coffee and cocoa which together constituted 75–92 percent of the country's exports between 1947 and 1957.²⁴ In the Territorial Assembly, at the same time, a number of political issues served seriously to divide the PDCI from the settler delegates and the colonial administration. What brought these local issues to the intense concern of Paris, however, was the alliance which had grown up between the PDCI and the French Communist Party, and the increasingly dominant role the

²³ Ruth S. Morgenthau, *Political Parties in French-Speaking West Africa* (Clarendon Press, 1964), p. 181.

²⁴ Aristide Zolberg, *One Party Rule in the Ivory Coast* (Princeton, 1969), p. 163.

PDCI was playing throughout the Federation of French West Africa (AOF).

In the first French Constituent Assembly (October 1945–May 1946), the African deputies had recognized both the Socialist and Communist parties as their allies in the effort to secure liberal reforms in colonial rule. Although the leaders of the Provisional Government assured the Africans these reforms would not be modified whatever the fate of the first draft of the constitution, the promise was not kept. The combined pressures of settler lobbying, de Gaulle's warning that firmness must be displayed, and the need to come to some unequivocal stand in the negotiations with the Vietminh during the summer of 1946 worked together to produce a text in which the second Constituent Assembly (June–October 1946) defined the French Union in terms distinctly less liberal than those earlier proposed.²⁵ In response, therefore, some 800 delegates from French Africa assembled at Bamako in October 1946 to coordinate their efforts to secure liberal reforms. In an effort to sabotage the congress, Colonial Minister Moutet used his influence inside the Socialist Party to convince affiliated Africans, most notably the Senegalese, to boycott the meeting. In the absence of the well-organized Senegalese, the PDCI with Houphouët at its head emerged as the unrivaled leader of both French West and Equatorial Africa through the creation of the interterritorial party, the Rassemblement Démocratique Africain (RDA). Several years later this was to prove critically important when the issue of attaining independence as a federation arose and the unionists within the RDA found themselves cut off from their Senegalese allies outside and so less able to thwart what came to be Houphouët's goal of breaking the federation into sovereign states. At the time, a boycott on the part of the French parties which had also been invited to the conference as observers meant that the Africans responded favorably to the one metropolitan party in attendance, the PCF. It was hardly surprising, then, that the newly formed RDA would affiliate itself (*apparentement*) with the Communists in the first legislature of the Fourth Republic elected in November 1946.

With the exclusion of the Communists from the French Government the following May, and especially with the railway strikes in West Africa in the fall of 1947, Paris began to anticipate the need to deal with the same firm hand in West Africa that it had already shown in Indochina, Algeria, and Madagascar. In January 1948, Socialist deputy Paul Béchard was appointed Governor General of AOF and Orselli was named Governor of the Ivory Coast. Initially these men pursued a somewhat conciliatory policy, trying to woo the RDA and the PDCI away from the Communists. But when this showed no signs of progress, Orselli was replaced by Laurent Péchoux and the administration cracked down to rid the territory of the

²⁵ Marshall, *op. cit.*, chaps. 5, 7, 8; Morgenthau, *op. cit.*, chaps. 2, 3.

RDA by the time of the elections to the second legislature in 1951. Naturally this repression (as it was frankly called) fell most heavily in the Ivory Coast. PDCI officials were imprisoned en masse, villages favorable to the Party found their taxes raised, even pilgrims to Mecca were prohibited from leaving if they were members of the Party. In a move familiar in all the French territories after the war, administrators reorganized electoral districts and rigged election results to favor their hand-picked candidates. The repression did not go unanswered. Between February 1949 and January 1950, the Party responded in kind to these measures. Hunger strikes, mass demonstrations, acts of civil disobedience, and actual street fighting took the lives of several score Africans while hundreds were injured and thousands arrested.²⁶

For our concerns, the most striking thing about these developments is that ultimately the policy achieved its aims. Unlike the situation in Algeria or Indochina, but like the case of Madagascar, force worked. From the spring of 1950, when Houphouët-Boigny met with François Mitterrand in Paris and determined to break with the Communists, until the present day, France has had no better friend in Africa. Here, then, is the signal success of French decolonization, the exemplar of the policy of reform within order designed to guarantee a continued French presence in the overseas territories. It raises the obvious question of what factors were present in the case of the Ivory Coast which were lacking in Indochina and Algeria.

