Determinants of French colonial expansion in Southeast Asia, 1880-93

Deniz Kocak

Follow this and additional works at: https://digital.car.chula.ac.th/arv

Part of the Asian Studies Commons

Recommended Citation
DOI: 10.58837/CHULA.ARV.20.1.8
Available at: https://digital.car.chula.ac.th/arv/vol20/iss1/9

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Chulalongkorn Journal Online (CUJO) at Chula Digital Collections. It has been accepted for inclusion in Asian Review by an authorized editor of Chula Digital Collections. For more information, please contact ChulaDC@car.chula.ac.th.
Determinants of French colonial expansion in Southeast Asia, 1880–93

Deniz Kocak

Abstract

The essay analyzes and highlights the motives, determinants and scopes of three French influential actor groups: The French government, geographic societies and colonial associations, and the “men on the spot”. While the government faced domestic struggles and set the colonial agenda, the geographic societies and colonial associations promoted French expansionist imperial rule, and the men on the spot, who represented France at the periphery, shaped the expansion by their own interests and ideas. The aim of this essay is to point out that the French colonial policy under the government of Jules Ferry did not follow any well elaborated concept, but rather served as a political instrument to overcome domestic struggle and to consolidate republican rule in France. Secondly, the colonial seizure of “Indochina” was a result of an interconnection between three major actor groups, who partial mutually constrained each other in their actions, and their respective interests.

Introduction

A French presence in Vietnam goes back to the seventeenth century when French missionaries established Catholic missions. Over the next centuries, the French informal influence on the Annamite court in Hué gradually intensified due to military assistance, lucrative trade agreements, and missionary work. When in the nineteenth century the Annamite ruler Tu-Duc ordered a persecution of Catholic missionaries because of assumed subversion, the French government under the reign of Napoleon III decided to attack the city of Tourane in 1858. The following seizure of Saigon by French troops and the formation of the French colony of...
Cochinchina in Southern Vietnam in 1867, however, were just the prelude to a French presence in mainland Southeast Asia. Whereas European power politics in the 1870s briefly interrupted the formal French expansionist advance in Southeast Asia, the emerging French Third Republic took up the colonial heritage of the Second French Empire and continued the territorial occupation.

To understand the French "engine of expansion" in Southeast Asia during the early stages of the Third Republic, it is necessary to examine French domestic policies, the motives of the leading statesmen and other influential actors in the metropole in France, as well as the executing French forces at the periphery in mainland Southeast Asia. At the government level, Jules Ferry as French prime minister (1880—1 and 1883—5), driven by domestic issues such as the stabilization of the republic and diplomatic tensions between the European powers, formed the political agenda for the ultimate French occupation of Vietnam. The geographic societies and colonial associations, especially the Société de Géographie and the Parti Colonial, as the bearer of the imperial thought and the "unofficial mind of imperialism" in Andrew's phrase, had a decisive impact on the extent of French expansion. Besides their influence on the colonial agenda through networking and lobbying, they also supported the resident agents at the periphery to enhance the colonial process. Finally, the individual actors at the periphery formed the link between the government's agenda and its implementation overseas. However, these men on the spot did not only execute their given instructions, but also created and influenced the process of expansion on their own, as will be described on the basis of Jules Harmand's and Auguste Pavie's actions.

The government level

In the wake of the lost war against Prussia 1870–1, the great economic depression that hit its peak in France in the 1880s, and the domestic struggle for the consolidation of the Third French Republic, Jules Ferry tried to compensate for the territorial loss of Alsace-Lorraine, and ease French economic weakness by annexation of overseas territories.
According to his speech at the Assemblée Nationale on 28 July 1885 and his 1890 published book *Le Tonkin et la Mère-Patri*, Ferry’s motives for a French colonial overseas expansion rested on three main pillars: for the economy, for geo-political reasons, and for the sake of civilization.\(^5\)

