Imperial Disposition

The Impact of Ideology on French Colonial Policy in Madagascar

1883-1896

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Chapter I. Introduction

“An irresistible movement is bearing the great nations of Europe towards the conquest of fresh territories. It is like a huge steeplechase into the unknown.”\(^1\)

--Jules Ferry

Empires share little with cathedrals. The old cities built cathedrals over generations. Sons placed bricks over those laid down by their fathers. These were the projects of a town, a people, or a nation. The design was composed by an architect who would not live to see its completion, carried through generations in the memory of a collective mind, and patiently imposed upon the world. Empires may be the constructions of generations, but they do not often appear to result from the persistent projection of a unified design.

Yet both empires and cathedrals have inspired religious devotion. In the late nineteenth century, the idea of empire took on the appearance of a transnational cult. Expansion of imperial control was deemed intrinsically valuable, not only as a means to power, but for the mere expression and propagation of the civilization of the conqueror. Empires acquired spiritual ambitions. But did imperial piety prompt expansion, as faith spurs the construction of the cathedral? Does ideology lay the foundation, raise the spires or, like stained glass, merely color the vision of the faithful? Many theorists have explored the origins of the imperial systems that came to dominate the world. Perhaps expansion was, as Ferry claimed, irresistible. Or perhaps the ideas he promoted played a

role. Those ideas passed through periods of challenge and ascendance—the difference in imperial action on both occasions illuminates the role of the ideology in expansion.

This essay compares French colonial policy in Madagascar in 1883-5 and 1894-6. In both 1883 and 1894, similar events on the island led to a diplomatic crisis. However, the ideological climate had changed substantially by the later date. The divergence indicates the extent and limits of the impact of ideology on policy. In the 1880s, questions of expansion provoked vitriolic debate. An anti-colonial backlash toppled ministries and briefly defined colonial policy. By the 1890s, the imperial concept dominated. Faith in the intrinsic value of the expansion of imperial control had captured the political mainstream and forced the anti-colonial opposition to the radical margins. The ideological change did not manifest in a designed, intentioned, and long-term “imperial project”. However, the divergent responses of the French government to similar stimuli in highly different ideological climates reveal how ideology impacts reactive policy decisions by molding the dispositions of the state.

The French Third is the colonial power examined here; it allows an effective study for several reasons. From 1883 to 1895, the Third Republic was a young, unsteady and newly reinvented political organism in which the legislature held considerable power. The assemblies were consulted on colonial decisions to a great extent; their assent was required for the release of funding to colonial expeditions. Often, the government would arrive with a proposition and a begging jar; at times, impetus originated in assemblies themselves. The records and composition of the assemblies can reveal how decisions were made, and under what rationale. Ideological considerations are often made explicit. The power of the Legislature, the practice of universal manhood suffrage, and the
formation within the assembly of a pro-colonial pressure group before the second Madagascar affair makes the Assembly an effective barometer of ideological change over time.

Madagascar, the colonized polity,\textsuperscript{2} is considered for three reasons. Due to its location and island nature, instability in Madagascar did not pose a security threat for any other contiguous French possession.\textsuperscript{3} Madagascar had limited strategic or commercial value that could not be obtained by a simple occupation of several, or indeed all, of its ports, particularly Diego-Suarez, rather than domination of the interior. A certain group within the assembly advocated this solution as more cost-effective than the invasion and occupation that ultimately occurred. Finally, and most crucially, French colonial expeditions occurred to Madagascar, in 1883 and in 1894. Both were spurred by highly events and dynamics on the island itself, yet ended with substantial different policy decisions and outcomes. The first expedition occurred during a famous period of “anti-colonial reaction,” and the second at a time of expansionary zeal. This distinction allows, to a certain extent, the isolation of ideology in order to study the manner, method, and extent of the impact of imperial ideology on colonial policy.

i. A Young Republic, Born in Chaos

The French Third Republic was conceived in defeat, born under siege, and threatened from within by domestic forces for nearly a decade after its founding. The state was subsequently characterized by fragility, volatility, and fierce nationalist instincts. In addition, the effective destruction of the executive branch following the

\begin{itemize}
\item [2] In 1883 and 1894, the island was not a united polity, due to the continued independence of various groups—however, it was formally treated as such by the European powers.
\item [3] Unlike Tunisia and Algeria, where raids and instability served as either the motive, pretext, or trigger for French invasion and the establishment of a protectorate.
\end{itemize}
surrender of Napoléon III at the Battle of Sedan engendered a regime dominated by a bicameral legislature.

The 19th century was not an inactive period in French political history. Between the defeat of Napoléon Bonaparte in 1815 and of his nephew Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte in 1870, France passed through two monarchies, a republic, and an empire. The alliance that vanquished the Grande Armée of Napoléon I imposed the Restoration of the Bourbon Monarchy in 1815. That regime survived until the July Revolution of 1830 replaced Charles X with the less conservative regime of Louis Philippe. A revolution that Paris in February 1848 sparked a continental conflagration that swept through the German States, Italian States, Habsburg Empire, and Switzerland. In France, citizen revolt overturned the July monarchy and installing the Second Republic. This regime instituted universal suffrage and held direct elections for the office of president. Louis-Napoléon, who had spent the majority of his life in exile harboring dreams of power, returned to the country immediately upon the outbreak of revolution. He won the presidential election by a crushing landslide. Based entirely on the force of his name and the Bonapartist movement, Louis-Napoléon received more than 5 million votes, nearly three quarters of all votes cast.

Louis-Napoléon sought to parlay his good fortune into long-term power. In 1850 he attempted to amend the Constitution to allow a second four-year term for the president. The National Assembly refused and, cognizant of the popularity of the Bonaparte name among the indigent, restricted suffrage with a three-year residency mandate. The law disenfranchised the itinerant poor, who had voted in large proportions for Louis-Napoléon. The law backfired, as Louis-Napoléon traveled the country
gathering popular support, staged a coup d'état on the 2\textsuperscript{nd} December 1851, and established his legitimacy with a referendum \textit{post facto}. In 1852, he declared himself emperor and inaugurated the Second Empire.

During his reign, the country enjoyed significant economic growth, rapid industrialization, some political liberalization in the 1860s, and a series of foreign wars. These included an expedition to Italy in 1849 that established Pope Pius IX as the independent ruler of the Papal States and rallied Catholic support for the French Emperor; the Crimean War (1854-1856) a war with Austria in 1859; an invasion of Vietnam in 1861; an ill-conceived, five-year attempt to install an Austrian archduke as the Emperor of Mexico (1862-1867); an invasion of Korea in 1866; and, finally, the fatal invasion of Prussia in 1870.\footnote{See, Roger Price. \textit{The French Second Empire: an anatomy of political power} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1944)}

The true origins of the Franco-Prussian war are subject to substantial debate.\footnote{Robert Howard Lord. \textit{The Origins of the War of 1870} (New York, Russell & Russell, 1966), or for another perspective, Emile Ollivier and George Ives. \textit{The Franco-Prussian War and Its Hidden Causes}, Boston, (Little: Brown and Company 1913)} The superficial the spark, began with a secession crisis in Spain. The Prussians supported a Hapsburg candidate of German ancestry, unnerving the French and instilling fears of encirclement. The protests of the French government coerced the withdrawal of the offending candidature; however, King Wilhelm refused a subsequent demand that Prussia renounce any and all future support for similar candidacies. Chancellor Otto von Bismarck leaked an edited version of the offending “Ems Telegram” to the press, causing
a furor and a supposed slight to French honor. In the grand tradition of the time, this could only be resolved by mass slaughter. Louis-Napoléon declared war in July.

The decision proved catastrophic. On the first of September 1870, Napoléon found himself encircled with little hope of escape. He surrendered with all of his forces. On September 4, the Assembly declared the creation of the Government of the National Defense, a republic born under siege, as the armies of Prussia and other German states surrounded Paris. Resistance did not long endure. The French surrendered under Bismarck’s terms—including a partial occupation lasting until the payment of an indemnity and the forfeiture of Alsace and Lorraine—and violently repressed a radical internal rebellion known as the Commune.

Monarchists dominated the new Assembly of the Third Republic. However, divisions within the monarchist movement, the influence of continued German occupation, and widespread belief, encouraged by Bismarck, that a restoration would renew hostilities, helped preserve the republican regime. The Constitutional laws of 1875 established a bi-cameral legislature with the power to select the executive. The two chambers were the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate. After elections in 1876, monarchists held a slight majority in the Senate, while republicans dominated the Chamber. The President, MacMahon, was a monarchist. On the 16 of May he dismissed

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6 Documented in detail in Deluns-Montaud, Pierre, et al., Les Originies diplomatiques de la guerre de 1870-1871, recueil de documents publié par le ministère des affaires étrangères, 10 vols, Gustave Ficker
the assemblies in an apparent bid for power, demanding new elections. The elections of 1877 delivered a crushing electoral victory to Republican parties and ensured the survival of the regime.

The chaotic formation of the Third Republic created a government dominated by a bi-cameral legislature composed of regional representatives directly elected by universal manhood suffrage. Following the end of MacMahon’s term in 1789, the Président de la République largely served as the figurehead, while the Président du conseil des ministres, commonly referred to as the Prime minister, formed the cabinet and conducted policy. The assemblies had, and often employed, the authority to overthrow a sitting ministry. Many issues of policy, including the allocation of funds for military expeditions, were debated and formed in the legislative bodies, particularly in the more raucous and more prominent Chamber of Deputies.

ii. Development of French Imperial Ideology

While an imperial ideology does not appear to have exerted a substantial political influence until the 1880s—perhaps due to the weakness of the country in the first decade of the Third Republic—early manifestations of French imperial ideology were apparent by at least the dawn of the Third Republic. The Geographic Movement served as an intellectual precursor to the ideas of the “civilizing mission”. The first Society dates to 1821, but did not capture the popular interest until the 1870s. Various philosophers of the movement began to develop arguments for expansion in the same decade. In the 1880s, Prime Minister Jules Ferry elevated these ideas to the heights of political
discourse as he trumpeted the necessity of colonization as, implemented expansionary policies, and suffered the consequences of domestic discontent.  

The Société de Géographie de Paris was founded in December 15, 1821 with a mandate to, in the words of an early leader, “break the fatal charm that holds us enchained to our shores.” The society began with a membership of 217 and did not experience substantial growth until around 1860, when figure rapidly surpassed six hundred. The War of 1870/1871 suppression participation in civic groups; however, enthusiasm for geographic studies swelled in the aftermath of the war. Leaders of the movement frequently claimed that superior knowledge of geography had provided the Prussians with a decisive advantage. This argument was commonly employed after the defeat; educators made the same suggestion regarding the advantages of the Prussian schooling system. Whether or not the argument was unique, or even effective, the membership doubled in the first three years of the decade.

New geographic societies appeared in response to increased demand. By 1873 there were 88 syndicates in Paris, although provincial groups would only manifest later in the decade. Confirming the increasing prominence of the movement, President Marshal MacMahon and his ministers attended the previously obscure International Congress of Geographical Sciences in 1875. The opening address indicates the philosophical inclinations of the conference. The speaker, one La Roncière-Le Noury, pronounced:

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10 The full title for the first minister of the Third Republic was Président du Conseil des ministres français. English speaking sources tend to refer to Ferry as Prime Minister.
12 Mackay, Geographical Movement, 215
14 Murphy, Ideology of French Imperialism, 25
“Gentlemen, Providence has dictated to us the obligation of knowing the earth and making the conquest of it...Geography, that science which inspires such beautiful devotedness and in whose name so many victims have been sacrificed, has become the philosophy of the earth.”

The geographic movement had invested an academic discipline with a sacred aura, while the presence of MacMahon supported its claim to relevance in global politics. King Leopold II of Belgium seemed to concur, and called a conference for renowned geographers the following year. The result was the formation of International Commission for the Exploration and Civilization of Africa, composed of the presidents of every national geographic society in Europe.  

The French national Society of Commercial Geography formed the same year the aim to develop French commerce abroad, spread knowledge, fund exploratory expeditions, map useful natural resources in distant lands, study modes of global communication, and investigate all questions related to colonization and emigration. One of its first projects created a map of the globe designating the locations of French consulates, communities of French emigrants, and current or potential markets for exports. The funding of exploratory missions met with mixed success. In 1874 the societies sponsored the expeditions of a Moroccan rabbi, Mordokhai, and a French explorer Dournaux-Dupéré, in central Africa; however, the murder of the latter at the hands of natives briefly dampened the enthusiasm for such missions. The zeal did return by 1878, when agitation from the societies enabled the first large government subsidy for

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15 Murphy, Ideology of French Imperialism 25, footnote 107, Compte rendu (Paris, 1875), II, 14-15  
16 Murphy, Ideology of French Imperialism, 10  
17 Murphy, Ideology of French Imperialism, 10
an exploratory mission in 1878, when the Chamber of Deputies allocated 100,000 francs to Abbé Debaize for a journey through Africa from the Indian Ocean to the Atlantic.\textsuperscript{18}

By that point, the movement had expanded substantially both in France and in Europe as a whole. Rising interest outside of Paris manifested in the formation of the Union Géographique du Nord and the Union Géographique de l’Est (Geographic Unions of the North and East), federations of multiple smaller societies. Internationally, total membership grew from 5,500 in 16 societies in 1865 to nearly 30,000 members in 60 societies by 1881. Membership in geographic societies was concentrated in the colonial powers. France, with around 9,500 members, had by far the highest total membership—Germany had an estimated 5,300, and Great Britain had 3,300.\textsuperscript{19}

In addition mass membership, the geographic movement counted several notable and original thinkers. Their views portrayed geographic knowledge as a tool for political power whose implementation through colonial activity could preserve or promote French national greatness. Their writings reflect a fear of national diminishment or destruction.