The most serious problem immediately facing Houphouët-Boigny in the period from February 1949 to January 1950 was the inadequacy of his party organization. Relative to other political formations in French Africa the PDCI may have seemed a potent force, but it simply could not tolerate the pressures put on it by the French administration. It should be recalled that the PDCI only came into existence in 1946 and that it built on the foundation of the SAA created just two years earlier. While it is true that the SAA associated tribal chiefs with commoners and that Houphouët had important credentials both as a planter and as the scion of a leading chiefly family, this simply did not constitute strength enough to oppose the French. The root weakness of the Party seems to have been the tribal structure of the country (indeed, wherever we turn in colonial situations these 'primordial divisions'—to use Clifford Geertz's term—constitute the basic obstacle to party formation regardless of whether the society is 'tribal' or 'peasant'). The PDCI was in fact an 'indirect party' in the sense that its structure depended more on the loyalty of elites who had their bases independent of party control than on authority the Party could muster on its own account. Beneath its upper levels, Party structure mirrored rather than bridged the cleavages within society at large. Once the top split, the Party, devoid of horizontal linkages at lower levels, simply fragmented into

²⁶ Zolberg, *op. cit.*, pp. 131 ff; Morgenthau, *op. cit.*, pp. 188 ff.

its constituent parts. As Aristide Zolberg puts it, '... the structures created in 1947 helped maintain ethnic ties even when economic and social change might have diminished their importance ... basic party units coincided with ethnic wards, and party life also reinforced ethnicity. ... Those who were particularly responsible for party organization knew that its machinery was adequate only for electoral purposes.'²⁷ What occurred under French pressure was, quite simply, the disaggregation of this elite as some succumbed to hopes for personal gain while others responded to fears of personal loss.

This alone, however, cannot explain Houphouët's capitulation to the French. Other parties at other times have been fractured by repression only to arise more powerfully thereafter. Is it not conceivable that Houphouët could have appealed over the head of his fellow party leaders to the people, retired to the bush and begun a war of national liberation against the French? If a West African specialist may balk at the idea, certainly a student of Asian politics would not. Houphouët was, after all, widely agreed to have charismatic personal qualities, and the election results after his reconciliation with France suggest that in the eyes of the people his opposition served to heighten his prestige. But this is not the course of action Houphouët chose and while the reasons may seem apparent to the Africanist, they may be illuminating for a comparative study of decolonization attempting to encompass the Middle East and Asia. In a word, as the largest planter in the Ivory Coast, Houphouët-Boigny realized the obvious: the future of his class and thereby of his people lay with France. Mobilize the peasantry? Conduct guerrilla warfare? Nothing seems less probable. As this Catholic, this traditional chief, this leading spokesman of the African bourgeoisie put it to his compatriots at the opening of a fair in 1953: 'If you don't want to vegetate in bamboo huts, concentrate your efforts on growing good cocoa and good coffee. They will fetch a good price and you will become rich.'²⁸

To promote these export crops, the Ivory Coast of the early 1950s needed the cooperation of France. For the country produced only 3 percent of the world's output and this of an inferior variety making it especially vulnerable to price fluctuations on the international market. Under a 1954 agreement with France, however, Ivory Coast coffee (accounting in those days for some 57 percent of total exports) received both a quota guarantee and a price floor in metropolitan markets.²⁹ The growing middle class of African planters, along with their upper-class colleagues on the great

²⁷ Zolberg, *op. cit.*, pp. 143, 237; Morgenthau, *op. cit.*, pp. 207 ff.

²⁸ Cited in Zolberg, *op. cit.*, p. 151. Tribal cultivators are, of course, very different from peasants so that for reasons of social structure they may be more difficult to mobilize in revolution.

²⁹ Elliot J. Berg, 'The Economic Basis of Political Choice in French West Africa', *American Political Science Review*, LIV (1960), p. 290; Zolberg, *op. cit.*, p. 165.

estates, depended for their livelihood on the stability of these contracts.³⁰

Houphouët-Boigny and the interests he represented faced another challenge as well: the threat of incorporation into a federal West Africa. Since 1904, French practice had been to finance the entire Federation from indirect taxes levied throughout the area. Wealthier territories perennially complained about this practice in the Grand Council in Dakar, but to no avail. After 1945, the Ivory Coast confirmed a trend begun earlier, so that by the mid-1950s it was the undisputed economic leader of the AOF, accounting for 45 percent of the region's exports. As a result of the Federation's taxing system, the Ivory Coast received an average of only 19 percent of the money it remitted to Dakar. These taxes to the federal authority amounted, in turn, to two or three times the amount collected and retained locally, so that of the total governmental revenue levies in the Ivory Coast, well over half left, never to return.³¹

In order to make good its separation from French West Africa, the Ivory Coast needed the support of France, for throughout the Federation in the early 1950s the mood was for union. Houphouët's preference for decentralization met the opposition of Léopold Senghor from without the RDA, while from within the Party, Sékou Touré of Guinea began to challenge the Ivory Coast leadership. As a result of French support, however, Houphouët could disregard the opinion of his fellow West Africans. The French National Assembly's framework law of March–April 1957 severely weakened the federal authority of the AOF by removing certain of its powers to Paris and devolving others onto the reinforced territorial assemblies, Senghor complained of the 'balkanization' of West Africa and most observers have agreed with him that this was the conscious intention of France.³² At the Bamako RDA conference held in September 1957, Touré was much more popular than Houphouët (who found his only backing from wealthy Gabon), but the Ivory Coast's Paris connections made it quite invulnerable to African objections.