... la polititique d’expansion coloniale est un système politique et économique; ... on pouvait rattacher ce système à trois ordres d’idées: à des idées économiques, à des idées de civilisation de la plus haute portée, et à des idées d’ordre politique et patriotique. \(^6\)

By the Prussian annexation of the departments of Alsace and Lorraine, France lost an important supply of commodities, especially coal and iron ore needed by French industry. Furthermore, due to the economic crisis in Europe, most European countries established protective tariffs and trade barriers which seriously weakened French exports. Ferry argued that annexing overseas territories would enable France to establish new markets for French products to counter the recent export deficit and to gain natural resources abroad: “... la fondation d’une colonie, c’est la création d’un débouché.... le lien colonial subsiste entre la mère patrie ... et les colonies qu’elle a fondées, pour que la prédominance économique accompagne la prédominance politique.”\(^7\) The new colonial empire, as he concluded, would serve as a security for the future of France.\(^8\)

Les missionnaires et les premiers voyageurs qui ont écrit sur le Tonkin signalent tous la richesse de ses mines. L’expedition du Mekong a recueilli ... des renseignements intéressants, desquels il ressort que tout le bassin du fleuve Rouge, tant en Chine qu’au Tonkin, abonde en gisements de toute nature.\(^9\)

Particularly the Tonkin region and the southern Chinese province of Yunnan appeared to be profitable for Ferry due to their abundance of resources and potential as a market. “Le Yunnan est une des provinces les plus riches de la Chine; ... le Yunnan est destiné à être le centre d’un commerce actif.”\(^10\) Ferry’s argument about economic benefits in overseas territories was mainly influenced by the French economist Paul Leroy-Beaulieu who published an essay ‘De la colonisation chez les peuples moderne’ in 1874. Leroy-Beaulieu asserted that the investment of French
financial assets in newly founded colonies would foster economic growth and establish consumer markets for French manufactured goods. In addition, the colonies could provide raw materials for France.

Thus we should congratulate ourselves on the expatriation of capital toward well-organized, prosperous colonies; this capital is not lost; it is rather multiplied; each one gains from its more productive employment on new soils; the colonies, the mother country ... draw considerable advantages from it.¹¹

Due to new markets abroad, overproduction as well as unemployment in France would be diminished and social harmony might be achieved.¹²

Following the defeat against Prussia and the loss of Alsace and Lorraine, there seemed one way to balance the value of the lost provinces and to overcome the misery. "Must we hypnotise ourselves with the lost provinces and should we not take compensations elsewhere?"¹³ Jules Ferry was quite aware of the fact, that France was neither military, economically, or demographically capable of starting another war against the newly founded German Reich just because of two provinces. Therefore, Ferry opted for a political reconciliation with the Germans, the so called "rapprochement," and rejected French claims for revenge.¹⁴ By annexing overseas territories, however, France would compensate for the loss of its provinces and gain strategic, military power. The distant occupied regions could serve as naval and military bases for the French fleet and army to protect French interests abroad and to compete with rival European powers. These promising plans, as Ferry argued, would not only once again rebuild the French self image as a "Grande Nation," but also function as a security guarantee for the future.

Je dis que la politique coloniale de la France, que la politique d'expansion coloniale, celle qui nous a fait aller, sous l'Empire, à Saïgon, en Cochinchine, celle qui nous a conduits en Tunisie, celle qui nous a amenés à Madagascar, je dis que cette politique d'expansion coloniale s'est inspirée d'une vérité sur laquelle il faut pourtant appeler un instant votre attention: à savoir qu'une marine comme la nôtre ne peut pas se passer, sur la surface des mers.... Regardez la carte du monde ... et dites-moi si ces étapes

---

¹¹
¹²
¹³
¹⁴
de l’Indochine, de Madagascar, de la Tunisie ne sont pas des étapes nécessaires pour la sécurité de notre navigation?\textsuperscript{15}