Paul Leroy-Beaulieu figures prominently among these theorists. A Member of the Academy of Moral and Political Science, Leroy-Beaulieu taught economics for nine years at the École Libre des Sciences Politiques. The now-famous institution was founded in 1872, and Leroy-Beaulieu gave the second lecture.\textsuperscript{20} He also wrote prolifically for the Journal des débats,\textsuperscript{21} and in 1873 founded his own publication, L’Economiste française. His most famous work was De la Colonisation chez les Peuples

\textsuperscript{18} Mackay, Geographical Movement, 216
\textsuperscript{19} Murphy, Ideology of French Imperialism, 8 and Mackay, Geographical Movement, 231
\textsuperscript{20} Murphy, Ideology of French Imperialism, 106
\textsuperscript{21} A moderate republican daily, read by the liberal bourgeoisie and political circles, self-confessed partisanship for Adolphe Thiers during the early years of the Republic. Francis Charmes, “Le Journal des Débats sous la Troisième République, Livre du Centenaire. pp. 339-375, in Murphy, Ideology of French Imperialism 105
*Modernes*, published in 1874. Interest in the book increased substantially with time. He wrote in a foreword for the third edition, published in 1886, that in 1874 colonial theory was regarded as an “anachronism”, while his editor warned that such a work “would not sell.”

He wrote that, by 1882, “public opinion had a little recovered from this systematic ignorance of things colonial.” People in France and Germany, and in Italy “began to consider that half the globe in its savage or barbarous state, solicited the methodical and persevering action of civilized peoples.”

Subsequent editions, published in 1886, 1898, 1902, and 1908, grew in both length and popularity. He added an entire chapter on the philosophy of imperialism to the edition of 1898, on the heels of extraordinary expansion of the holdings of the French Empire.

Leroy-Beaulieu’s argued that expansion was a question of national survival. “Colonization is for France a matter of life or death,” he wrote in *De la Colonisation.* “Either France becomes a great African Power, or in a century or two, she will be a secondary European Power, and will count in the world little more than Greece or Romania counts in Europe.” Apparently such a fate equated to extinction. Leroy-Beaulieu felt that today’s colonial acquisitions determined future political standing: “the people who colonize the most are the first people; if they are not today, they will be tomorrow.”

The economist offered a rationale for this belief that founded on the emigration of capital and people. He believed that colonies were the best possible use for both the excess capital and the excess population of the European powers.

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22 Murphy, *Ideology of French Imperialism*, 109
24 Murphy, *Ideology of French Imperialism* 109, footnote 16
26 Girardet, *L'idée Colonial en France*, 25
27 Murphy, *Ideology of French Imperialism*, 111-124
While Paul Leroy-Beaulieu was among the first to propound an economic logic for French expansion, various other figures contributed to the development of imperial ideas during the same period. They reflected similar fears of French national decline, and spoke of colonies as a method of ensuring national stature in world affairs. Gabriel Charmes, a frequent contributor to the *Revue des Deux Mondes* and the *Journal des débats*, advocated for a Mediterranean Empire and called for the French to neglect the frontier of the Vosges in favor of overseas expansion. He believed that “France would fall quickly enough to the rank of second powers if she remained indifferent to the great struggle that is currently pursued for the domination, no longer of Europe, but of the World.”28 The Abbé Raboisson concurred that colonies meant power and, in his *Étude sur les colonies et la colonization au regard de la France* in 1877,29 claimed that “there has never existed a great power without great colonies”.30 Paul Gaffarel, a professor of history and geography and member of the Geographic Society of Paris, contributed a particularly notable work in *Colonies françaises*, published in 1880. Gaffarel, who dedicated that work to Admiral de Mahy,31 a deputy from Réunion who will recur in this narrative, helped propagate the idea of colonization as a method by which man “diffuses civilization.” An early advocate of assimilation, Gaffarel desired the foundation of “New Frances” around the globe.32

This concept of assimilation became an essential and unique feature of French imperial ideology; it is often portrayed as the principal point of contrast with the philosophies of British imperialists. Assimilation entailed the political and cultural

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28 Girardet, *L'idée Colonial en France*, 29  
29 Girardet, *L'idée Colonial en France*, 31  
30 Murphy, *Ideology of French Imperialism*, 209  
31 Murphy, *Ideology of French Imperialism*, 193  
32 Murphy, *Ideology of French Imperialism*, 193
absorption of the colonies into France. Newly acquired territory would not merely be
dominated; it would be transformed into as an essential part of the mother country. This
entailed the exportation of French legal institutions, language, and cultural norms. In
essence, the Third Republic sought to create colonies in her own image. Raymond F.
Betts’ *Assimilation and association in French Colonial Theory, 1890-1914* provides an
essential review of the concept. Betts claimed that assimilation had philosophical roots in
the Roman Empire, which was influenced by Stoic concepts of universal reason and
human fraternity.\(^{33}\) Theory became practice with the progressive extension of Roman
citizenship to conquered peoples; Gauls received equal rights as citizens in 49 BC.\(^{34}\) The
Christianization of the Empire added an element of religious universalism, while
philosophers such as Rousseau and Abbé Siéyès promoted the concept of universal
human rights.\(^ {35}\) These ideas pervaded the concepts of the Revolution of 1789, and were
applied to colonial policy when the Constitution of 1795 declared: “The colonies are an
integral part of the Republic and are subject to the same constitutional law.”\(^ {36}\) Enshrined
as an essentially republican tenet, the concept of assimilation became doctrine for
expansionists in the 1870s. Over time, assimilation proved expensive, ineffective, and
impractical, and was widely rejected towards the end of the 19\(^{th}\) Century in favor of
methods of indirect rule, broadly called *association*, that General Joseph Galliéni
pioneered in Madagascar from 1896 to 1905.\(^ {37}\)

\(^{33}\) Raymond Betts. *Assimilation and Association in French colonial theory, 1890-1914*
\(^{34}\) Betts, *Assimilation and Association*, 10
\(^{35}\) Betts, *Assimilation and Association*, 15-16
\(^{36}\) Betts, *Assimilation and Association*, 13
\(^{37}\) Betts, *Assimilation and Association*, 8
Thinkers like Gaffarel and Leroy-Beaulieu laid a scholarly foundation for an idea that Jules Ferry would carry to the peaks of French political discourse. As Prime Minister, Ferry expanded the French Empire in the 1880s, but he suffered for his initiative. Expansionists of later decades would view him as the first prophet and martyr of the imperial cause.

Ferry, a particular proponent of an economic rationale for expansion, described colonial policy as the daughter of industrial policy. Modern industrialization created a pressure to export goods, demanding access to foreign markets. Rising protectionism and the progress of other industrial powers, particularly Germany and the United States, had closed large markets and offered competition for French manufacturing and agriculture. Meanwhile, other powers had begun acquiring distant territory, which he feared they would hold as privileged markets behind high tariffs. The world economy would segment into imperial blocs. “Have you not seen the great industrial nations one by one arrive at a colonial policy?” he asked the Senate in 1884. Confronted by rising protectionism, France must respond in kind, or else face a future of relative weakness and poverty on the global stage. This policy of protection would demand one of aggression: colonial expansion. Ferry wrote: “the protectionist system is like a steam-boiler without a safety-valve, unless it has a healthy and serious colonial policy as a corrective and auxiliary.” Tariff walls were only harmful if they did not enclose subservient markets to purchase the product of an industrial center. Other powers had arrived at the same conclusion and so, Ferry believed, France faced a scramble to dominate distant lands.

39 J. Ferry, Le Tonkin et la Mère Patrie (1890), 40, cited in Roberts, History of French Colonial Policy, 17
His ideas faced significant resistance in the first half of the 1880s, and very little by the 1890s. Opponents of expansion generally viewed colonies as an expensive distraction. The Senator Duc de Broglie referred to colonies as “a luxury, the costly fantasy of a great nation”. In the shadow of the humiliation of 1870, many prominent politicians viewed overseas projects as a diversion of attention from the “blue line of the Vosges”. In a particularly revealing exchange, Ferry confronted Déroulède for his opposition to colonial activity: ‘You will end by making me think you prefer Alsace-Lorraine to France. Must we hypnotize ourselves with the lost provinces, and should we not take compensations elsewhere?’ Déroulède responded, “That is just the point. I have lost two children, and you offer me twenty domestics!” Ferry encountered this attitude frequently, although it was rarely expressed so succinctly.

Jules Ferry served twice as Prime Minister; in 1881, and in 1885. On both occasions, his ministry lost power to a revolt in the Chamber of Deputies. In 1881, the reaction followed actions his ministry took to impose a French protectorate in Tunisia. In 1885, at a point of expansion in many directions, military blunders in Tonkin would prompt a backlash against colonial expansion in general. Ferry was driven from office in disgrace, opposed by all political parties, and viewed as the least popular man in France. At one moment in 1885, crowds gathered at the Palais-Bourbon to chant “Death to Ferry!” Prominent politicians of the following decade judged his policies

40 Roberts, History of French Colonial Policy, 12
41 The Vosges mountain range marked the new French border with Germany following the absorption of Alsace and Lorraine into the Reich.
42 Roberts, History of French Colonial Policy, 11
43 The anti-colonial backlash of 1885 receives more attention in Chapter II.
44 Roberts, History of French Colonial Policy, 19
more favorably than did his contemporaries. Foreign Minister Gabriel Hanotaux said of Ferry in 1898:

…with a clear consciousness of the past and a precise view of the future, and having considered the times and our strength, he fixed the four points which henceforth determined the four-fold idea of our colonial domain,—Tunisia, Tonkin, Congo, Madagascar. In less than fifteen years, a new Empire was written there. 45

Hanotaux voiced these sentiments five years after the death of Jules Ferry. However, the famous statesman lived to see his once maligned idea enter the mainstream of French political discourse. Hanotaux credited Ferry with directing French attentions to Madagascar, and much of the first Madagascar affair occurred during his second ministry. However, European interactions with the great island pre-dated his ministries

iii. Madagascar Before 1894

The history of the Madagascar is characterized by the island’s immense size 46 and mountainous terrain. These factors contributed to a high level of political fragmentation and significant ethnic and linguistic diversity. European merchants, and navies, drawn by the island’s ports, began operating around the island in the 19th century. The powers contended for influence on a minor scale for several decades, while Protestant and Catholic missionaries attempted to spread their faiths. In 1873, the opening of the Suez Canal substantially diminished British strategic investment, and by 1890 the British recognized French preeminence in Madagascar for a reciprocal recognition of English dominance in Zanzibar. 47

45 Ferry’s Collected Speeches, Vol. IV, 482, cited in Roberts, History of French Colonial Policy, 15
47 Affaires de Madagascar, p. 24. 5 August 1890, Declarations exchanged between the Government of the French Republic and the Government of Her Majesty on the subject of African territories
The island was not united under one ruler until French rule was fully imposed under General Galliéni in 1902. Nonetheless, the European powers desired to recognize a single group as masters of the isle for the purposes of both commerce and diplomacy. The British, in particular, supported the rise of the Merina people to predominance specifically to create such a trading partner. The Merina were then concentrated in the Imerina region. Although older European documents frequently refer to the Merina people as Hova, this term is inaccurate, as it designates only a particular Merina caste. In the early 19th century, the Merina king Radama I sought to dominate and centralize the great isle.\(^{48}\) With British assistance, he codified the Merina language, founded a meritocratic bureaucracy, and established a national army. Hunger, disease, and combat destroyed nearly half of that army during military campaigns in the 1820s. Nonetheless, by 1825 Radama I had conquered most of the “economically useful” areas of the island, including the best natural ports.\(^{49}\)

In 1828 a military coup elevated Queen Ranavalona I (1828–61) and established the essential internal dynamic of Merina politics, a pattern disrupted only by French invasion.\(^{50}\) From 1828–1895, groups of military officers and traders held real power and maneuvered for advantage, while the monarch offered religious and traditional legitimacy by transmitting *hasina* or blessing, to the people from the ancestors of the royal family.

King Radama II (1861–1863) offered a brief exception, and met a brutal end. Radama II adopted a form of free trade policy that offended commercially invested members of the officer class while exposing the unskilled peasantry to competition from

\(^{48}\) Solofo Randrianja and Stephen Ellis provide an effective summary of the Merina state’s history, rise, and instability before French invasion in 1894-5.


\(^{50}\) Randrianja & Ellis, *Madagascar: A Short History*, 126
industrialized economies. He also neglected the religious rituals required of royalty.\textsuperscript{51}

He was reputed to have told a French painter, while sitting for a portrait, that religions were “merely political institutions, good for guiding children of all ages.”\textsuperscript{52} The failure to tend to this institution stripped him of traditional legitimacy. A group of officers assassinated Radama II in 1863.