Before the territorial assemblies had fully assumed their new prerogatives, however, the Fourth Republic fell. The French scheme of things for Africa was now expressed in de Gaulle's idea of the 'French Community'. By the terms of the Fifth Republic's constitution, Africans had two choices: either 'federation' in subordination to France, or independence. In other words, the policy of the Fifth Republic was essentially the same as that of the Fourth so far as African federations were concerned. They could expect no comfort from Paris, for France would not support a gradual evolution

³⁰ In 1944 there were 40,000 of these farms. By 1956 there were 120,000, while the population total was under 3 million: Zolberg, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

³¹ Computed from figures provided by Zolberg, *op. cit.*, pp. 159 ff.

³² This judgment is shared by Morgenthau, Zolberg, Michael Crowder and Pierre Gonidec, among others.

towards a federal structure for the AOF which reduced metropolitan control. (The contrast with the British in Nigeria at the same time is striking. Here the pressures for decentralization—at least after the Richard's constitution of 1946—came from the Africans themselves, and especially from the Northern Region.)

A comparison of the Ivory Coast with other colonial situations suggests that the key variable to analyze for an understanding of the colonial response to metropolitan policy is the local power position of the predominant nationalist elite. For every war of colonial liberation carries within it a civil conflict so that in fact the nationalist elite is fighting on two fronts: against the imperial power and against other local groups striving to replace it. Dominant elites are therefore prudent to avoid armed confrontation with the imperial authority. This is not only because it is sensible to recognize that, given the great disproportion of military means, it is especially their fellow citizens who will be killed. The elites understand as well that the initial military setbacks they can expect to suffer may well release the centrifugal forces of class and ethnic division which so profoundly mark most colonial societies. Since warfare in the colonial context will almost inevitably be a protracted, decentralized affair, the initially dominant nationalist elite may find their position assumed by rival leaders. It is, after all, a story of nationalist fairy books that nationalism feeds on its own reversals, jumping up from the earth each time more powerful than before until the entire 'people' is united on that great day of liberation. In fact, as closer inspection of virtually any colonial situation will warrant, there are a variety of nationalist movements behind what to the casual observer may seem like a single wave of nationalism, and these diverse groups are frequently seriously at odds.

Thus civil war lurks in the heart of every movement for national liberation. So, shortly after the signature of the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921, serious strife broke out within Ireland lasting for two years before the Provisional Government was able to bring it under control. The terms of the dispute continued to mark Irish life for decades thereafter. Again, in the very midst of fighting the Dutch effort to regain the Netherlands East Indies, the Communists attempted a coup against the Hatta-Sukarno government (the Madiun Rebellion of 1948) which the Indonesian Army never forgot. In the case of Tunisia, Bourguiba found his agreement to 'internal autonomy' as a prelude to eventual independence hotly contested by Salah ben Youssef, Secretary General of the Destour Party, who secured important backing within the country as well as from the Algerians and the Egyptians. Only because his leadership of the nationalist movement was so undisputed could Kwame Nkrumah accept the 1950 constitution for the Gold Coast which offered him a good deal less than independence. What he must certainly have feared was that his continued recalcitrance would

prompt the British to support the separatist movement in Ashanti and the Northern Territories (as they might easily have done). 'We have no program but independence' declared the Moroccan Istiqlal Party in the early 1950s. This made good sense indeed for a party representing landed interests in a country where 60 percent of the rural population was landless and the nationalist movement divided into three autonomous forces. It was the same slogan adopted by the Wafd Party in Egypt on the occasion in 1951 of their unilateral abrogation of the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1936. But the Wafd quickly saw things pass out of its hands with the mobilization of the Muslim Brotherhood and the Free Officers and the coup against the monarchy in 1952. More wisely than the Wafd, Ho Chi Minh avoided confrontation with the French until it was literally forced upon him, realizing that whatever the apparent strength of the Vietminh, Indochina was far from secure in its hold in 1946. In the case of the Ivory Coast, there is a slight variation in this pattern. For what Houphouët-Boigny had to fear was not so much local as federal interference with his position. That is, other forces in the AOF played the functional equivalent of an internal threat to his leadership.

Yet however reluctant virtually any nationalist elite may be to enter into war against the imperial authority, such confrontations do occur and we must investigate further to see the possibility of establishing categories of nationalist leadership, determining in each case its likelihood of heading a militant insurrection. Dominant groups *least likely* to mount a sustained challenge to the colonial order are those which recognize the fragility of their control locally and the interest they well may have in a European connection. A particularly clear case of this, as we have seen, is the Ivory Coast. Here local factors—the threat of the AOF to incorporate the territory—combined with international considerations—the preferential treatment given in French markets to coffee and cocoa production, the economic basis of the ruling class—to dictate a policy of prudence towards Paris. Not that an elite based on export revenues is necessarily a willing collaborator with European interests; Colonel Qaddafi of Libya is evidence enough of this. But even in the case of Qaddafi, it should be recalled that petroleum products have demonstrated a special immunity to international pressures, and that even this is true only of the present period, as the experience of Prime Minister Mossadegh testifies. The royal court of Cambodia provides another instance of elite collaboration with the Europeans. The Cambodian king welcomed the French return since this promised to destroy the anti-monarchical forces the Japanese had fielded before their defeat and to return to his rule the territory seized by Siam during the Second World War. Royal courts do not make the best collaborators, of course, since economic development tends to throw up classes whose attitudes undermine their legitimacy. European interests are

most effectively represented instead by what may be called an import-export elite whose capacity to develop economically, even if only within certain limits, allows it to cooperate usefully with the international system and at the same time assure domestic stability. The history of Latin America from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century (and beyond) demonstrates this.³³