It was furthermore Ferry’s argument that recovering the leading role among European nations was possible for France only through an effective colonial expansion. Andrew described Ferry’s notion very well when he stated that the “colonial expansion outside Europe was the road to greatness inside Europe.”\textsuperscript{16} In addition, due to rising rivalry among European powers, it was necessary to act immediately and engage in the Middle East and the Orient. Missing the opportunity to engage in colonial expansion would mean a decay of the French nation.\textsuperscript{17}

Rayonner sans agier, sans se mêler aux affaires du monde ... comme une aventure toute expansion vers l’Afrique ou vers l’Orient, vivre de telle sorte, pour une grande nation ... c’est abdiquer ... c’est descendre du premier rang au troisième ou au quatrième.\textsuperscript{18}

With his colonial plans, Jules Ferry provoked resentments among French politicians. Especially Georges Clemenceau, Jules Ferry’s domestic counterpart and leader of the Radical-socialist party, perceived Ferry’s colonial agitation as subservience towards the Germans. For Clemenceau, the loss of Alsace and Lorraine should not be accepted.\textsuperscript{19} Moreover, Clemenceau argued that engagements in overseas territories would weaken and overstretch the French army’s defense capabilities in Europe in case of renewed aggression by the eastern neighbor. “Je dis que nous sommes arrivés à la limite des efforts que nous pouvons faire sans compromettre notre mobilisation et unie à notre sécurité.”\textsuperscript{20} Furthermore, Clemenceau claimed that colonial expansion could lead to a serious rivalry with other colonial powers, especially with Britain, and might trigger an armed conflict.\textsuperscript{21}

Yet another motive in Ferry’s argument was the “moral mandatory for expansion” in overseas territories, the so called “mission civilisatrice.”\textsuperscript{22} This concept of colonial justification can be traced back to the French revolutionary years and even beyond to the seventeenth century, when French scholars turned their attention especially to religious vindications for colonialism. However, during the emergence of Jacobinic thought in France, the
colonial proponents’ notions altered to the idea of the equality of man and the duty of the civilized to free the unfree from despotism and savagery.

Il faut dire ouvertement qu’en effet les races supérieurs ont un droit vis-à-vis des races inférieures.... Je répète qu’il y a pour les races supérieures un droit, parce qu’il y a un devoir pour elles. Elles ont le devoir de civiliser les races inférieurs.²³

Therefore, Ferry condemned the Spanish for enslaving the Native Americans in the sixteenth century because they failed to fulfill the civilizing mandatory of the superior race. Though, the French could conduct the task of civilizing the inferior races in Africa and beyond. Moreover, as he claimed, they abandoned an unjust polity, pacified Algeria, and implemented morality and justice.²⁴

Ces devoirs, messieurs, ont été souvent méconnus dans l’histoire des siècles précédents, et certainement, quand les soldats et les explorateurs espagnols introduisaient l’esclavage dans l’Amérique centrale, ils n’accomplissaient pas leur devoir d’hommes de race supérieure. Mais, de nos jours, je soutiens que les nations européennes s’acquittent avec largeur, avec grandeur et honnêteté, de ce devoir supérieur de civilisation.... Est-ce que quelqu’un peut nier qu’il y a plus de justice, plus d’ordre matériel et moral, plus d’équité, plus de vertus sociales dans l’Afrique du Nord depuis que la France a fait sa conquête? Quand nous sommes allés à Alger pour détruire la piraterie, et assurer la liberté du commerce dans la Méditerranée.²⁵

Although the idealized French sense of mission should foster progress, equality, and prosperity in all “civilized” territories, this colonial ideology soon turned out to produce a scattered colonial empire, with each territory moving at its own pace, rather than a prosperous empire with equal rights for its citizens. This discrepancy between idealized rhetoric and French colonial practice even overburdened the French socialists when they came to power in the 1930s under the leadership of Léon Blum.²⁶ Alice Conklin therefore asserts that:

Europeans ... masked their baser motives for colonies—greed, national pride, the quest for power—in claims to civilize the
“natives” beyond their borders. They thus seduced the masses, and even themselves, into supporting colonization as a force for good.27