The officer class consolidated power, and the Merina state essentially became an oligarchy founded on twin pillars of slavery and serfdom.\textsuperscript{53} The slave population of Imerina composed between forty and fifty percent of the general population at the time of the French invasion.\textsuperscript{54} Yet the free Malagasy peasantry did not benefit from this inequity. In 1855, a French Jesuit in Madagascar wrote that the conditions of the peasantry were so poor that “many slaves refuse manumission if it is offered to them.”\textsuperscript{55} Merina peasants suffered under military conscription and a system of forced labor that the French referred to as \textit{la corvée}.\textsuperscript{56} The French Foreign Minister, Gabriel Hanotaux, described the system succinctly in a letter to M. Ranchot, the adjunct to the Resident General, in April 1895. Hanotaux wrote that:

\textit{...in Madagascar, the corvée consists an obligation imposed on all free men, by the Government or by his Representatives, to freely perform a work or to accomplish a service, to the end of a public utility...Diverted from its original goal, the corvée was not employed uniquely, as it should have been, to satisfy a general interest; it was put in the service of purely private interests.}\textsuperscript{57}

\textsuperscript{51} Randrianja & Ellis, \textit{Madagascar: A Short History}, 136
\textsuperscript{52} Randrianja & Ellis, \textit{Madagascar: A Short History}, 144
\textsuperscript{53} As in medieval Europe, Merina peasants were “tied to the land.”
\textsuperscript{54} Randrianja & Ellis, \textit{Madagascar: A Short History}, 136
\textsuperscript{55} Randrianja & Ellis, \textit{Madagascar: A Short History}, 135
\textsuperscript{56} A term also used in English to designate unpaid labor required of a serf or peasant by his feudal lord.
\textsuperscript{57} Ministère des affaires étrangères. \textit{Affaires de Madagascar, 1885-1895}, (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1895), De M. Hanotaux, Ministre des Affaires étrangères, à M. Ranchot, Adjoint au Résident général à Madagascar. 9 Avril 1895, 70
Hanotaux identified slavery and the corvée systems as “the bases of the social organization of Madagascar.”\textsuperscript{58} The royal palace, constructed entirely by forced labor, served as physical manifestation of the abuse of political power to particular gain. By the 1890s, the Prime Minister was personally wealthier than the Treasury\textsuperscript{59}, while Imerina’s population, infrastructural development, and capacity to project military power were all in decline.\textsuperscript{60}

At the commencement of the first Franco-Merina conflict in 1883, Madagascar was politically fragmented and unstable. The most powerful kingdom on the island had never established hegemony and had begun to deteriorate. Large stretches of the island were ruled by independent tribes or often troubled by marauding bands. This instability would provoke many of the French complaints in both the 1880s and the 1890s, while the first conflict would exacerbate the ills of the Merina state.

iv. Theories of the Periphery and the Métropole

The interaction between European powers and the nations they colonized are generally view the interaction through a metrocentric or pericentric lens.\textsuperscript{61} Metrocentric theorists tend to describe expansion as the expression of the will of the métropole, or the incurring state that would become the dominant center of the imperial relationship. Pericentric writers describe how crises on the peripheries of empire can draw

\textsuperscript{58} Affaires de Madagascar, 1885-1895, De M. Hanotaux, Ministre des Affaires étrangères, à M. Ranchot, Adjoint au Résident général à Madagascar. 9 Avril 1895, 70
\textsuperscript{59} Randrianja & Ellis, Madagascar: A Short History, 136
\textsuperscript{60} Randrianja & Ellis, Madagascar: A Short History, 137
\textsuperscript{61} Sometimes called “excentric” rather than pericentric. Some theorists can be classified as primarily “systemic,” as they focus on dynamics of the international political system, such as the rivalry between colonial powers. None of the authors considered here are primarily concerned with systemic causes.
expansion. Some theorists are best described as systemic, due to a strong emphasis on the role of structural forces, such as international political rivalry between colonial powers, in the extension of imperial control. However, those considered here tend to focus primarily on either the center or edges of an imperial system.

While aspects of each theory can be found in their works, most historians of French colonial policy tended naturally towards a metrocentric perspective. Brunschwig, largely preoccupied with dispelling the claim that expansion responded to an economic rational, claimed psychological motivations: “the spread of nationalist fever, as a result of the events which had taken place in 1870 and 1871.” Trauma created an aggressive psychology that pursued national prestige through colonial control. Girardet felt that expansion was natural to France, and described the period of 1870 to 1880 as an exception to the rule, a mere parenthesis in a continual drive to extend French dominion. Ganiage described a country captivated by a “vision of a greater France,” that sought power through the establishment of a larger French community through the acquisition and assimilation of the colonies. Aspects of the “civilizing mission”, such as abolition, appealed to the public, but over time the difficulty of implementing assimilation, the expense of the empire, and the revelation of colonial abuses, dampened popular enthusiasm. Roberts’ comprehensive History of French Colonial Policy focused and portrayed the expansion of the Empire as an essential expression of French

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62 Particularly associated with Robinson and Gallagher, The Imperialism of Free Trade and the Partition of Africa
63 Acknowledgements to Georgetown University Professor Charles Kupchan, from lecture in his course “Grand Strategy in Comparative and Historical Perspective.”
64 Bruschwig, French Colonialism, 182
65 Girardet, L’idée Colonial en France, 24
66 (Ganiage 415)
culture: “Expansiveness was a natural Gallican attribute: so too was the manner of that expansion”. Assimilation, made colonization a form of “national proselytism”.

Perhaps more surprisingly, several histories of Madagascar also offer metrocentric explanations that portray French expansion as the expression of long-held intentions. Philip Allen describes the expansion as the result of pressure from domestic commercial interests, the church, and colonists on Réunion; “politicians in Paris attended half-heartedly” to their complaints concerning Merina property laws or restrictions on missionary and trading activities. For Allen, the disputes between the French and the Merina served as a mere “pretext” for aggression driven by French domestic and colonial interests. Mervyn Brown also emphasizes a centrally guided French imperial project. The Government wished to establish to protectorate not only to appease pressure groups, but also to divert domestic attention overseas. The humiliation of 1871 fostered expansionary tendencies. The British served as the only barrier to their expression in Madagascar; as long as the main passage to India encompassed the Malagasy coastline, the British Empire would not suffer the French to dominate the isle. However, the opening of the Suez Canal in 1873 removed this strategic consideration and, in Brown’s words, “in effect sounded the death-knell of Madagascar’s independence”. With the British counter-balance removed, the assertion of French dominance was inevitable.

The pericentric theories are most commonly associated with Gallagher and Robinson, who co-authored a highly influential article The Imperialism of Free Trade, which appeared in the Economic History Review in 1953; the chapter “The Partition of

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67 Roberts, History of French Colonial Policy, 4
68 (Allen, Madagascar: Conflicts of Authority on the Great Isle, 33)
69 (Allen, 34)
70 Brown, Short History, 204)
71 (History, Brown, 202)

Robinson and Gallagher discuss how crises in periphery of the imperial system both draw expansion and instigate transitions from informal to more formal methods of rule. The extension of informal control often “unleashed such disruptive forces upon the indigenous structures that they tended to wear our and even collapse with use.” As Chapters II, IV and V will demonstrate, this analysis resonates with the example of French imposition in Madagascar.

D.K. Fieldhouse considers aspects of both theories. He discusses the role of peripheral crises, saying that the Empire in general was “largely unplanned and had no unity of character or function. Many French colonies were the product of unplanned expansion by existing nuclei,” including Senegal, Tunisia, and Indo-China. However, Fieldhouse felt that French tended to overreact: “on a number of occasions pressures within France led to colonial acquisitions which could have been avoided, or were larger than a crisis on the periphery made necessary.” This diagnosis is particularly pertinent to this study, which examines how ideological climate contributed to an excessive reaction to a peripheral crisis.

Elements of peripheral, metropolitan, and systemic forces interacted in the French annexation of Madagascar. The events of both 1883 and 1893/4 initiated with conditions on the island largely resulting from the frailty of the Merina state. That weakness was somewhat amplified in 1893 compared to the previous decade, largely due to the

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73 Robinson, Ronald Edward, Gallagher, John *The Imperialism of Free Trade*
74 Robinson, Ronald Edward, Gallagher, John *The Imperialism of Free Trade*, 145
75 (Colonial empirers 305)
financial toll levied by the blockade and the indemnity enforced by the treaty of 1885. However, the irritants for the French did not appear to differ substantially in each case, as Chapters II and IV discuss. However, the ideological climate in 1893 was far more receptive to the proposition of imperial expansion. Results differed accordingly. The conquest of Madagascar does not appear to have resulted from a specific imperial “project” designed in the official mind of Government of the Republic. The decision to invade in 1894, although aggressive, remained essentially reactive. From the point of departure, theory and ideology in Paris appeared to affect French policy. A drive for direct control, originating in the imperialistic impulses of the Chamber, conducted the Government to annexation against its will. However, the same political dynamics in Madagascar that had frustrated the French prior to the invasion—and the comprehension of the French Governor and General—precluded assimilation, and the administrative methods of indirect rule introduced in Madagascar would ultimately replace assimilation as the dominant doctrine of French imperial administration.
Chapter II. The First Madagascar Affair

Jules Ferry is remembered as the godfather of the new French Empire. His two ministries increased French holdings in regions as distinct as North Africa and East Asia, while his rhetoric offered eloquent justification for expansion. He championed the idea of the “civilizing mission” before it became embedded in national culture in the 1890s. He extended both the physical borders of French control and the philosophical reach of the imperial idea. Yet, in 1885, a wave of anti-colonial sentiment engulfed his ministry and propelled him from office in disgrace. The first Madagascar expedition concluded in this context of opposition to imperial expansion. The second occurred as the imperial fever approached its highest temperatures. Both expeditions responded to similar dynamics at the periphery; the outcomes differed substantially. The discrepancy reveals the extent and limits to which domestic ideology may affect imperial expansion.

i. Foreign and Domestic Context

While the Madagascar expedition concluded in 1885 amidst a parliamentary reaction against foreign adventures, the beginning of hostilities occurred against a different backdrop. An account of French foreign affairs in the first half of the 1880s would suggest a period of colonial hyperactivity. The Third Republic expanded its imperial holdings in Tunis (1881), Sudan (1881), the Congo (1882), and initiated a war in Tonkin in 1883. German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck wondered aloud “why the French

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76 Jules Ferry served as Prime Minister from September, 1880 to November, 1881, and from February, 1883 to March, 1885
77 1883-December 17, 1885. Sometimes referred to as the First Franco-Hova or Franco-Merina War
initiate so many affairs at the same time…all that, Tunis, Tonkin, Madagascar, and the Congo, makes a lot of undertakings at once.”

In the 1880s, these expeditions were led by ruling ministries amid fierce debate. The increasing expense of overextension, and the particular failures of the Tonkin Affair, left an aggressive colonial policy subject to attack from the legislatures. At the end of March, 1885, the Jules Ferry ministry collapsed under a series of assaults against both his character and the expansionary policy in general. A vote of confidence brought crushing defeat. The Chamber of Deputies eventually began to treat each proposed allocation of funds to the military operations in Tonkin, Tunis, or Madagascar as a referendum on colonial expansion in general. Although the Chamber originally authorized the use of force in Madagascar by a vast majority, paying for it proved less popular. Measures to fund the expedition passed by increasingly dwindling margins.

The conflict itself occurred between the French Navy and the Merina tribe. The island contained numerous ethnically and linguistically distinct groups, and the Merina did not enjoy complete hegemony. However, they were the most powerful local group. French and English colonists and missionaries had treated principally with the Merina since the beginning of the nineteenth century. In 1868, the French formally recognized the Merina as the sole owners of the entire island. In exchange, the accord guaranteed

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79 Also reviewed in Section II
80 Journal des débats politiques et littéraires, 31 mars 1885
81 The Third Republic had a bicameral legislature, with a Senate and a Chamber of Deputies.
82 In particular, Annales. Chambre des députés. Débats Parlementaires. 4/30/1885, 7/28/1885-7/31/1885, 12/18/1885-12/24/1884
83 French primary sources and older secondary sources refer to the Merina as the “Hova,” which was in fact the name for the ruling caste. Merina is now considered more accurate.
freedom of religion, freedom from persecution, and property rights to all foreign nationals. By 1881, each of these liberties was subject to dispute.

ii. Irritation at the Periphery

The conflict did not begin by French design. Events in Madagascar, rather than the initiative of the French metropole, initiated a diplomatic crisis. Differences developed over questions of national sovereignty, personal property, and the status of French nationals on the island. French and Merina diplomatic documents reveal unsurprisingly distinct diagnoses of the issue at hand; their proposed prescriptions were equally distant. The sides failed to find synthesis without resorting to force.

The French narrative asserted that the Merina had progressively taken measures to hamper and expel the small community of European residents and merchants, systematically violating the treaty of 1868. French nationals experienced increasing harassment, from the local public and government, beginning in at least 1878. Two laws passed in 1881 institutionalized the perceived hostility and undermined core aspects of the treaty of 1868.

On 13th of December, 1881, the consul in Madagascar, M. Baudais, wrote to the French Foreign Minister, revealing an anxious sense of persecution. He warned ominously of expected escalation in offenses, and made oblique references to the potential effect of a violent application of naval firepower on native perspective. The consul wrote that the Merina have been “walking slowly, but in a continuous fashion,

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84 Documents Diplomatiques. Affaires de Madagascar, 1881-1883, 1884-1886.
85 Ganiage, Histoire de l'Expansion coloniale de la France, 190-2
86 Documents diplomatiques. Affaires de Madagascar. 1881-1883. From M. Baudais, Consul and Commissaire du Gouvernement à Tanarive, to M. Gambetta, Ministre des affaires étrangères. 13 December, 1881 8-11
87 Then Léon Gambetta
towards the same goal for several years: the expulsion from the country of all that is French.”

Since 1878, he had witnessed “a continuous attack” against the treaty of 1868. Law 270, promulgated March 29, 1881, undermined religious liberty by proscribing conversion, disturbing both Catholic and Protestant missionaries on the island. Yet Law 85 most outraged M. Baudais. The Merina law formally returned all property “to the earth”, claimed every inch of the island as property of the crown, and forbade the sale of land to foreigners.

Baudais warned darkly that, “A day will come, and is perhaps not far, when all property will be dispossessed if the French Government does not immediately demand the abrogation of this law as contrary to treaty.”

While the consul declared that he was “far from considering an armed intervention,” he recommended a display of force. He suggested that the presence of several French navies would force the repeal of Law 85 and prevent the necessity of “more energetic means”.

Discord over private property was soon matched by disputes concerning public territory. The French consulate objected to the installation of Merina encampments, flags, and customs posts in the Northwest coast of the island. The French claimed to have obtained complete control of the area by treaty with the Sakalave tribe.