What I have presented is, of course, an ideal type to which there are important historical exceptions. Thus, fragile nationalist elites will not always recognize where their interests lie in the manner of Houphouët-Boigny. Just as the Czar was extremely ill-advised to tangle with Japan in 1904—and even more mistaken to back his Slavic brothers in Serbia in 1914—so the Wafd Party of Egypt unwittingly committed suicide in October 1951, when it chose to abrogate the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1936 in a vain attempt to recover the Sudan and the Suez Canal. What occurred, quite simply, was that in undertaking policies which exceeded their power internationally they fell prey to local opponents. Nor can one assume that the imperial power will always understand the needs of its foreign collaborators. Britain inadvertently threatened the Jordanian monarchy by its invitation to join the Baghdad Pact in the spring of 1955. And Britain ultimately destroyed the regime of its faithful Iraqi friend Nuri Pasha as Said as one of the prices it paid for the invasion of Suez. On the other hand, groups one might not expect to lead determined nationalist movements do succeed, as the survival of the Moroccan monarchy attests. In this case the explanation seems to be that the king could count on the divisions among his local opponents to neutralize each other in his favor, while towards the French (and later the Americans) he was most conciliatory. These apparent exceptions to the ideal type seem rather to confirm the likelihood that rulers basing their power on traditional legitimacy or import-export revenues will be least ready to mobilize their peoples for wars of national liberation.³⁴

In light of the foregoing analysis, what sorts of nationalist elites may be expected to enter into violent conflict with an imperial regime? Three situations tend to produce such leaders: where an elite dependent on the foreign power has never been created; where an elite once created is destroyed; where such an elite has been displaced by the rise of a rival political formation.

In the case of Algeria, a Muslim elite was simply never created which

³³ Colin Leys argues that the British effectively created such an elite in Kenya in the few years before their departure. See his *Underdevelopment in Kenya: The Political Economy of Neo-Colonialism, 1964–1971* (University of California, 1974).

³⁴ This suggests that Elliot Berg's influential analysis of the economic limits on political choice in French West Africa after 1945 (article, *op. cit.*) is too narrow since it fails to distinguish the political and social variables of poverty. Were he correct, were economic need so decisive politically, Algeria would never have had its revolution.

depended for its position on the good favor of the French. The role of local native elite was pre-empted by the settlers. As a result, the rise of an important Frenchified Muslim class failed to occur, and it became increasingly likely as the twentieth century progressed that the terrible grievances of the Muslim peasantry would be directly expressed against the French instead of being mediated by a native bourgeoisie. To be sure, there were the various bourgeois movements associated with Ferhat Abbas and Doctor Bendjelloul which had a certain activity from the mid-1920s until the mid-1940s. But these never created any ties with the masses. In retrospect, they must be seen as highly visible but politically insignificant compared to the efforts of Messali Hadj and the Reformist Muslim Ulama who gave a popular base to opposition to the French. Once the revolution began in November 1954, the French sought desperately for some group with authority with whom they could negotiate a settlement on better terms than those held out by the National Liberation Front (FLN). None was found, partly because the history of rigged elections served to stigmatize any Algerian who worked with the French as their puppet, but more importantly because the class of people who might have seen their future interests tied to France and who might have feared a radical peasant uprising just did not exist in any important number.³⁵

In the case of Indochina, a nationalist elite which might have had an interest in cooperating with the French after 1945 was destroyed. Here the decisive factor was the Japanese Occupation. As George M. Kahin and John W. Lewis write:

Japan's role in Indochina was radically different from her occupation of any other Southeast Asian country. In the rest of the colonies there, the Japanese realized the advantage of working through the native elites, whom they regarded as more satisfactory instruments of administration than Western colonial civil servants. In order to secure the support of the educated indigenous groups in these other areas, the Japanese were obliged to grant them concessions. . . . The one great exception was Indochina. There the pro-Vichy French administration was willing to come to terms with the Japanese. . . . Thus, during the war the major channel open to those Vietnamese who wished to free their country from Japanese, and ultimately French, control was an underground movement where Vietnamese communists already had a strong and entrenched position.³⁶

Other developments contributed to making it difficult to find a local counterweight to the Communists after 1945. Economically, the French presence in the 1930s had rested on the investments of a number of large capitalist firms like Michelin, the activities of a Chinese merchant class (with their families totaling perhaps 4 percent of the country's population),

³⁵ Tony Smith, *The French Stake in Algeria, 1945-1962* (Cornell University Press, forthcoming, 1978).