Besides Jules Ferry’s official justifications for overseas expansion, other domestic causes had a decisive impact on Ferry’s colonial policy. Due to the political struggles between republicans and conservatives about the new French constitution in the late 1870s, Jules Ferry aimed to stabilize the republic-friendly middle class against the proponents of restoration and monarchical rule by announcing financial benefits through colonial trade. Moreover, colonial expansion would relieve political as well as social frictions within French society and rally the French people around the flag. To sum up, Ferry adopted the idea of colonial expansion and continued the campaign in Tonkin out of pragmatic reasons and for the sake of republican stability in France. Even Jules Ferry’s dismissal in spring 1885, engineered by the Radical Socialists and the Boulangistes as a result of the Lang Son incident in Tonkin, did not weaken the process of colonial expansion. The opposition’s criticism of Ferry’s colonial policy from the left and the right was not based on any genuine concern for the safety of French borders or French soldiers losing their lives abroad, but rather domestically motivated to served the opposition groups’ respective political interests.28

Geographic societies and colonial associations

The geographic societies and colonial associations in the French Third Republic can be counted among the main promoters of French imperial rule and colonial expansion. Since the early 1870s, shortly after the French defeat in the Franco-Prussian war, French geographic societies propagated imperialistic ideas. In particular, the Société de Géographie, which was founded in 1821 in Paris, played a crucial role in French colonial agitation. Originating from an intellectual movement, the society soon recruited members among scholars, high-ranking civil servants, the military forces, as well as agents from commerce, industry, and trade. The geographic society created a stage where academic interests in exploring undiscovered areas were linked to the “mission civilisatrice,” and to economic
interests striving for financial profits. However, as Aldrich states, from the second half of the 1880s military and strategic aims became equally important as well.\textsuperscript{29}

Messieurs, la Providence nous a dicté l’obligation de connaître la Terre et d’en faire la conquête. Cet ordre surprenant est un des devoirs impérieux... Ce pionnier de la civilisation... qui... prépare les voies à la colonisation,... n’est-il pas un de nos plus précieux champions, un de nos plus vaillants soldats?\textsuperscript{30}

The speech by Roncière, at that time president of the Société de Géographie, exemplifies the mindset of the societies’ members, who idealized the hazardous adventurer conquering for the sake of France and its republican values.\textsuperscript{31}

According to these expectations, the society sponsored explorers in their fields of research, mapped natural resources in overseas regions, published travelogues, and organized lectures to promote the colonial movement in France.\textsuperscript{32} Similar societies, such as the Union Coloniale Francaise, founded in 1893, and the Comité de l’Africe Francaise, founded in 1890, campaigned for their respective aims through publications and organized lectures. The societies were tightly linked with each other and shared several members in common. For example, Eugène Etienne, one of the main colonial proponents in pre-war France and co-founder of the Parti Colonial, held several chairs.\textsuperscript{33}

The Parti Colonial emerged in the early 1890s and served as a reservoir for the various and heterogeneous geographical and colonial societies in France. However, the Parti Colonial should not be understood as a modern political party, but rather as a pressure group consisting of businessmen, lawyers, politicians, publicists, and members of the military. Although the deputies’ membership was cross-factional, most of the deputies derived from the centre of the political spectrum. According to Andrew, in contrary to the previous associations, the Parti Colonial was the first colonial movement in France with a coherent appearance and an actual colonial agenda. Despite their relatively few members in the early 1890s, the Parti Colonial and its parliamentary representation, the Groupe Colonial de la Chambre, founded in 1892, had a decisive impact on the government and public opinion by lobbying and by agenda-setting. By presenting the colonial expansion as a question
of national prestige—prestige that barely existed after the military defeats in the last decades and the economic decline—the Parti Colonial and its supporters gained increasing support from deputies and the public. Furthermore, in the wake of the soaring rivalry in Africa and Asia with European powers, especially Britain, it was argued that French overseas colonial policy was ultimately French foreign policy with its European neighbors and therefore it touched the essential interests of the French.  