Relations on the island moved from tense to violent. On June 14th 1882, Consul Baudais reported the brutal murder of the director of a coffee plantation. A few days later, a letter was posted to the door of the French Consulate in nearby Tananarive. The

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88 Documents diplomatiques. Affaires de Madagascar. 1881-1883. Baudais to Gambetta, 13 December, 1881, 8
89 Documents diplomatiques. Affaires de Madagascar. 1881-1883. Baudais to Gambetta, 13 December, 1881, 10
90 Documents diplomatiques. Affaires de Madagascar. 1881-1883. Baudais to Gambetta, p. 8
91 Documents diplomatiques. Affaires de Madagascar. 1881-1883. Baudais to Gambetta, 13 December, 1881, p. 11
note promised to throw the corpse of the consul “to the dogs.” It was signed “the Army.”

On the first of July, the consul sent a dark missive to the Foreign Ministry:

The situation becomes more and more serious. Death threats against the Chancellor have been fixed to the door of the Consulate of Tananarive and at the homes of Frenchmen. I am commanding the Chancellor to come here. Diplomatic measures are completely exhausted...it is necessary to have complete satisfaction or to abandon Madagascar definitively.

The second option received no serious consideration. However, neither would the French obtain the first.

### iii. The Embassy to Paris

Although Baudais had surrendered hope of a diplomatic solution, the French and Merina foreign ministries did not. Negotiations on the island ceased entirely, but plans were made to send a Merina envoy to Paris. The ambassadors arrived in Marseille on the 23rd of October, 1882, and presented their perspective on the conflict. A series of official notes exchanged between the Merina ambassadors and the French representatives captured the essence of the dispute, and depict the failure to find a peaceful resolution.

The two main issues were quickly defined as the status of the Northwest coast and the rights of French nationals to purchase land. The ambassadors of the Merina Queen felt that their government had consistently upheld the obligations of the 1868 treaty, and that the current disputes resulted from both a misunderstanding of the treaty and philosophical differences concerning the treatment of land.

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92 Documents diplomatiques. Affaires de Madagascar. 1881-1883. M Baudais, Consul et Commissaire du Gouvernement à Tananarive, à M. de Freycinet, Ministre des Affaires étrangères. 17 June 1882, 38

93 Documents diplomatiques. Affaires de Madagascar. 1881-1883. Baudais to Freycinet, 17 June 1882, 41
First, they addressed the issue of private property and Law 85. The Merina delegation referenced the fourth article of the treaty of 1868, which stated that:

The French in Madagascar will enjoy complete protection of their persons and property. They will be able to pursue all commercial and industrial operations that are not prohibited by domestic legislation.

The ambassadors emphasized that the laws and customs of the Merina had always forbidden the sale of land to foreigners; Law 85 was merely “the confirmation…of the traditions of the country”. In Madagascar, all land was considered to be property of the Queen, and therefore of the island itself. She could not sell it:

Our government has always declared that, following the laws and traditions, and also the force of public opinion, so powerful in Madagascar, neither the queen, nor the nobles, nor the particulars, may alienate the ownership of land to foreigners”. 94

The ambassadors compared the Merina philosophy to that of “States of the Orient,” where they claimed even the subjects of the Crown could not be considered to own land; land was instead “indefinitely delegated.” 95

Regarding the northwest coast, the Merina delegation declared that the treaty between the French and the Sakalaves was void by the terms of the treaty of 1868, which recognized the Merina queen as the queen of all Madagascar. The delegation then proposed a compromise. The note suggested a system of renewable leases at a length of 25 years and the establishment of the Northwest coast as a neutral zone, forbidding the installation of the flags or military outposts by either party. However, exploitation of the

94 Affaires de Madagascar, 1881-1883. Deuxième note remise par les ambassadeurs hovas, Octobre 1882, 56
95 Affaires de Madagascar, 1881-1883. Deuxième note remise par les ambassadeurs hovas, Octobre 1882. 61
forests and mines of the interior must remain under the discretion of the Merina government.96

The French response dismissed the Merina terms in a manner that bordered on personal insult. Their reply stated that the suggested compromise could not be considered as a serious offer and called into question the honest disposition of the Merina negotiators. If the delegation continued in this vein, the French government would take the protection of their own “rights and interests” into their own hands.97

The Merina delegation responded that they would accept continued discussion of the application of the treaty and the status of the Northwest coast, but continued to insist on the necessity of long-term leases rather than direct land-ownership.

The French offered a second note with specific conditions: the “voluntary removal” of Merina outposts in the disputed region and the recognition of French property rights with renewable loans at a length of 99 years, in exchange for the French commitment not to place fortifications of their own on the North-West Coast. Intimating that the period of negotiation had closed, the letter requested only the signatures of the Merina delegates.98

The Merina reply made two requests: to remove a specific clause concerning “the general rights of France to Madagascar”, and the return to renewable loans of 25 years. On November 30, 1882, the French announced the failure of negotiations and expelled

96 Affaires de Madagascar, 1881-1883. Deuxième note remise par les ambassadeurs hovas, Octobre 1882. 57-58
97 Affaires de Madagascar, 1881-1883. Deuxième note remise par les ambassadeurs hovas, Octobre 1882. 59
98 Affaires de Madagascar, 1881-1883. Deuxième note remise par les ambassadeurs hovas, Octobre 1882. 63
their surprised visitors from the Grand Hotel. Determined to obtain some measure of value from their long journey, the Merina delegation sought support in the capitals of European powers and the United States, but were politely rebuffed. The Merina would face the French navy alone.

iv. Opening of Hostilities

The Chamber of Deputies responded to the failure of negotiations by authorizing the use of “all measures necessary” by a vast majority. Speakers addressing the chamber evinced little enthusiasm for full annexation; however, pressed by an apparent crisis, the deputies were loath to deny the use of all powers in defense of French nationals abroad. This consensus would erode with time; but, in 1883, a broad majority of the French legislature voted to authorize the use of force.

The recently appointed Minister of the Navy happened to be an advocate of annexation. François de Mahy, a deputy from Réunion appointed to the Navy during a short-lived ministry in early 1883, instructed the bellicose Admiral Pierre to make an impression on the local government and then to deliver an ultimatum. The Admiral executed his commands. On May 7, he bombarded and destroyed two Merina posts on the Western coast of Madagascar. He shelled and occupied the town of Majunga ten days later. On the first of June, he arrived within sight of the Merina capital, Tamatave, and delivered his ultimatum: the Merina were to repeal Law 85, recognize a French protectorate north of the 16th parallel, and pay an indemnity of one million francs, or risk further cannon-fire.

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The elderly Queen Rananova II responded with regal defiance. She addressed her people:

If this land which God has given to me, and where my ancestors rest, and where the bones of your ancestors lie buried, is claimed by others, then I stand up for the benefits which God has conferred. God made me a woman, still, when anyone attempts to seize that which He has given me, and the country which my ancestors conquered is threatened, then I feel strong to go forth as your leader, for I should feel ashamed…if I did not protect what God had entrusted to me.  

She rejected French demands on June 9. Admiral Pierre shelled and occupied Tamatave on the eleventh.

The Merina withdrew to the interior. The firepower of the French navy could destroy any settlement along the coasts, but the thousand-strong expeditionary force would not suffice for an invasion of the isle’s heartland. The Merina pledged renewed resistance despite the death of their defiant queen on the 13th of July. Her young successor, the 22 year old Ranavalona III, vowed not to cede voluntarily even as much soil “as would cover a grain of rice”.  

The deadlock held. Persistence in the conflict became increasingly costly. Prolongation of the naval expedition required repeated renewal of credits and bombardment and blockade devastated the Madagascar economy. Negotiations were renewed in Tananarive in February, 1884, but failed to make advances. At the end of March the Chamber of Deputies voted, by a margin of 450 against 32, to declare their continued resolve to “maintain the rights of France in Madagascar”.

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101 Letter from Procter to Rainilaiarivony, Nov 9, 1882, cited in Brown, History of Madagascar, 208
102 Roberts, The History of French Colonial Policy, 380
103 The Chamber of Deputies had to vote to release unexpected funds for military purposes
104 Roberts, The History of French Colonial Policy
105 Document Diplomatiques. Affaires de Madagascar. M. Jules Ferry, Président du Conseil, to M. Baudais, Consul à Madagascar. 28 March 1884 49
Jules Ferry resolved to alter the Merina bargaining position by renewed violence. On April 3rd, he instructed Consul Baudais that, in the event of the failure of the conference, he should not attempt to reopen negotiations before the arrival of a new fleet under Admiral Miot. Negotiations collapsed on the 8th of April. Once again, the French declared their impatience first, brusquely informing the Merina representative that he could consider the Conference dissolved and hostilities resumed. He protested the disengagement, to no avail. M. Baudais wrote to Jules Ferry that only the arrival of new fleets with reinforcements would change the attitude of the Merina Government. The Chamber, still obliging, authorized further coercive measures.

Admiral Miot declared his belligerent intentions on arrival. On the 13 of May, he announced to Merina representatives:

I did not come here to demand of you the recognition of such and such rights, nor the respect of such and such past agreements… I come to exercise those rights and to impose that respect…Have no more hope of again placing your flag on the North West Coast. It is henceforth under the effective protection of the Republic. We will never abandon Majunga, and we will not leave Tamatave save when we wish it. If you sue for peace today, there is perhaps still time, and here are the principal conditions: Miot’s conditions were a reinforced edition of Pierre’s ultimatum: French property rights would be restored, French sovereignty in the Northwest respected, and a larger indemnity of 3 million francs paid. The admiral brought new ruin as well, reporting the town of Vohemar as “completely destroyed” on August 1884.

v. Reaction against Expansion

107 Document Diplomatiques. Affaires de Madagascar. M. Baudais to M. Ferry, 11 April 1884, 100
109 Document Diplomatiques. Affaires de Madagascar. 1884-1886. M. Baudais to M. Ferry, 2 August 1884, 113-114
But domestic support for foreign expeditions began to erode. Several events marked the change in climate: the Tonkin disaster; the subsequent expulsion of Jules Ferry from power; the results of the October elections; and debates in July, November, and December concerning the extension of continuing credits to the Navy which served as a referendum on colonial policy. The last nearly brought about the abandonment of Madagascar.  

The Tonkin Affair refers to the retreat of French forces from Lang Son in the Sino-French War. At the end of March, Chinese troops attacked a French column near Lang-Son. The General de Négrier was wounded, and passed command to a Lieutenant-colonel Herbinger who, perhaps surprised in a state of inebriation, ordered a sudden retreat, abandoning all previous gains and a substantial amount of materiel and artillery. The commander of French forces in Tonkin received confused news of Herbinger’s retreat. Assuming an impending large-scale attack, he wrote to Paris for reinforcements of men and material and warned of an imminent calamity to befall the French army.

The news sparked a furor in France, vastly strengthened the case of the anti-imperialists, and initiated the fall of the Ferry Ministry. On March 30, Ferry stood before the Chamber, summarized the perceived military situation, and declared that, while new battalions and batteries were already en route,

“these measures are insufficient. It is necessary to repair, to avenge the failure of Langson. It is necessary, not only for the possession of Tonkin, for the security and the future of our establishments in Indo-China, but for our honor in the entire world.”

10 Ganiage, L’expansion Coloniale, 142-144
11 Ganiage, L’expansion coloniale, 138
12 Ganiage, L’expansion coloniale, 138-140
13 Journal des débats politiques et littéraires, Chambre des Députés, 31 mars 1885
Ferry asked for a swift vote on a measure to supply an extraordinary credit of 200 million francs for the war in China. He called again on his colleagues to defend “the grandeur of the country and the honor of the flag,” but not to treat the vote for the credits as a vote of confidence in his ministry or in the colonial policy itself. He stated that this vote could be raised later, if necessary, prompting raucous shouts of “Immediately!”

Ferry was roundly abused for the rest of the session: both personally, and for the colonial policy he represented. He suffered routine interruptions, and slurs against his character. When he mentioned “honor,” a delegate rose to shout: “You do not have the right to say that word! Our honor? It is you who compromised it!” M Clemenceau elevated the attacks to their highest pitch:

> At this time, there can be no discussion between the Cabinet and a republican member of this Chamber! We can no longer hear you; we no longer recognize you; we no longer wish to recognize you! You are no longer ministers! You are accused, and accused of the crime of high treason!\(^\text{115}\)

The credits were voted down by 306 to 149; the Ferry government collapsed in disgrace.

The formation of a new ministry under M. Brisson allowed the restoration of financial support to the Tonkin expedition. Yet the debate over the colonial question had hardly run its course. The sessions of the Chamber of Deputies from the 28\(^{\text{th}}\) to the 31\(^{\text{st}}\) of July were preoccupied with yet another proposed credit: on this occasion, over 12 millions francs to cover the continued expenses of the Madagascar expedition. Although out of office, Jules Ferry returned to promote the credit in a Chamber largely hostile to his message.

The debates were again marred by personal attacks, but the content of the dispute also revealed much regarding the nature of the colonial and anti-colonial movements.

\(^{114}\) *Journal des débats politiques et littéraires*, Chambre des Députés, 31 mars 1885

\(^{115}\) *Journal des débats politiques et littéraires*, Chambre des Députés, 31 mars 1885
Jules Ferry implicitly suggested that the designs of the colonial movement in Madagascar far exceeded their official demands in negotiation. He declared that the sole defect of the current policy was that the tribune had not “positively, formally, expressed its desire to (bring about) the conquest of the island of Madagascar.” He claimed that the “future of France” was at stake, and defended an expansionary policy on economic grounds, describing the necessity to open and protect foreign markets in a world of rising tariffs and increased competition, particularly from the rising German and American economies.

A particular exchange exemplified the divide between the Ferryistes and the anti-colonial deputies. Ferry defined the colonial policy as a rationally guided endeavor. He attempted to use this idea rhetorically, revealing it as a founding premise of his thought. However, his opponents did not subscribe to the same assumptions. Ferry stated that, if the colonial policy were not bound by “principles or rules,” but operated without “rhyme or reason, pushed by I do not now what desire for battles, for adventures, for easy glory, ah! Messieurs, so conceived, the colonial policy would not be a system, it would be a simple act of madness…”

At this point, Clémentceau cried out, “It is exactly that!” For Ferry, the foreign policy of France could not be mad; therefore, the colonial policy must be a rational system. Clémentceau evidently disagreed.