³⁶ George M. Kahin and John W. Lewis, *The United States in Vietnam* (Dial Press, 1967), pp. 14-15.

and the influence of a few thousand wealthy landowners whose property for the most part was located in the Mekong Delta.³⁷ In addition, between 1929 and 1932, the French had liquidated the most important non-Communist opposition to their rule when a combination of the Tan Viet and the Viet Nam Quoc Dan Dang had risen against them. Despite the simultaneous suppression of Communist insurgents in Nghe-Tinh province in 1930–1, the ICP proved far more resilient than their fellow Vietnamese nationalists. Thus the economic base on which a collaborating nationalist elite might stand was exceedingly narrow, while politically the French repressions of the thirties and the Occupation of the early forties worked to the advantage of the Communists.

While these considerations suggest that the French presence in Southeast Asia would have to be drastically modified after 1945, one is not warranted to conclude immediately that a Communist-sponsored peasant revolution would necessarily triumph there ultimately. For the congeries of political forces existing in Vietnam that the Communists did not control—the Catholics, the Cao Dai, the Hoa Hao, and perhaps even the Buddhists—might have been welded together with other potentially anti-Communist forces to split the union of communism with nationalism. Thus, had the French seriously backed Bao Dai in 1947 and granted his demands for the unity and independence of Vietnam as they apparently debated doing, Cochin China might effectively have been denied to Ho Chi Minh and in the process the Cambodian monarchy preserved. Paris could have counted on the threat from the north to persuade Bao Dai to limit his claims to sovereignty in favor of a veiled French presence. However much one may admire the Communist-led Vietnamese Liberation Movement, it does not do justice to its achievement to assume its victory was somehow inevitable. In Malaya, where admittedly the Communists were in a more difficult situation for a variety of reasons than their counterparts in Vietnam, a crucial part of the final British success was their willingness to respect the independent power base of Tengku Abdul Rahman, head of the Alliance Party associating Malays with Chinese, in order to crush the insurgents. Perhaps the ‘Bao Dai formula’ would have failed whatever the French position, for as the preceding analysis showed the social structure there was not favorable to the French return. But one must be cautious not to confuse the political predispositions of a particular structure with a necessary historical outcome.

A comparison of Indochina with Indonesia is instructive at this point since the chief differences between the two areas seem to be more political than economic or social if one is interested in evaluating the possibilities for a Communist-led revolution there. For Indonesia in the 1930s had, if

³⁷ John T. McAlister, Jr., *Viet Nam: The Origins of Revolution* (Knopf, 1969), chap. 6; and Joseph Buttinger, *Vietnam: a Political History* (Praeger, 1968) chap. 9.

anything, a greater percentage of landless peasants than Indochina, while the Dutch plantations and Chinese merchant class effectively stifled the growth of an indigenous middle class.³⁸ Moreover, Communism had come to Indonesia earlier than to any other country of Asia and Africa, and had quickly made an important place for itself in local politics.

The obstacles to Communist success in Indonesia as compared to Indochina seem to me to have been essentially political. First, the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) showed very bad timing in the uprisings it staged. Whereas in Indochina it was especially the non-Communist nationalists who destroyed themselves in rising against the French before the Second World War, the PKI revolt of 1926–7 effectively set the Party back for over a decade while other nationalist organizations, more reluctant to use force, were gathering strength. During the war, the PKI entered into a United Front with other nationalists against both the Dutch and the Japanese. But their attempted coup against the Hatta–Sukarno Government in the fall of 1948, at the very moment a large Dutch force was preparing an offensive against the nationalists, earned them the perpetual mistrust of many of their erstwhile allies. Second, Tokyo's toleration of Indonesian nationalism during the Occupation denied the Communists hope of controlling through the underground resistance either the country's great nationalist hero Sukarno or, more important, the bulk of those Indonesians given military training first by the Dutch and then by the Japanese. After the defeat of Japan, therefore, non-Communist Indonesian nationalists enjoyed an autonomy in organizational and military terms unknown to their Indochinese counterparts. Finally, after a determined effort to reoccupy the Islands, the Dutch accepted United Nations, and especially American, pressure, and in 1949 conceded independence to the area. Had the Indonesians been obliged to fight as the Indochinese were, it is conceivable the PKI might have been resurgent.³⁹ To sum up this argument, Communism in Indonesia was not defeated by the predispositions of the country's social structure, which rather encouraged its development, so much as by a series of fortuitous political developments.

³⁹ I have been unable to find a comparative study of Communist organization in Indonesian and Vietnamese villages.

³⁸ George Kahin estimates that by 1925, perhaps half the families on Java and Madura (together accounting for two-thirds of the country's population) were landless and that this percentage increased during the 1930s. Françoise Cayrac-Blanchard puts the landless there at 60 percent of the population in the early 1970s. Apparently a combination of communal mutual aid, strong patron–client relations, and the existence of two opposed tendencies of Islam combined to discourage class conflict at the village level. See Kahin, *Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia* (Cornell 1952), pp. 17 ff; Cayrac-Blanchard, *Le parti communiste indonésien* (Colin, 1973) pp. 33–4; Clifford Geertz, *The Religion of Java* (Chicago, 1960), pp. 127 ff; Ruth McVey, 'The Social Roots of Indonesian Communism' (speech published by the Centre d'Etude du Sud-Est Asiatique et de l'Extrême-Orient, l'Université Libre de Bruxelles); and Rex Mortimer, 'Class, Social Cleavage, and Indonesian Communism', *Indonesia*, no. 8, October 1969 (Cornell).