The men on the spot

The spectrum of French actors at the periphery comprised traders, researchers, colonial officials, the military, and simple adventurers whose motives and behavior were often obscure. However, Ronald Hyam argues that the general motives of these actors, besides the pursuit of their own interests, can be made out. Traders and businessmen were after financial benefits, whereas researchers and adventurers, who often were financially supported by colonial and geographic societies, sought fame in their respective field of science, knowledge about indigenous tribes, and undiscovered territories. The French military, branded by the defeat in the Franco-Prussian war, longed for military victories against outgunned enemies abroad to regain self-confidence. "Quand elle [the military] n'avait pas à guerroyer en Europe. Elle poussait à quelque expédition lointaine, pour le besoin de s'agiter." These actors at the periphery, the so-called "men on the spot," functioned as a linkage between the metropole and the periphery. In this crucial position the men on the spot had discretionary powers to a certain degree at their disposal and influenced the information about the processes at the periphery. Although they were accountable to the government for their actions and had limited decision-making powers over the overall strategic agenda, they shaped the process of expansion by their own interests and ideas. As Nicholas Tarling puts it, "local officials tended to go beyond their instructions or even act in defiance of restraints by superiors." Jean Dupuis, for instance, a French trader located at the Red River, claimed in the 1860s that French rule extended up to the Chinese province of Yunnan in order to facilitate his business
with the Chinese. When Vietnamese officials prohibited his trade within their territories, Dupuis seized Hanoi with a fistful of mercenaries in 1873. Against the French government’s orders, the residing French governor in Saigon, Admiral Dupré, an advocate for the extension of French rule, ordered Francis Garnier to assist Dupré in his struggle against the Vietnamese troops in Hanoi. This episode of defying orders from Paris by French authorities at the periphery ended with the French withdrawal from Hanoi, but in exchange the Vietnamese ceded the whole Cochinchina region to the French.39

Jules Harmand and Auguste Pavie shaped the French presence in Southeast Asia by their actions even more than Dupuis. Jules Harmand first travelled to Cochinchina in 1866 and was a member of Garnier’s expedition corps in the early 1870s. After his explorations along the Mekong River from 1874 to 1877, Harmand resided in Bangkok as French consul.40 During his employment, Harmand generated two strategies to strengthen the French influence on the Southeast Asian peninsula. Firstly, Siam’s economic connection to Cochinchina should be intensified by a telegraph cable reaching from Bangkok to Saigon and a channel through the Isthmus of Kra. Both projects should be conducted by French companies to roll back the British influence on Siam and the Malay region. Secondly, Harmand suggested establishing a French protectorate in Luang Prabang in order to prevent the British expanding their influence from Burma to Upper Laos, and finally to the Chinese province of Yunnan. Above all, France should control the tributary realms of Annam to build a barrier against British approaches in this region.

Du côté du Luang-Prabang, la question de frontières ... réglée à notre avantage, préparerait aussi notre action sur ce Royaume si important, destiné, dans mon opinion, à arrêter l’expansion et influence Anglais vers des territoires qui doivent être un jour Français.41

The Quai d’Orsay thereupon accepted Harmand’s suggestions and integrated them into their guidelines for the following years.42

In recognition of Harmand’s services, the Quai d’Orsay promoted him in June 1883 to the post of the commissaire général civil in Hanoi. Despite the governments’ explicit orders not to
extend the controlled possessions, Harmand annexed the province of Binh-Thuan to secure the borders of Cochinchina against Siamese influence and to provide new areas of settlement at the lower reaches of the Mekong delta.