The discussion of the credits for Madagascar concluded on the 30th of July. Clémentceau spoke against the measure and against colonial expansion in general. The

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116 Annales. Chambres des députés. Débats parlementaires. 28 juillet, 1885
117 Annales. Chambres des députés. Débats parlementaires. 28 juillet, 1885
118 Annales. Chambres des députés. Débats parlementaires. 28 juillet, 1885
colonial doctrine, he insisted, was nothing more than “a theory, invoked as justification of faits accomplis:”

...you understand now the practical utility of the theory of colonial expeditions brought to the tribune by M. Ferry. We have rights everywhere; they slumber, we must not awaken them all at once. When all is finished in Tonkin, we will act in Madagascar! So we explain to ourselves how the national honor could suddenly demand amends in so many parts of the globe; how it comes to pass that before the arrival of M. Jules Ferry to power we had expeditions nowhere and how the appearance alone of M. Jules Ferry at the head of the government excited such barbarities in defense of the national honor”.

But Clémenceau encountered resistance when he attempted to tie the current regime to M. Ferry. When he impertinently asked whether the ministry before him was the “Brisson Ministry or the Ferry Ministry,” Brisson himself responded with indignation.

His ministry did not long endure. However, the pragmatic argument he advanced for the conservation of colonial holdings, which advocated, in the case of Madagascar, neither annexation nor retreat, ultimately held sway.

Brisson proclaimed, “we are neither for the policy of abandonment, nor for the policy of adventures, nor for the policy of conquests, but for the policy of conservation of our national patrimony.” He insisted that aim alone formed the basis of the pursuit of additional credit, rather than any stance towards the colonial policy in general. “It is not a primordial question.” The credit passed, but by a far slimmer margin than any previous proposition concerning the Madagascar expedition, with 291 for and 142 against.

The opposition to further extensions only increased with time. Elections in October demonstrated the unpopularity of an expansionary agenda. Candidates at every point in the political spectrum—which, in the Third Republic, ranged from avowed monarchists to radical socialists—campaigned on a platform of “antiferrysme”, or

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119 *Journal des débats politiques et littéraires*, Chamber of Deputies, 31 juillet 1885
120 *Journal des débats politiques et littéraires*, Chamber of Deputies, 31 juillet 1885
opposition to the expansionary policies that Jules Ferry emblematized. A royalist newspaper, *le Soleil*, wrote that the republicans of the Ferry ministry had instituted a policy of “financial ruin, religious war, and distant adventures” that conservatives candidates would conclude. The *Avenir du Loir et Cher*, called Tonkin the “Mexico of the Republic”, in reference to the ill-advised and unpopular attempt made by the Second Empire to conquer Mexico and place it under the rule of Maximilian Ferdinand, an Austrian archduke.  

The results altered the balance of the chamber, to the detriment of expansionary measures. The Monarchist minority, which consistently opposed “distant adventures, took 180 of all available seats while the other factions combined obtained 138. The Chamber became highly divided, as the various parties assembled into three main groups. 168 deputies formed the Radical faction (combining Radical Left and Extreme Left), 206 composed the Opportunists (or the Union of the Left), and 202 Bonapartist and Royalist deputies comprised the Monarchists. Eight deputies represented a small Socialist delegation. Even by the standards of the Third Republic, this triad produced an unruly assembly.

While the elections of October weakened the impetus for further French action on in Madagascar, the conflict began to lose momentum on the island itself. The Merina Government, financially burdened by blockade, made peace overtures in early November 1885. On this occasion, the French Foreign Ministry responded positively. One M. Patrimonio had previously replaced M. Baudais as Consul. The Foreign Minister De Freycinet wrote to the new consul, giving him the authority to negotiation on behalf of

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121 Ganiage, *L’expansion coloniale*, 140
122 Ganiage, *l’expansion coloniale* 141
the French government while advising that he “must not neglect this chance for an 
accord”. De Freycinet made several preemptory accommodations on issues that had 
scuttled prior negotiations. He granted permission to avoid use of the word 
“protectorate”, to use guard “of honor” rather than “military guard”, and to make other 
subsequent modifications if necessary.

Although military hostilities in Madagascar had abated while negotiations 
progressed, expenses accrued and expected required a renewal of finances. In December 
1885, the Brisson Ministry proposed a single bill allocating 30 million francs for the 
Tonkin expedition and 20 million francs for Madagascar. The measure was highly 
contested. The treaty of Tamatave was signed the 17th of December, 1885. News of the 
event arrived in the Chamber on the 23rd and in the midst of debate. The limited treaty, 
which promised to end hostilities and establish an informal protectorate, largely satisfied 
the anti-colonial opposition, some of whom proposed that a similar solution be applied in 
Tonkin. 

The proposition came to a vote on December 24, 1885, and passed with great 
difficulty by a vote of 274 to 270. The two largest parties voted en bloc; merely four 
Opportunists opposed the measure, while only a single Monarchist voted in favor. Seven 
of eight Socialists voted against, and the Radicals split, with 73 in favor and 84 opposed. 
The margin of victory was even slimmer than the final result demonstrates, as six 
representatives of the extreme left, all likely to oppose the measure, were engaged in 
runoff elections. 

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123 Affaires de Madagascar, 1884-6, De Freycinet to Partimonio, Consul Général, 13 November 
1885, 157 
124 Journal des débats, December 25, 1885, Chamber of Deputies 
125 Ganiage, L'expansion coloniale, 142-143
The difficulty with which Brisson obtained this last measure of funding for the Madagascar expedition clearly discouraged further actions on the isle in the short term. In 1894, Brisson would speak with regret of his inability to accomplish more in Madagascar, deterred by rising hostility to expansion.¹²⁶ The treaty itself represented a limited imposition upon Merina sovereignty. Under the terms of the treaty Madagascar became, essentially, an informal French protectorate. The Merina government paid a 10 million franc indemnity and adopted a 99-year lease system. The French took effective control of Madagascar’s foreign policy, but recognized the sovereignty of the queen in the interior. One occupied town, previously named Antsiranana, permanently became French Diego Suarez.¹²⁷

After two years, the French had attained a treaty that nominally addressed their most of their original demands, but achieved little actual change. Few essential issues were resolved; several would return to prompt the renewal of hostilities. During a period of domestic dissension, there proved little impetus for full annexation. The events of the following decade would unfold in another ideological climate, with entirely different results.

¹²⁶ *Annales, Chambres des députés. Débats parlementaires.* November 13 1894, 453-454. Discussed at greater length in Chapter IV.
¹²⁷ *Affaires de Madagascar, 1884-6, Treaty of 17 December 1885*, 174
Chapter III: the Victory of the Colonial Idea

This sixth edition comes at a moment more favorable than the initial few, at a moment when the anti-colonial passions seem to have been disarmed in Parliament and in the public. The time is past when we put the evacuation of Tonkin to vote in the Chamber of Deputies, when one of our finest possessions was saved only by a majority of a single vote, when the Statesman to who we are principally indebted for the acquisition of Tunis, of the Congo, of Madagascar, of Indochina, succumbed under the weight of a most unmerited unpopularity.128

--Alfred Rambaud, 1893, preface to the sixth edition of La France Coloniale

The quote above shows an imperialistic historian basking in a national climate that had never been more receptive to his ideas. What was clear to Rambaud then has only become more evident with time. This is therefore a chapter of limited ambition, as it seeks only to establish and describe a broadly accepted historical dynamic: that the imperial idea, which in 1885 was engaged in fierce combat with anti-colonial thought, had attained a truly dominant position in France by 1894. There is unusual consensus among historians on this subject. The greatest disagreements concern the scale, time, and causes of the shift towards expansionism, rather than the fact of the change itself. Some writers emphasize the popularization of the idea; others focus on the capture of decision makers; nearly all examine the role of several crucial pressure groups. A few authors locate 1889 as the beginning of the ascendance of the colonial movement; some pinpoint 1890. In either event, this section makes an essential yet uncontroversial claim: the ideological climate of 1894 was substantially more amenable to imperial expansion than that of 1885.

The 1880s were a period of fierce debate concerning the colonial enterprise; by the 1890s, the question had largely been resolved. The events of the Tunisian Affair and

128 Preface of La France Coloniale, by Alfred Rambaud, cited in Girardet, L’idée Coloniale en France, p. 94
the Tonkin expedition had sparked anti-colonial revolts in 1881 and 1885, toppling the
two ministries of Jules Ferry. Within nine years, debate transformed into consensus as
the ideal of the “civilizing mission” moved from the margins to the mainstream of
political discourse.

Certain organizations that appeared in the early 1890s serve as both a symptom
and a reinforcing cause of the rising strength of imperial ideology. The principal groups
were the groupe colonial de la Chambre, a caucus of sorts in the Chamber of Deputies;
the Comité de L’Afrique Française, a public pressure group popular with journalists and
publicists; and L’Union Colonial; a coterie of influential French businessmen. The
ensemble was often referred to as “le parti colonial”, and has been either credited with
(or blamed for) generating public and Parliamentary support for colonial expansion and
development.

These colonial groups built upon the limited success of the previous “geographic
movement” of the 1870s and 1880s. Yet while the geographic societies had published
periodicals informing and interesting the public on colonial matters, the colonial pressure
groups of the 1890s minted and dealt in political currency. The first visible roots of the
colonial movement begin with the first national French colonial congress, convened in
Paris during the Universal Exposition of 1889. The congress counted 312 members,
among them 18 deputies, 5 senators, and the ministers of foreign affairs and public

129 Although some sources refer to the Colonial Group of the Chamber as “le parti colonial”
130 Discussed briefly in Chapter I
Institution Press, 1983), 8
instruction. The group gathered with the goal of uniting “disparate colonial elements” into a single body capable of political action.\textsuperscript{132}

The following year, committed expansionists gathered to form the Comité de l’Afrique Française, with the stated aims of bringing the benefits of French civilization to the colonies, informing the public on colonial matters through a monthly bulletin, securing France’s “rightful share” of the African continent by supporting expansion and exploration, and pressing for reforms in colonial policy. “It goes without saying,” concluded the group’s first declaration, “that the aims of this Committee, formed as it is for purely patriotic reasons and without party political commitments, are completely disinterested and free from profit motives.”\textsuperscript{133} Critics may have concluded that the Committee protested too much, but the group contained far more journalists than businessmen, and few substantial ties to commercial interests.

A publicist by the name of Jules-Hippolyte Percher founded the committee and served as General Secretary until he became an unintended martyr to the cause, falling in a duel on March 1, 1895. Percher contributed frequently to the Journal des débats politiques et littéraires; an article he wrote concerning French possessions in Africa proved fatal when it caught the attention of M. Le Chatelier, the administrator of the Société d’études du Congo français. The two were ideologically aligned, yet when Le Chatelier wrote a letter of correction to the journal, Percher responded in a manner that his interlocutor found offensive. Attempts at conciliation failed, and the subsequent duel, supposedly held in the ballroom of the Moulin Rouge, took the life of M. Percher.\textsuperscript{134}

\textsuperscript{132} Persell, French Colonial Lobby, 7-8
\textsuperscript{133} Persell, French Colonial Lobby, 16
\textsuperscript{134} For the full story see Wilkinson, J.C. A fatal duel: 'Harry Alis' (1857-95), a behind the scenes figure of the early Third Republic. Antony Rowe Pub. 2009 asdf
Besides having a colorful founder, funded exploratory expeditions and propaganda efforts. Between 1891 and 1906, the Committee spent 460,000 franks funding missions to Dahomey, Sudan, Timbuktu, Chad, and Upper Tonkin. Over the same period, the Committee spent roughly a million francs on propaganda aimed at rallying national opinion to support various expansionary efforts. Techniques employed usually included an appeal to nationalistic tendencies and xenophobia. Paul Crampel led an exploratory mission to Sudan from 1889 to 1891 under the sponsorship of the Committee and framed his task in terms of patriotic calling. “France has a duty to expand in Africa,” he claimed. “Our duty is to realize the union of West, Central, and North Africa…we must do this to beat the Germans and English in establishing ourselves in this area.” The Committee obtained funding by selling subscriptions and drawing donations from a large base. However, the group operated with relatively small membership. The 29 members in 1890 included nine deputies and one senator. By 1901 there were 45 members, including 13 actual or former members of parliament.

Although at times referred to as le parti colonial, the Colonial Group of the Chamber, was not a political party, but rather a caucus drawn from a broad political spectrum. The party consisted entirely of deputies and was founded in 1892 with an impressive 91 members. This number rose to 200 by 1902. The July bulletin of the Comité de l’Afrique Française trumpeted the formation of a group “consisting of a large number of deputies belonging to different political tendencies but united by a desire to ensure France’s strength and greatness in colonial and foreign spheres.” The political and

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135 Within the area now known as Benin
136 Brunschwig, *French Colonialism*, 117
137 Persell, *Colonial Lobby*, 18
138 Brunschwig, *French Colonialism*, 113-117
139 Brunschwig, *French Colonialism*, 113
occupational demographics of the caucus were impressively diverse and largely reflected those of the chamber as a whole. Members included deputies of nearly every party. Of the deputies, two thirds sat in the center (with political alignment quite literally arranged by seating position) and were drawn from various Opportunist, or moderate, republican parties. Radicals were less numerous, and the fewest members were drawn from the Conservative wing. Support strengthened towards the center and weakened at either extreme, demonstrating that expansionist policy had successfully entered the political mainstream, while anti-colonial opposition had become a radical position. The occupations of the members also encompassed a broad range reflecting the composition of the entire chamber, indicating that no particular economic interest led or dominated the drive for expansion in Parliament.