Had the French been able to engineer a functionally similar set of circumstances—and it does not seem to me beyond the realm of the historically possible that this might have happened—Cochin China and Cambodia might have been kept from Communist control with relatively small involvement on the part of the French and Americans.

There is a third type of situation in which a nationalist elite may be expected to oppose the colonial order on the basis of its local power position. This is the case of a national manufacturing bourgeoisie whose rise displaces the previously dominant elite in the name of tariffs to protect their young industries and for the sake of more rational agricultural production to feed the urban proletariat and increase rural demand for manufactured goods. Such a situation is illustrated by India. Here the alliance of the peasantry and the rising urban bourgeoisie brought about by Gandhi after 1920 through the vehicle of the National Congress Party created the force which eventually would evince the British.⁴⁰ The roots of this manufacturing bourgeoisie lay in the 1850s in the textile mills of Bombay and the jute industry of Calcutta. The *Swadeshi* movement beginning in 1905 over the British decision to partition Bengal involved a boycott of British goods in favor of domestic products, so demonstrating to this bourgeoisie in tangible terms the utility of nationalism. But the period of greatest expansion for this group began after the First World War when the British permitted the first important protective tariffs for India since it was increasingly the Japanese who were profiting from the subcontinent's low custom duties.⁴¹

At the same time the Indian manufacturing bourgeoisie was gaining strength, Gandhi was effectively extending the nationalist creed to the Indian peasantry. His greatest success initially was his 1920 program of 'full non-cooperation' with the constitution of 1919, but he gained still wider support in the early 1930s with his world famous campaigns of civil disobedience. However much Gandhi may have inveighed against the evils of the modern world, preached the rights of Untouchables, and promoted the interests of factory workers, Barrington Moore, Jr. seems correct to stress that his respect for property rights and insistence on non-violence gave the Indian industrialists no serious cause for alarm. At the same time Gandhi provided the ideological vehicle whereby the peasantry and manufacturing elite could join forces.⁴²

Indian specialists seem agreed that had the British not granted independence to the subcontinent within the first few years after the end of

⁴⁰ The significance this alliance for the political development of India is given central importance by Barrington Moore, Jr., *Social Origins of Dictatorship: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World* (Beacon, 1966), pp. 370 ff.

⁴¹ Angus Maddison, *Class Structure and Economic Growth: India and Pakistan since the Moghuls* (George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1971), chap. 3.

⁴² Moore, *op. cit.*, pp. 373 ff.

the Second World War, there would have been a revolution.⁴³ The Congress Party declared its militancy clearly in its 1942 Quit India Resolution, and the incidents of the interwar years combined with scattered disturbances in the military immediately after the surrender of Japan to make British minds turn once again to memories of the Great Mutiny of 1857. India would be done with the British.

Nevertheless, it is not clear that the organization of interests which ultimately brought India to independence would have maintained their hold on the country had an intense revolution of long duration been necessary. For not only was there the serious problem of minorities, especially the Muslims, there was a destitute class of peasants as well whom revolution would doubtless rouse to political activity. An official study of landholding in India (exclusive of Pakistan) in 1953-4, found that 23 percent of the rural households were landless, another 24 percent owned less than one acre, while 14 percent owned between 1 and 2.5 acres.⁴⁴ One may legitimately speculate in these circumstances on the fate of the 3.5 percent of the population which was reported (in what was certainly an underestimate of their property since the census was part of an effort to reduce large holdings) to own 36 percent of the land. As it was:

India has been governed since independence by a coalition consisting of the bureaucratic-military establishment, which implements policy, the big business groups, which have backed Congress financially, the rank and file politicians who mainly represent the rural squirearchy and richer peasants, and the intellectuals who articulate policy . . . [Nehru] was a leftist flanked by conservatives who knew from experience that it was not worth opposing progressive resolutions or legislation which were not likely to be implemented.⁴⁵

The case of India presents us, then, with a nationalist elite which would surely have hesitated long before launching into revolution but which gave every indication of pursuing such a course should the British prove obstinate and refuse to grant independence. It is to the credit of British statesmen that they could view the changed status of such an important possession so realistically and attempt as best they could to harmonize their interests with the future of a country which for over a century had been the base of their foreign policy from the Mediterranean to China.

The foregoing case studies offer examples of a spectrum of colonial responses to the maintenance of European rule after 1945, ranging from militant revolutionary opposition to the call for independence within the framework of a continuing European presence. They are not intended to establish rigid, predictive models for the likelihood of colonial uprisings,

⁴³ See, among others, Francis Hutchins, *India's Revolution: Gandhi and the Quit India Movement* (Harvard, 1973).