J'ai fait un cadeau à la Cochinchine de la grande province du Binh-Thuan ... la Cochinchine aura une frontière mieux déterminée.... Je vais pouvoir ... reprendre avec les princes du Laos et de Luang-Prabang les négociations que j'avais entamées à Bangkok et ouvri aux Annamites l'accès de la vallée du Mékong.\textsuperscript{43}

As a consequence of frictions about his policies with the local military administration and the government in Paris, however, Harmand was forced to leave his post in December 1883. Even after his dismissal Harmand still justified his actions and agitated for further enlargement of Vietnamese (meaning French) territorial influence. In particular, Harmand insisted that the French occupation of Annam only interrupted the process of Vietnamese expansion in mainland Southeast Asia and that France, as Annam's legitimate legal successor, should pursue this process.\textsuperscript{44}

Auguste Pavie came to Southeast Asia during his military service in the French marine. After war against Prussia, Pavie left the military and was engaged on the construction of a telegraph cable from Bangkok to Saigon. According to Tuck, Pavie became an explorer as a result of boredom and his thirst of adventure. Through several publications for the Société de Géographie as a cartographer, and personal contacts with the governor of Cochinchina, Le Myre de Vilers, Pavie soon received an offer to act as French vice-consul in Luang Prabang.\textsuperscript{45} Similar to Harmand, Pavie perceived Vietnam and its tributary states as the coming French India and therefore he pursued a policy of integrating all countries of the Southeast Asian peninsula under French authority. He rejected the strategy of the Quai d'Orsay that wanted to delimit French rule along the Mekong River and advocated instead the annexation of the whole Mekong valley.

C'est le bassin du Mékong et non la rive gauche qui doit tomber un jour ... sous notre influence. On doit prévoir l'avenir et le réserver.... Il se peut que l'Angleterre mette la main sur le Siam.\textsuperscript{46}

As a vice-consul in Luang Prabang, he mapped the complete
region around Luang Prabang, verifying the economic profitability of Laos and finding evidence for Vietnamese tributary claims over Luang Prabang. Tributary claims and the concepts of boundaries not only differed between Siam and Vietnam, the two hegemonic powers on the Southeast Asian peninsula, as Osborne argues, but also between the European colonial powers and Southeast Asian countries. As to the Siamese case, the borders were not fixed but vague, porous, shifting and often just defined by natural obstacles such as hills and forests or by sacred places, with large stretches of territory unclaimed as no man’s land. Moreover, some domains overlapped, some rulers paid tribute to several authorities, and some tribes were not aware what state they were in; arrangements that were hardly comprehensible by European officials with their conception of fixed borders.

Pavie’s first mission from Luang Prabang to Tonkin in 1886–9 aimed at evaluating the amount of commodities in this region and extending French influence over the residing tribes. “Des missions, dont je fis partie, furent organisées pour parcourir les provinces troublées dans le but d’amener la soumission de ceux qui s’étaient armés.” During this first mission, Pavie not only subjugated several insurgent banditries and resisting tribes but also hindered a Siamese expedition corps from advancing into the Tonkin region. By “pacifying” the provinces against the “Pavillons Noirs” and other marauders, the French explorer especially relied on collaboration from resident tribal elites who were subordinated to a French supervisor but maintained their accustomed privileges and rights within the tribal hierarchy.

Le but de mes négociations ... était de l’amener sans humiliations à renoncer à l’occupation du pays.... Voici le Nam Ma; s’il y a danger du fait de rebelles, il commence ici.... Nous y installons un agent nouveau; il reçoit des ordres pour que sa conduite ne puisse pas nuire a nos intentions.