Eugène Étienne, often viewed as a spiritual successor to Jules Ferry, founded the Colonial Group of the Chamber of Deputies. He never attained the same heights of office as Ferry; nevertheless, while operating under more favorable circumstances, he would aid and abet the largest colonial expansion in French history. The Oran business community funded Étienne’s first campaign for a position as deputy in 1881; Étienne immediately began a long career supporting expansion by becoming a prominent proponent for the occupation of Tunisia. He served the Undersecretary for the Colonies from 1887 to 1892 and used his position to agitate for imperial growth.

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140 Opportunist parties represented: Republicans, Republicans of the Left, Progressive Republicans, Members of the Left, the Republican Union, and Union of the Left
141 Radical parties represented: Radicals, Radical-Socialists, the Radical Left
142 Conservative parties represented: Boulangists, Revisionists, Republican Right, Liberal conservatives, Liberal Union
143 Brunschwig, French Colonialism, 108
144 detailed breakdown available at Brunschwig, French Colonialism, 110
145 Persell, Colonial Lobby, 11
were included within the Ministry of the Marine and colonies; Étienne initiated a push to establish an independent Ministry of the Colonies, and succeeded in 1894.146

Étienne held chaired the Colonial Group at its founding. August le Prince d’Arenberg, chairman of the Comité de L’Afrique Française, and Admiral Vallon, the former governor of Senegal, served as vice-chairmen. The group did not hold its members to strict rules or defined policies or operate as a political party in any traditional sense. However, it constituted a significant political bloc dedicated to the promotion and support of colonial expansion, marking a striking shift from the anti-colonial Chamber of 1885.

While politicians composed the groupe colonial and the Comité de L’Afrique Française disassociated itself from business interests, the Union Coloniale Française exclusively represented commercial concerns. At the formation of the Union in August 1803, the Comité de l’Afrique Française announced the creation of “a federation of the leading French business houses with interests in our colonies.” The Chairman, Mercet, also directed the Comptoir d’Escompte, a prominent French bank that lent the Merina Kingdom a substantial sum to cover the indemnity imposed by the Treaty of 1885.147 As Chapter IV details, this debt contributed to the already serious decay of the Merina State. Members of the Union represented banking, transport, and commercial firms with interests in the colonies. Unsurprisingly, the Union was well financed. Membership increased from 234 in 1893 to 485 in 1894, reaching a peak of 1,219 in 1900.

These three groups sought to inform the public of colonial affairs which they believed would never otherwise enter the popular consciousness. Eugène Étienne

147 Bruschwig, French Colonialism 120
reflected in 1910 that, “In France the attention of the great public does not attaché to a question until it has arrived to an acute state”. He emphasized that this held true for “all of the colonial questions”. In both 1885 and 1894, Madagascar entered the French parliamentary and media discourse only shortly before the initiation of journals. Although it is impossible to verify, the colonial groups took great pride in the belief that their informative efforts reached every level of society. In 1896, during a diplomatic spat with the English concerning a French attempt to establish a foothold in the Nile, the correspondent of the Times in Paris wrote an article describing the French public as ignorant of and disinterested in the subject. A member of the groupe colonial, François Deloncle, offered to take the English journalist on a tour of any region in France of his choosing, in order to prove that “there is not a hamlet where the Egyptian question is not known, and where its settlement is not ardently desired.” The English writer did not respond to this bombastic proposition.

ii. International Political and Economic Shifts

Pressure groups exerted significant influence on French colonial policy after 1890. They offer evidence of a shifting ideological climate; however, their role in the change should not be overstated. Economic conditions and geo-strategic considerations also shifted between 1885 and 1894. Economic struggles generally strengthened the appeal of arguments for expansion, while diplomatic agreements liberated French foreign policy on the European continent, allowing renewed concentration on expansion overseas.

148 Andrew, Colonialist Movement 152, citing Dépêche Coloniale, 5 July 1910.
149 Andrew, Colonialist Movement, 152
Most writers maintain that the colonies acquired by France in the 1880s and 1890s were largely unprofitable for the metropole. Nonetheless, prominent colonialists consistently sought to establish an economic logical for expansion. Even advocates of expansion at the time claimed that the benefits of direct control of distant lands would only be realized over the long term. They envisioned a future world economy divided by tariff walls into independent imperial blocs; industrial centers would maintain colonies as privileged markets for their exports. Eugène Étienne became one of the principal proponents of this worldview. A speech he gave in 1890 supporting the Dahomey expedition outlines the essence of his argument.

We have (in West Africa) a vast and immense domain which is ours to colonize and to make fruitful; and I think that, at this time, taking into account the world-wide movement of expansion, at the same time as foreign markets are closing against us, and we ourselves are thinking of our own market, I think, I repeat, that it is wise to look to the future and reserve to French commerce and industry those outlets which are open to her in the colonies and by the colonies.

Étienne claimed that the global drift towards protectionism necessitated direct control of foreign markets as outlets for domestic industry. The conception of colonies as outlets reveals a preoccupation with industrial policy and a fixation on exports colored by fear of rising trade barriers.

Conditions in the late 19th century appeared to confirm Étienne’s anxiety. French exports stagnated in the decade before the first Madagascar affair: total exports actually fell from 4,518 million francs in 1876 to 4,281 million in 1886. With a few exceptions, imports consistently exceeded exports until the turn of the century. In 1892,

150 Particularly D.K Fieldhouse, Henri Brunschwig, French Colonialism, Raymond Betts, Ronald Robinson Henri Brunschwig addresses the economic argument at length in *French Colonialism 1891-1914: Myths and Realities*, and concludes that the French Empire generally pursued expansion for psychological reasons, rather than in service to any economic rationale.


152 A viewpoint inherited from Ferry. See Chapter I.

153 Roberts, *History of French colonial policy*, 18
the year when the Mèline government imposed the first French import tariff since the Anglo-French accords of 1860, the annual trade deficit exceeded a million francs.\textsuperscript{154} The European economies and the United States experienced a prolonged period of deflation and low growth from 1873 to 1896. French agriculture suffered from falling prices, often blamed on competition with American grain.\textsuperscript{155} The colonialists were particularly sensitive to the last issue. Étienne asked the Chamber of Deputies in 1891,

...in the presence of that economic movement which has come out of America and which can neither be combated nor denied, and which to-day is invading the whole of Europe, what are you going to do with your products if you can no longer export them?\textsuperscript{156}

Tariff walls did indeed seem to be rising. Germany introduced a tariff system in 1884, while United States instituted the Mackinley tariff in 1890.\textsuperscript{157} The French followed with the Mèline tariff of 1892. Dire economic circumstances likely fanned the flames for the Boulanger crisis, when Republican France found itself threatened by a charismatic General.

In 1889, the immense personal popularity of General Boulanger seemed poised to shatter the Third Republic. The previous Minister of War drew attention with a series of reforms and aggressive rhetoric towards Germany, which earned him the name “Général Revanche”\textsuperscript{158} His following contained several of the elements that would later characterize the rise to power of fascist regimes in the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, including a paramilitary organization, the “League of Patriots”.\textsuperscript{159} On the 27\textsuperscript{th} of January, the

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{154} Brunschwig, \textit{French Colonialism}, Appendix I, 187. See this Appendix for trade with other powers and colonies.
\item \textsuperscript{155} Ganiage, \textit{L’expansion coloniale}, 144-5
\item \textsuperscript{156} \textit{Journal Officiel}, Deps, 2/12/91, p. 2381 cited in Roberts, \textit{History of French colonial policy} 17
\item \textsuperscript{157} Brunschwig, \textit{French Colonialism}, 85-6
\item \textsuperscript{158} General Revenge
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
General won a crushing victory in a race for a seat in the Chamber. Masses of supporters rallied to demand that he seize control of the government, while the coalition he had formed with monarchists in parliament seemed poised to take the general elections set for the end of the year. The nature of the Republic had been challenged since its founding; after the 1885 elections, nearly a third of the delegates professed their desire for a return to a monarchist regime as an essential aspect of their political platform. Meanwhile, the Republicans appeared to lack an effective leader, until the timely emergence of the minister of the interior, Ernest Constans. Intelligent and ruthless, he was known to occasionally refer to himself in private by the moniker the newspaper *Le Figaro* had coined—“old pirate.” Constans began to employ the police forces of Paris as a weapon against Boulanger’s paramilitaries, shadowing them to their meeting places and harassing them in public. Constans successfully intimidated the General and then let it be known that he intended to put the upstart to public trial in the Senate—a risky maneuver, considering the popularity of the man. However, Boulanger lost nerve and fled to Belgium. With the personal aura of the general in tatters, the movement dissipated.

The Boulanger affair demonstrates the volatility of French political life in 1889, the date of the first National Colonial Conference. Yet while the economy limped through the decade and the political system teetered briefly at the edge of the abyss, the years between 1885 and 1894 proved exceptionally fruitful for French diplomacy.

The Conference of Berlin of 1884-1885 was a remarkable moment in world history, a fact apparent at the time. A writer for the Journal des Débats wrote: “We are

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160 Fulton, “Boulanger,” 312
161 Fulton, “Boulanger,” 313
162 Fulton, “Boulanger,” 314
163 Fulton, “Boulanger,” 314-8
164 Ganiage, *L’expansion coloniale*, 145
witnessing a unique historical spectacle, the veritable partition of an unexplored continent by certain civilized nations of Europe.”165 The division of Africa aimed to avoid the possibility of distant disputes prompting a European conflagration. The conference is generally noted for the deliberate partition of much a continent by the colonial powers. A particular aspect of the accords reached had an especially profound impact. The recognition of the claim was made to be contingent upon effective occupation or exploitation of the territory in question. This system gave governments powerful incentives to approve and finance expeditions to effectuate their possession of the vast lands allocated by the agreement.166 The Conference inaugurated, or perhaps merely accelerated, what became known as the “Scramble for Africa”.

Madagascar was not dispensed to one power or another in the Conference Berlin, but two accords signed in 1890 would assure international respect for the French claim. On August 5th, the British Prime Minister Lord Salisbury announced the recognition of the French Protectorate over Madagascar in exchange for a reciprocal acknowledgement of British hegemony on the islands of Zanzibar and Temba.167 On November 17, the French established the same accord with the German Empire in exchange for French recognition of German rights to the continental portion of Zanzibar and the isle of Mafia.168 Salisbury gloated that England had gotten the best of the agreements: “the territories left to France are light, very light. The Gallic cock, which likes to scratch the

165 Persell, Colonial Lobby, 17
166 Brunschwig, French Colonialism, 73
167 Affaires de Madagascar, p. 24, 5 august 1890, Declarations exchanged between the Government of the French Republic and the Government of Her Majesty on the subject of African territories
168 Affaires de Madagascar, p. 24, 17 novembre 1890, M. Herbette, Ambassadeur de la République française à Berlin à S. Exe. le baron de Marschall, Secrétaire d'Etat pour les Affaires étrangères Berlin, le 17 novembre
ground, will be able to use his spurs on it. As for us, we keep the fertile region."\textsuperscript{169} His taunt may have been accurate; the accord would prove no less fateful for the history of the Malagasy.\textsuperscript{170} After 1890, France would operate in Madagascar with the assurance of impunity.

The international recognition of French dominance in Madagascar was soon followed by the strategic liberation of France on the European continent. Since the end of the Franco-Prussian war, German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck had consistently sought to isolate France from potential international allies. The Iron Chancellor succeeded during his tenure, but his resignation in 1890 marked a shift in German policy. Meanwhile, a crisis in Bulgaria in 1887 and irritation directed at the German tariff policy had strained Russo-German relations. On the 27\textsuperscript{th} of December, 1893, France concluded an alliance with Russia; the terms mandated Russian intervention in the event of a German or German-Italian assault on France, and French involvement in the event of a German or united German-Austro-Hungarian aggression against Russia. The accord relieved the insecurity of the “blue line of the Vosges”.\textsuperscript{171} The recession of a proximate menace would weaken the hand of “continentalists”, including Georges Clemenceau, who scorned colonial ambitions as a distraction from the true Germanic threat and the lost provinces of Alsace Lorraine.

\textbf{iii. Consensus of Change}

The imperial idea took hold in several major colonial powers in the 1890s. The reason why exceeds the scope of this thesis. Even a comprehensive review of the various

\textsuperscript{169} Bruschwig, \textit{French Colonialism}, 102
\textsuperscript{170} The term Malagasy refers to all inhabitants of the island considered to be indigenous (i.e. including the Merina people, of probable Polynesian lineage, but excluding European colonists).
\textsuperscript{171} Ganiage, \textit{L'expansion coloniale} 159-162
theories would merit extended study. Brunschwig diagnosed imperialism as a “nationalist fever” acquired as a result of the humiliation of 1870 and 1871.172 Persell refuted this notion, noting that anticolonialists such as Clemenceau were equally affected by the military defeat, but in the opposite direction. Persell instead credited the actions of pressure groups for the conversion of the general public to expansionary ideas.173 Fieldhouse used similar language as Brunshwig, but considered imperialism a transnational virus, an outcome of a “fevered nationalism” common to every colonial power at that time.174 Biondi described a gradual conquest of the opinion “that counts”, but as the result of an inexplicable and irreversible movement towards colonization; the rejection of Ferry in 1885 merely represented a temporary “counter-current”.175 Where Biondi saw currents, Roberts described a pendulum, in which the expansion of the two Ferry ministries provoked a prolonged backlash which gave way to the “forward policy of 1894-1906” that would yield in turn to a reaction enduring until the Great War.176 Ganiage saw a strategic trigger for expansion, feeling that the realignment of international politics in the 1890s allowed for a greater expression for the zeal to expand.177 Raymond Betts credited the influence of the alliance with Russia easing pressure in Europe; the decline of domestic opponents to expansion, with zealous resistance left only to the socialists; and the development of effective colonial pressure

172 Brunschwig, French Colonialism, 182
173 Persell, French Colonial Lobby
176 Roberts, History of French Colonial Policy, 13
177 Ganiage, L’expansion coloniale, 159-160
groups. The question drew much debate during the 19th century: socialists were inclined to blame the disproportionate influence of finance capitalists, while many imperialists at the time, such as Hanotaux and Ferry, claimed expansion to be a natural impulse of “civilized peoples”.