⁴⁴ Maddison, *op. cit.*, p. 106; Moore, *op. cit.*, pp. 368 ff.

⁴⁵ Maddison, *op. cit.*, p. 89; Moore, *op. cit.*, pp. 385 ff.

but to establish instead a heuristic typology. The factor which this study suggests should be most closely analyzed is the place the momentarily predominant elite occupies in respect to the double challenge it faces: from the international system and from local rivals. Import-export elites and traditional rulers are threatened in both respects and are well-advised to moderate their nationalist demands in order to assure continued foreign support for their regimes. On the other hand, a national manufacturing elite allied with rural forces representing more than a handful of great landlords is clearly more able to press its autonomous claims. But it must avoid if possible the radical suggestion to push for an all-out war of national liberation since it should recognize that the radicals intend to take advantage of popular mobilization not only to oust the foreigners, but to create a revolution from below and be done with them as well. By this same token, the most militant elite will be one which fears no local rivals—since none exists to any politically significant degree—and at the same time sees the outsiders with whom it must deal as the inveterate enemy of its most essential demands.

In this respect, Algeria and Indochina were idiosyncratic in the challenge they posed to France. These two colonies simply had no genuine parallels in the British experience. Kenya might be thought comparable to Algeria, but in essential respects this was not the case. For how could this relatively insignificant East African land be the equivalent to the British of what Algeria meant to France: the home of more than 2 percent of the national population; the location of badly needed petroleum resources; and a strategic outpost of France whose capital, Algiers, was only 500 miles southwest of Marseille? It was largely because Kenya was so unimportant that the British could arrange for the sale of the European farms at full value to the Africans and so create, virtually overnight, an export elite on whom they could base their post-independence relations.⁴⁶ In Algeria, on the contrary, the incomparably more powerful settler presence negated any attempt to create a politically important Muslim bourgeoisie. Nor could the French copy the example of the Republic of South Africa and cut themselves off from their North African territory. This was not because of 'centralizing traditions', but because, unlike South Africa, Algeria was far too poor for a small minority of the population to maintain its rule without constant aid from the outside. For these reasons—which had to do with Algeria and not with France—withdrawal was especially difficult. Had the French had the experience and institutions of the British it is not evident they would have responded to the crisis more ably.

The comparison between Indochina and Malaya is more ambiguous. But the relatively greater strength of the non-Communists after 1945 in Malaya combined with a British willingness to work with them to weld

⁴⁶ Colin Leys, *op. cit.*

them into a nationalist force capable of beating the insurgents. The British started with more advantages than the French and worked with them more skillfully.

The one celebrated instance where British policy failed was with Nasser. This is generally interpreted in the literature as a release of pent-up emotions over Britain's declining world role, but perhaps instead it is the one case where London shared the bad fortune plaguing Paris and found itself up against an anti-colonial leader with whom it could not strike a bargain. Indeed the major setback to Britain in decolonization occurred in relation to its 'informal empire' in the Middle East. The first challenge had come when Prime Minister Mossadegh nationalized the British petroleum holdings in Iran. 'He had never been very amenable to reason, and lately it had been necessary to humor him as with a fractious child', writes then Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden in his memoirs about this 'megalomaniac', 'Old Mossy'.⁴⁷ In this confrontation, Britain had ultimately got its way, but not before being obliged to call the United States to its rescue and paying a certain price in the form of a condominium agreement on Iranian oil.

Nasser's seizure of the Suez Canal in 1956, three years after the fall of Mossadegh, seemed if anything more menacing to Eden who had now become prime minister. 'A man with Colonel Nasser's record could not be allowed to "have his thumb on our windpipe",' Eden declared:

Some say that Nasser is not Hitler or Mussolini. Allowing for a difference in scale, I am not so sure. He has followed Hitler's pattern, even to concentration camps and the propagation of *Mein Kampf* among his officers. He has understood and used Goebbels' pattern of propaganda in all its lying ruthlessness. Egypt's strategic position increases the threat to others from any aggressive militant dictatorship there.⁴⁸

The greatest threat Nasser represented was the undermining of the weak, Western-oriented Arab elites of the Middle East—Libya, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon as well as the sheikdoms of the Persian Gulf—so monopolizing the region's petroleum reserves. Eden felt that this also would permit Russia a foothold in the area, and even endanger the British territories in East and Central Africa.⁴⁹ Whatever the reality of this belief, Suez—and indeed the decline of British fortunes in the Middle East altogether—was the most damaging of its global withdrawals.

It is, then, not enough to compare policy formulation in London and Paris in order to explain the pattern of postwar European decolonization. Whatever the advantages held by the British in terms of international place, domestic political institutions, and the legacy of imperial traditions and

⁴⁷ Anthony Eden, *op. cit.*, p. 230. ⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 474, 481.