This technique of collaboration proved its worth in consolidating French rule over the Luang Prabang region and Tranh Ningh. “La nécessité s’étant montrée urgente, d’organiser des milices locales pour remplacer les Annamites.” Although Pavie could not present any proofs of legal claims to the Upper Lao regions’ tributary status towards Annam, he received honours from
his superiors:

Le mémoire que vous m'avez fait l'honneur de m'adresser le 5 juillet dernier, est un document géographique et politique de la plus haute importance.... Grâce à votre profonde connaissance de l'indochine et à votre infatigable activité. 56

Pavie's second mission in 1889 took place in the wake of increased rivalry between Britain and France in Southeast Asia. Since the Quai d'Orsay worried that British troops might confirm their presence in the north of Siam, they shifted the strategic agenda in favor of Pavie, with the aim of extending French rule over the whole Mekong valley. In consequence of the new official strategy, Auguste Pavie occupied Siamese garrisons along the Mekong valley in order to expand French influence. 57

After Pavie took up office as French consul in Bangkok in 1892, he vehemently campaigned for a military strike against Siam in view of increasing skirmishes between French and Siamese military units. The Paknam Incident in August 1893, when French warships sailed up the Chaophraya River and threatened Bangkok, followed by a treaty between Siam and France, was the sum of the French presence east of the Mekong and doomed Pavie's strategic vision of French rule over Siam to failure. 58

Conclusion

The occupation of Indochina during the French Third Republic was mostly completed in 1893, when Laotian territories were incorporated into the Indochinese Union created in 1887. French aspirations for economic and political benefits from holding colonies in Southeast Asia, however, were not fulfilled. Even the later formulated "mise en valeur coloniale" never became profitable in the case of Indochina. 59

This result shows that Jules Ferry had no complete and well elaborated concept for colonial expansion despite his three main lines of argument about economic and political necessities and the duty of the mission civilisatrice. His first and foremost political aim was to defend the French republic against monarchic restoration. Falling back on colonial agitation in order to generate a republican French nationalism showed Ferry's political pragmatism and
opportunism rather than any colonial passion. The ambitions and motives of the geographic societies and colonial associations derived mainly from profit seeking, scientific idealism, and nationalism. Despite their small memberships, they had a disproportionately high influence on the colonial process. In particular, the Société de Géographie and later on the Parti Colonial with their sponsorships of scientists and adventurers at the periphery, as well as propagation of the colonial idea to the French public, were the precursors of French colonial expansion. The men on the spot were certainly a crucial element of the colonial takeover. Acting with relative independence while on their missions, often backed up by the local French authorities and interest groups in the metropole, they explored the hinterland and subjugated the indigenous people under French rule. In this context Auguste Pavie, as one of the main French men on the spot in this region, created the preconditions for a further extension of French rule in Southeast Asia.

The roles of these different actors were so intertwined that it is impossible to identify one decisive factor in the French colonial expansion of the 1880s. French imperialism of this era was a "chaotic pluralism" of varied actors and varied motives rather than an elaborated and concerted campaign.

Notes


5 Jules Ferry, 'Le débat colonial [1885],' in Olivier Wieviorka and Christophe

6 Ferry, ‘Le Débat Colonial,’ p. 70.


10 Ferry, *Le Tonkin Et La Mère-Patrie*, p. 240.


15 Ferry, ‘Le débat colonial,’ p. 71.

16 Andrew, *The French colonialist movement*, p. 150.


18 Ferry, ‘Le débat colonial,’ p. 73.


22 Almost every colonial power justified their colonial expansion by the abolition of “misgoverned” states and realms, as Lord Salisbury stated at the Primrose League 1898: “You may roughly divide the nations of the world as the living and the dying.... There are communities that are not Christian ... and in these States disorganization and decay are advancing.... Undoubtedly we shall not allow England to be at a disadvantage in any rearrangement that may take place. On the other hand, we shall not be jealous if desolation and sterility are removed be the aggrandizement of a rival in regions to which our arms cannot extend.” Lord Salisbury, ‘The Primrose League,’ *The Times*, 5 May 1898.


Determinants of French colonial expansion in Southeast Asia


25 Jules Ferry, cited in Scholze et al., *Unter Lilienbanner Und Trikolor* e, p. 150.


Determinants of French colonial expansion in Southeast Asia

59 Wilder, ‘Framing Greater France between the wars,’ p. 203.
61 Hyam, *Britain’s Imperial Century*, p. 288.