The explanations vary, but the fact is accepted; there is no serious dispute that the impulse to expand was substantially stronger in France in 1894, on the eve of another Franco-Malagasy diplomatic crisis, than in 1885, when an anti-colonial revolt in the French Chamber had helped bring an indecisive conflict on the great isle to an ambiguous conclusion.

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178 Betts, Assimilation and association, 4-6
179 Hobson, Lenin, and Marx
Chapter IV. The Second Madagascar Affair

Whether we wish it or whether we do not wish it, messieurs, whether we approve or censure, France is, like most European powers, entrained towards a policy of distant expansion which is not solely the result of a reasoned wish or a calculated design, but which is the natural result of this need for activity which counts among the best symptoms of health amongst the vigorous races. Despite serious difficulties, sometimes arduous disappointments, this tendency has been developing for fifteen years, since France regained her energy and strength. Madagascar offers our colonial activity, our political foresight, a field of action from which it would be truly unpardonable to avert our gaze.  

--Foreign Minister Gabriel Hanotaux, Chamber of Deputies, 13 November 1894

The French policies towards Madagascar in the 1880s and the 1890s illustrate how similar stimuli, occurring in different ideological climates, can evince divergent reactions from the same political system. In 1894, as in 1883, tension over the status of French legal privileges and the security of French nationals built into a diplomatic crisis. Negotiations foundered, as the domestic circumstances of the European power and the island kingdom made both actors inflexible. The French legislature responded far more strongly than in the prior decade, authorizing an expensive large-scale invasion.

i. Rising Diplomatic Tensions

The Treaty of 1885 left essential frictions unresolved. Either by deliberate obfuscation, or due to genuine confusion concerning the terms of the Treaty, the Merina Government resisted the implementation of French dominance of Malagasy foreign affairs. Meanwhile, despite a brief abeyance in violent disorder, French citizens and commercial interests in Madagascar remained physically insecure. Both the

181 The Merina would claim that certain articles in the text could only be interpreted in reference to an amending letter signed by Messieurs Miot and Patrimonio, who had been charged with the negotiation of a settlement in 1885. This letter, though signed by the Queen, was never ratified by the French assemblies.
182 Referred to here as “Malagasy,” because the French claimed to represent the entire island.
diplomatic tensions and the failure to provide security derived principally from the internal instability of the Merina state.

The diplomatic tensions centered on three main questions: the first concerns an apparent formality; the second, the control of communication by telegraph on the island; and third, the right of the Merina to import arms and munitions without French knowledge or consent. Of the three issues, the French government became the most distressed concerning the formality.

The Treaty of 1885 granted the French Republic control over Madagascar’s foreign relations. Various European powers employed consuls on the island to represent their interests; these consuls were recognized by the issuance of a legal document known as an *exequatur*. When the Merina Foreign Ministry continued to issue the *exequatur* to foreign consuls after 1885, the French Foreign Ministry interpreted this act as an abnegation of the treaty through the denial of French dominion over Malagasy foreign policy.

In September 1894, the French appointed Monsieur Le Myre de Viles as their Resident General. The Foreign Minister, Gabriel Hanotaux, wrote M. Le Myre de Viles to explicate the origins of the evolving diplomatic crisis. The *exequatur* featured prominently among his concerns. Hanotaux wrote that the Merina persistently ignored the second Article of the Treaty of 1885, which had made France, …the essential intermediary between the representatives of the Powers and the Hova Government….This consequence of the treaty was newly recognized and sanctioned following the accords reached in 1890 with Great Britain and Germany. The Hova Prime Minister, however, has refused just to today to execute the relevant clause. He has continued to claim the right to deliver the *exequatur* directly to the Representatives of the

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183 Affaires de Madagascar, Treaty of 17 December 1885, 41
184 This phrase used to refer to the major European colonial powers of the time. England and Germany are particularly relevant to this example
The Prime Minister certainly attempted to circumvent the authority of the Resident General over Malagasy foreign affairs. However, the German and English consuls displayed little interest in conspiracy, reacting rather with confusion; as Hanotaux mentions in his letter, the relevant Powers had recognized French supremacy in the great isle in 1890. The risk that the German or British representatives would treat with the Merina Prime Minister regarding essential matters was consequently slight.

Hanotaux acknowledged this reality, but nonetheless insisted upon the intrinsic importance of the *exequatur*. While speaking to the French Chamber of Deputies on November 13 1894, Hanotaux claimed that the issue of documentation was,

…a question not of pure form, as we sometimes said to attenuate the importance of this fundamental grievance, but a basic issue, if there ever was one, for it affects the very existence of the treaty of 1885.  

Other comments and writings by Hanotaux reveal that his concerns lay in the legal recognition of the treaty, rather than fear that French control of the island’s foreign relations would be challenged. He repeatedly emphasized the liberty of French action from interference of other powers, writing that, “from an international perspective, our situation in Madagascar…will not be contested.” He would restate this conviction when speaking to the Chamber of Deputies in November, 1894, “France may feel free of all engagement in regards to foreign powers.” The accords of 1890 guaranteed that

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185 *Affaires de Madagascar 1885-1895*, M. Hanotaux, Ministre des Affaires étrangères, to M. Le Myre de Vilers, Plénipotentiaire, 12 septembre 1894, 41
187 *Affaires de Madagascar 1885-1895*, p. 40-41. M. Hanotaux to M. de Vilers
188 With Germany and Great Britain recognizing the French Protectorate in Madagascar. Reviewed in Chapter 3.
French claims would go uncontested; the declaration by Lord Salisbury had even explicitly stated that the British government recognized the French protectorate “especially as regards the exequaturs of British Consuls and Agents, which must be applied for through the intermediary of the French Resident general.”¹⁸⁹ For Hanotaux, these treaties represented principal shift since the signature of the Treaty of 1885: “This was, at least, the result of the nine elapsed years. On this point of view, they were not inactive.”¹⁹⁰

Evidently, the Foreign Minister understood that the direct issuance of *exequatur* was highly unlikely to result in actual illicit dealings¹⁹¹ between the Merina and the European powers. He was nonetheless highly preoccupied by the issue, and claimed that this formality represented an integral portion of official recognition for French sovereignty over Malagasy foreign affairs. The control over external relations would compose the greater part of M. Hanotaux’s aims in establishing a protectorate; therefore, the question of consular documentation occurred to him as a pressing concern. French irritation on the subject appears genuine, and not a pretext for outrage.

While the French Foreign Ministry apparently regarded the issuance of the *exequatur* as a principal disturbance in tranquil relations with the Merina government, other ills posed an immediate threat to French citizens on the island. In 1893, the Resident General M. Larrouy¹⁹² warned of the probable future recurrence of a prior dispute with the Merina Prime Minister. On the 6 of June, 1893, he informed Hanotaux’s

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¹⁹¹ “illicit” from the French perspective, as they believed the Merina were violating international law
¹⁹² Relieved by Le Myre De Vilers in 1894
predecessor as Foreign Minister, M. Develle, that the Merina Prime Minister had displayed the intention “to take direct control of the telegraph” lines on the island. Larrouy wrote: “I hope that this new attempt will have no more effect than those which he made in 1888 and in 1891 to relieve us of the administration of this service. I have taken measures to obstruct (his aim)” . Develle responded with rather less sangfroid, writing that such an action by the Prime Minister “would be considered in France, in the current circumstances, as an act of declared hostility, and could bring grave consequences.”

A physical menace complemented the threat to channels of communication. Larrouy reported foreboding evidence that the Prime Minister was ordering large importations of modern arms and munitions. However, he clarified that the threat did not lie in the armaments themselves, but in the “excitation that the possession of these engines of war is of the nature to provoke in the mind of the Prime Minister and of the indigenous”. The new technology, by promising a shift in the balance of power among indigenous and colonists on the island, inflamed repressed currents of xenophobia among the local populace. This, in turn, spurred aggressive action from the Merina Government; Larrouy wrote that the “measures taken by the Hovas … become each day more audacious”.

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193 Affaires de Madagascar 1885-1895, M. Larrouy, Résident Général, to M. Develle, Ministre des Affaires étrangères, 29 June 1893. 19
194 Affaires de Madagascar 1885-1895, M. Larrouy, Résident Général, to M. Develle, Ministre des Affaires étrangères, 29 June 1893. 19
195 “Hova”, in fact the term for the governing class or elite caste of the Merina people, was employed by the French to refer to the Merina as a whole.
196 Affaires de Madagascar 1885-1895, M. Larrouy to M. Devell, 30 June 1893 p. 20
Develle responded that the arms imports were an unnecessary aggression “of which public opinion in France begins to be greatly preoccupied”\textsuperscript{197} and ordered the Resident to demand an explanation from the Prime Minister.\textsuperscript{198} Rainilaiarivony responded that he had the legal right to purchase arms for purposes of security, and that internal instability necessitated armament.\textsuperscript{199} Develle remained unimpressed. “If the Hova government is impotent,” he responded tersely, “we would be obliged to examine the dispositions to take to guarantee order and security ourselves.”\textsuperscript{200}

Chaos in Madagascar troubled the French for two reasons. The conventions and practice of international law demanded a stable partner able to sign and uphold legal agreements. In addition, the French colonization and commercial investment required basic physical security and infrastructure. The Merina state was poorly equipped to fulfill either task. The Merina were never truly masters of the isle, but were recognized as such by the Europeans only for the purposes of the latter. In reality, the Court of Emyrne failed to control large areas of the island, and remained ineffective in the regions of its dominion. The Sakalaves reigned in the West and the Bara in the South, while fugitive bands, often composed of escaped slaves or discontented serfs, promoted anarchy.\textsuperscript{201}

French citizens and commercial interests suffered as an inevitable result. 1894, as in 1883, marked a period of apparently increasing crime against European residents or merchants on the island. The Resident General intermittently reported assaults, robberies,

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{197} \textit{Affaires de Madagascar 1885-1895} Develle to Larrouy 11 August 1893, 22
\item \textsuperscript{198} \textit{Affaires de Madagascar 1885-1895}, Develle to Larrouy 11 August 1893, 22
\item \textsuperscript{199} \textit{Affaires de Madagascar 1885-1895}, Larrouy to Develle, 6 November 1893, 25
\item \textsuperscript{200} \textit{Affaires de Madagascar 1885-1895}, Develle to Larrouy, 14 November 1893, 25-26
\item \textsuperscript{201} Randrianja and Ellis, \textit{Short History}, 132
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
kidnappings, and murders committed against French citizens. Hanotaux succinctly described the systemic origins of the violence:

Due to the weakness of the central Government, the country is profoundly troubled. The provinces are desolated by bands of outlaws (fahavalos) which pillage the isolated habitations or villages, render communication between different centers nearly impossible, and do not hesitate to attack foreign resident or travelers.

The Foreign Minister’s objections extended beyond irritation with the inability of the Merina to prevent acts of violence. As in 1883, the French Government became frustrated with the failure of the Merina state to match European judicial standards, and grew alarmed at the apparent escalation in the frequency and gravity of the offenses committed against foreign residents. Hanotaux wrote that these “aggressions become more and more frequent” while,

…the local authorities have taken no serious measure to put an end to these disorders, so that they seem, if not provoked, then at least encouraged by inaction.

It is impossible to determine if violence was, in fact, increasing at this time, or if xenophobia and government inaction contributed to the targeting of French citizens. But it is clear that the French Government and public, as in 1883, believed that the level of violence against colonists was increasing. This perception may have resulted from increased public awareness, an actual spike in disorder, or a convergence of the two.

While complaining of the disorder, the French simultaneously refused to acknowledge their complicity in the enfeeblement of the Merina state and failed to comprehend that the issues they confronted in Madagascar were almost entirely symptomatic of the instability that Merina fragility engendered. Certain French observers

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202 Particularly accounts of attacks in September and October 1893, resulting in the deaths of two Frenchmen and the additional kidnapping of two citizens. See Affaires, p. 26
203 *Affaires de Madagascar 1885-1895*, Hanotaux to Le Myre de Vilers, 12 September 1894, 42
204 *Affaires de Madagascar 1885-1895*, Hanotaux to Le Myre de Vilers, 12 September 1894, 41-42
repeatedly confused banditry for political violence, and the weakness of the Merina Government for deliberate hostility. Others, notably Gabriel Hanotaux, understood the role of interior disorder in the present diplomatic tensions but maintained that an expedition, and a more robust enforcement of the protectorate system, would cure both ills. Only a minority in the Chamber noted that the expedition had been commanded to “reestablish” a level of order that had never existed in the history of the isle. Rebellions following the French occupation reflected this reality; regions that had never bowed to the capital did not lose their taste for independence upon the arrival of the French flag.

Although the French desired stability in Madagascar, they had also undermined it. The two-year blockade had devastated the island’s economy and the Treaty of 1885 imposed an indemnity of 15 million francs on an empty treasury. The Merina were forced to borrow 15 million francs from a French bank, the Comptoir National d’Escompte, at an interest rate of 6 percent. The bank seized the customs receipts of main ports as security, but this measure did not suffice. In a gross abuse of the traditional *corvée* system, Prime Minister Rainilaiarivony forced peasants to work without pay panning gold. Payments were made regularly until 1895, but at a steep cost. Forced labor spurred unrest, including mass desertions; many of these alienated peasants joined marauding bands, further contributing to the general disorder.

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205 Both the proposition voted unanimous to uphold French rights (held January 22, 1894) and the command allocating 65 million francs to the expedition (November 26, 1894) included the words “to reestablish order).
206 From 1883 to 1885
207 Randrianja & Ellis, *Short History* 137
208 An example of the Corvee system.
209 Randrianja & Ellis, *Short History*, 152
This disorder, and the apparent “impotence” of the Merina government, led to incidents that the French often interpreted as evidence of hostility. Ellis and Randrianja wrote that: “French diplomats often believed that indignities inflicted on French citizens were the result of political hostility, and failed to recognize the government’s weakness and administrative incapacity.”