⁴⁹ Elizabeth Monroe, *Britain's Moment in the Middle East, 1914–1956* (Johns Hopkins, 1963) chap. 4; Harold Macmillan, *Riding the Storm: 1956–1959* (Macmillan, 1971), chap. 16.

procedures, a comparative analysis must be made as well of the colonial situations over which the Europeans ruled after 1945 in order to conceptualize this historical process adequately. For the pattern of decolonization was decisively shaped by the character of the nationalist elites the European presence helped to produce in their overseas territories.

CONCLUSION

This essay has maintained that if a host of factors conspired to force an end to European overseas empires after 1945, the Europeans could nevertheless significantly influence this process in most cases by their attention to grooming their successors. For virtually every nationalist movement harbored a civil war whose divisions allowed the colonial authority a strong voice in local affairs. By deciding with whom they would negotiate, by what procedure they would institutionalize the transfer of power, and over what territory the new regime would rule, Paris and London decisively influenced the course of decolonization.

In order to exploit the genuine power they had in these circumstances, the Europeans had to have the experience and the institutions to maneuver adroitly in the colonial setting, and the political wisdom to respect the limits of their abilities, to know what they could not hope to accomplish. In this respect, the British had substantial advantages over the French in four regards: their imperial traditions had given them a preference for 'informal empire' and had furnished them with an established procedure for the devolution of power; their close links with the United States let them view the changing world order with guarded optimism; their domestic political institutions demonstrated an ability to handle issues of this magnitude with relative dispatch; and, except for Suez (where intervention by the United States and the Soviet Union could be blamed) their use of force was restricted to situations where it could be realistically expected to achieve reasonable ends.

If it is possible to conceptualize separately these influences on the process of decolonization, it is nonetheless their close interrelationship which becomes apparent as soon as a specific case is studied. Consider, for example, the conflicts in French Algeria and Indochina. Even though, as we have seen, the social structures of these two countries predisposed them to a revolutionary break with France after 1945, it was surely not inevitable that local factors would preclude a peaceful devolution of power: France was not locked into conflict by some iron law of structural necessity. In regard to Indochina, the French might have decided not to return in force to Southeast Asia, but to make arrangements with Ho Chi Minh for the orderly transfer of sovereignty with special safeguards for certain French interests in the area. Or, alternatively, Paris might have pursued the 'Bao

Dai formula' more realistically and so had a reasonable chance of preserving its authority in a new form in Cochin China and Cambodia. By way of comparison, British Malaya and especially the Netherlands East Indies had structural predispositions roughly comparable to Indochina, yet a combination of political factors discouraged Communist takeovers there.

A similar argument can be made for Algeria. In retrospect, it appears evident that Algeria would have become independent of France sometime after 1945. The economic, social and political history of the country was tending in this direction since the turn of the century, and international events served to confirm the process. But is it absurd to speculate that had the French been able to maneuver more wisely—had, for example, the Algerian Statute of 1947 been a genuine home-rule bill somewhat along the lines proposed *at the time* by the Muslim bourgeoisie and the French Communist Party—the base might have been laid for a ruling elite there eager to work in collaboration with Paris?

In other words, it is conceivable that the Indochinese and Algerian revolutions might have been avoided. Although an analysis of the structural features of the two countries internationally and internally shows them to have been particularly prone to a revolutionary break with France after 1945, the room for political artistry in the immediate aftermath of the war seems to have been adequate to permit other developments. Admittedly all things were not possible: a political break with France was well-nigh inevitable. But the form this break would take and, in consequence, the nationalist elite independence would tend to confirm in power, might have been different. That these alternate paths were not taken by the French sends us back to the other factors under consideration: to their imperial traditions, to their international place after 1945, and to the logic of their political institutions and the opinions of their political elites.

The multiplicity of factors entering into the course of postwar decolonization calls forth a last remark. There can be the terrible temptation to try to simplify such a multiform process, either by exalting one consideration over all others or by trying to force the particular case into what seems to be a general movement or pattern. Certainly decolonization acquired an international momentum, and it is possible to isolate certain variables which seem to have had a marked influence on its progress regardless of time or place. But the various colonial areas were not dominoes responding to some inevitable 'historical tidal wave of nationalism' any more than the European governments had a set response to every colonial challenge whatever its nature. Nationalism in each case had its local pedigree and its own internal tensions composed of unique constellations of class, ethnic and regional alignments. So, too, different governments in Paris and London acted in noticeably different fashions. In this sense, there were

multiple decolonizations, whose discontinuities, ambiguities, and uniqueness must be respected, however much they may interfere with the desire to reduce history to a crystalline pattern, to discover a single formula which makes sense of its complexity. If this essay has been an attempt to arrive at some general propositions about postwar decolonization, it has also been written with the knowledge that from the position of the specific case, generalizations always run a bit too smoothly. But the model for the analysis of the end of European overseas empire may be taken from the rich and ever-growing literature on its earlier expansion. Here particular case studies are informed by a generally recognized body of more comprehensive propositions which in turn are constantly reevaluated in light of new information. The historiography of decolonization today lacks this fruitful exchange. Its present task is to elaborate a comparative framework for historical analysis and so to tie specific cases to the general movement of European decolonization.