This prescription certainly applied to the French Chamber, and perhaps much of the Foreign Ministry. However, certain French diplomats recognized the link between political instability in Madagascar and the conflict between the French and Merina governments, over both diplomatic and security concerns.

Gabriel Hanotaux’s writings indicate a particularly nuanced understanding of the dynamic between domestic disturbance and diplomatic tensions. In the aforementioned letter to M. Le Myre de Viles, Hanotaux wrote that the current difficulties arose both from the “ill will of the Prime Minister” and also “the internal crisis that currently traverses Madagascar.” Yet, Hanotaux’s recognition of the weakness of the Merina state hardly prevented him from taking a hard line with regards to the physical safety of French citizens. He wrote to Le Myre de Viles that,

…if the Court of Emyrne, either by ill will, or by impotence, does not discharge of the duty which falls to it, we will find ourselves obliged to take measures to guarantee ourselves the security of our nationals and of other foreign residents.”

Events revealed these words as more than a euphemistic threat. By 1894 French irritation had built considerably. The aggravating factors—a legal dispute, control of foreign affairs, and the physical security of French citizens and investments—were highly reminiscent of the crisis of 1883. However, the reaction in France would proceed quite differently.

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210 Randrianja & Ellis, Short History, 149
211 Affaires de Madagascar 1885-1895, Hanotaux to Le Myre de Vilers, 12 September 1894, 41-42
ii. Negotiation

The French and Merina Foreign Ministries attempted to forge a diplomatic solution. Unfortunately both sides, constrained by their own domestic politics, proved inflexible. Foreign Minister Gabriel Hanotaux appointed Charles le Myre de Vilers as Resident General with a specific mandate to open negotiations with the Merina Prime Minister, Rainilaiarivony. The Foreign Minister defined the emissary’s goals in reference to a proposition, unanimously accepted by the Chamber of Deputies on 22 January 1894, which resolved “to support the Government in that which it undertakes to maintain our situation and our rights in Madagascar, to reestablish order, to protect our nationals, and to uphold respect for the flag”.

Minister Hanotaux strictly constrained Le Myre de Vilers with his instructions and, ultimately, gave him no scope to negotiate at all. While Foreign Minister gave the Resident the broad aim of ensuring the “entire and loyal application of the principles posed in the Treaty of 17 December 1885”, he also outlined highly specifically goals concerning French control over Madagascar’s exterior relations, commerce, infrastructure development, and arms importations. This mostly involved the more robust enforcement of specific clauses from the Treaty of 1885. Concerning foreign relations, the French would “reclaim the right for the Resident General to serve as the intermediary between the Hova government and Foreign Powers…(including) that which concerns the

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212 Rainilaiarivony had held power since 1864
213 *Affaires de Madagascar 1885-1895*, Hanotaux to Le Myre de Vilers, 12 September 1894, 43
214 *Affaires de Madagascar 1885-1895*, Hanotaux to Le Myre de Vilers, 12 September 1894, 43
recognition of these agents”, a clear reference to the *exequatur*. In addition, Hanotaux mandated that any new agreement guarantee liberty of commerce and the forced implementation of certain public works, including the repair or establishment of telegraph lines and inland roads. Finally, France would control the importation of arms into the island in exchange for a vow “to assist the queen in defense of her states.”

Hanotaux offered no room for compromise, or even for true negotiation; he merely sent M. de Vilers the exact text of a proposed treaty, and instructed him to refuse any alterations while using both his own “powers of persuasion,” and the menace of the French fleet, to obtain the signature of Rainilaiarivony. It was essentially an ultimatum rather than a proposal. If the French emissary were to receive a formal refusal, he was instructed to immediately evacuate himself and the French residents from the capital of Tananarive. He would retain the right to agree the same terms if the Merina were to change their disposition following a breakdown in negotiations; he could not, however, modify the text itself.

Hanotaux designed the treaty to respond to a variety of French interests and complaints while offering few concessions in exchange, save the withholding of military force. The treaty would satisfy French demands for control of diplomatic relations enforcing the intermediary role of the Resident General. The French would also exert some control over exploitation of the island, by obtaining veto power over any

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215 *Affaires de Madagascar 1885-1895*, Hanotaux to Le Myre de Vilers, 12 September 1894, 43-44
216 *Affaires de Madagascar 1885-1895*, Hanotaux to Le Myre de Vilers, 12 September 1894, 44-5
217 *Affaires de Madagascar 1885-1895*, Hanotaux to Le Myre de Vilers, 12 September 1894, 44-45
218 *Affaires de Madagascar 1885-1895*, Hanotaux to Le Myre de Vilers, 12 September 1894, 44
commercial concessions granted by the queen to foreign nationals.\(^{219}\) The treaty would address security concerns by granting the French government unprecedented license to post any and all “forces that it will judge necessary to assure the security of its citizens and of foreign residents.” In addition, demonstrating a perhaps warranted lack of faith in the Merina government, the draft would guarantee the Government of the Republic the right to “undertake works of public utility,” including ports, roads, telegraphs, canals, et cetera, and, crucially, the right “to collect the consequent taxes” in the event that the Government of the Queen would not carry out said works. Finally, the last article of the treaty declared that, “in case of difficulties of interpretation” the French text would prevail.\(^{220}\) This clause did not merely reflect a typically French tendency to assert linguistic primacy; the Government of the Queen had frequently claimed that discrepancies between the Merina and French texts of the Treaty of 1885 were at the root of disagreements.

Charles le Myre de Vilers arrived in the Madagascar on the 8\(^{th}\) of October, 1894. He reported an ominous atmosphere: “a great excitement reigns among the Frenchmen and the indigenous, who consider war inevitable. The Malagasy government multiplies its armaments.”\(^{221}\) Frequent telegrams between M. de Vilers and Hanotaux reveal the tenor, dynamic, and outcome of negotiations.

The talks began disastrously. After an initial meeting the night of the 19\(^{th}\) of October, 1894, the Prime Minister and the French representative agreed to meet the following morning at 10 o’clock. Rainilvirony, at this point sixty-six years old, and often afflicted by illness, did not arrive. Having traveled from France specifically for that

\(^{219}\) *Affaires de Madagascar 1885-1895*, Hanotaux to Le Myre de Vilers, 12 September 1894, 45

\(^{220}\) *Affaires de Madagascar 1885-1895*, Hanotaux to Le Myre de Vilers, 12 September 1894, 45

\(^{221}\) *Affaires de Madagascar 1885-1895*, Le Myre de Vilers to Hanotaux, 8 October 1894, 47
meeting, Le Myre de Vilers, “conforming to instructions,” deposed the treaty proposition with aides to the Prime Minister and set a deadline for the response at the 26th of October at six in the evening. In the event of a refusal or a failure to respond, “the evacuation of French civilians and missionaries” would begin.222

The deadline did not arrive without a meeting; however, the conversation did not prove fruitful. A conference was eventually set for the 22 of October; it began inauspiciously. Le Myre de Vilers opened by remarking, that, in accordance with his instructions: “Regularly, I should not be here, for the conference of the ultimatum closed the negotiations. It is in consideration of my amicable relations with Your Excellence that I rendered myself at your invitation.”223 Rainilivirony thanked Le Myre de Vilers for his arrival and deposited a counterproposal to the French treaty224. He alluded to domestic difficulties that motivated his response.

De Vilers replied frankly, and with remarkable insight. First, he underlined an issue that would become heavily contested in the aftermath of military operations: “The Government of the Republic does not desire to intervene in the interior administration of the Kingdom”.225 This statement reflected exactly the stance of the Foreign Ministry, which held that French national interests would be better served by government through proxy rather than direct administration.226

222 *Affaires de Madagascar 1885-1895*, Le Myre de Vilers to Hanotaux, 20 October 1894 47
223 Le Myre de Vilers received this post in light of previous time spent on the island, so his reference to friendly relations with the Prime Minister reflects prior meetings rather than mere formalities.
224 *Affaires de Madagascar 1885-1895*, Procès-Verbal de la conference du 22 October 1894, 48
225 Le Myre de Vilers, unlike Hanotaux, refers to the document more accurately as an “ultimatum”
226 *Affaires de Madagascar 1885-1895*, Procès-Verbal de la conference du 22 October 1894, 48-49
227 For the debate between the system of protectorate and annexation, see later in this chapter.
Second, he warned that the initiation of combat would mark a point of no return. He remarked that, “Once war has been declared, we will no longer be able to stop its course and, by the force of events, we will have to impose our domination over you”.

The eventual drive to annexation reveals this comment to be particularly prescient. The French diplomat also bluntly dismissed the possibility of a Merina victory at arms.

So that Your Excellence holds no illusion; the result of the war is not in doubt; it will be a terrible crushing of the Malagasy people. European armies are currently organized in such a fashion that resistance is not possible without a long and knowing preparation and without perfected armament…the result is mathematically certain. If I speak to you thus, it is not out of contempt for the Malagasy; your soldiers could be as brave as possible; they will be inevitably defeated nevertheless.

The course of the conflict would vindicate this view, exposing an astounding differential of military capability between the European colonial power and the most powerful kingdom of a fragmented island. The technological disparity was such that the allocation of 15,000 troops resembled a misappropriation of force; a far smaller party formed the column that took the capital.

Le Myre de Vilers concluded his remarks to the aging Malagasy Prime Minister by stating the futility of further dialogue due to the heavy limits imposed upon his personal authority.

I cannot modify the draft treaty which was deliberated in the Council of the cabinet and in the presence of the President of the Republic. I cannot accept the least change and I am obliged to return to the same point. Will Your Excellence accept it, yes or no?

Rainilhivony rejected the binary of war or surrender. He submitted a counter-proposal accompanied by a lengthy summary of grievances against French aggression. Le Myre de Vilers transmitted the draft to Hanotaux, but denigrated it as “a ridiculous counter-project giving us partial satisfaction for external relations,” diminishing the advantages of

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228 Affaires de Madagascar 1885-1895, Procès-Verbal de la conference du 22 October 1894, 50
229 Affaires de Madagascar 1885-1895, Procès-Verbal de la conference du 22 October 1894, 49
230 Affaires de Madagascar 1885-1895, Procès-Verbal de la conference du 22 October 1894, 50
the treaty of 1885 and compromising “the security of our nationals.” M. de Vilers did not send the counter-proposal for serious consideration, certain that it would be declined, but forwarded it on the 26th—the expiration date of the French ultimatum—as a record of the failure of negotiations. The small French population of Tananarive evacuated to the coast at dawn on the 27th of October.

The Merina Prime Minister entered negotiations with constraints that were less specific, although no less significant, than those of his counterpart. The superiority of French records allows for greater illumination of their motives than those of the Merina. However, it is possible to examine how the diplomatic crisis, culminating in the refusal of the ultimatum, reflected the dynamics of Malagasy politics and of the interaction between the Malagasy monarchy and the French Republic.

M. de Vilers blamed internal Malagasy politics for the failure of negotiations. He wrote to Hanotaux that Rainilaiarivony “felt his authority menaced” following the conclusion of the Treaty of 1885, and “could not consent to new concessions which…could induce a revolution”.231 The aging autocrat found himself caught between “two perils” of external and internal enemies. He chose to confront the more remote threat, hoping “to win time and to profit from a European incident which would turn out attention away from the affairs of Madagascar.” Le Myre de Vilers determined that this very policy had succeeded “for thirty years”.232 Now, apparently, his time was running out.

The insecurity of the Prime Minister combined with inherent corruptions in the Merina political system to make a resolution improbable. De Vilers referred to a

231 *Affaires de Madagascar 1885-1895*, Le Myre de Vilers to Hanotaux, 5 novembre, 54-55
232 *Affaires de Madagascar 1885-1895*, Le Myre de Vilers to Hanotaux, 5 novembre, 55
“divided oligarchy, who preoccupy themselves more with infighting than with the destiny of the country. In these conditions, negotiations threatened to become eternal”.\textsuperscript{233}

Oligarchs composed Rainaiarivony’s council; a strong faction among them surely opposed peace on French terms. During the conference, M. de Vilers alluded to the influence of such a group.

His Excellence will tell me, perhaps, that his cabinet does not agree; in all the countries of the world, it is so; everywhere there are violent men who push for extreme decisions, and then, once misfortune has arrived, they reject responsibility onto the chief, who they push into the abyss. For Your Excellence knows it well: the situation for Madagascar is excessively grave.\textsuperscript{234}

The Prime Minister lacked the strength to oppose his near enemy; conflict with the distant enemy then appeared inevitable.

Rainaiarivony’s counterproposal reveals what the Merina government could and could not concede; what they believed may assuage the French; and what minor distinctions would compel 15,000 French marines to depart for the great African isle. The counter-proposal did not touch upon the issue of the \textit{exequatur}, but did provide that the Queen would formally recognize the French Resident, reinforcing the legal recognition of French dominion over Malagasy foreign affairs. However, internal affairs, including the granting of concessions and control of public works projects, would remain under the control of the Court of Emyrne. The draft linked the French desire for security to the Merina wish to import arms: the Malagasy would protect French citizens, while the French navy would not block importations of arms and munitions.\textsuperscript{235}

\textsuperscript{233} \textit{Affaires de Madagascar 1885-1895}, Le Myre de Vilers to Hanotaux, 5 novembre, 55

\textsuperscript{234} \textit{Affaires de Madagascar 1885-1895}, Procès-Verbal de la conference du 22 October 1894,

\textsuperscript{235} \textit{Affaires de Madagascar 1885-1895}, Le Myre de Vilers to Hanotaux, 28 October 1894, Counter-proposal of Hova Government, 52-53
A substantial portion of the draft treaty concerned the administration of justice—a topic of frequent French complaint. Yet Rainaiarivony’s proposal also hints at similar Merina grievances. French security forces would be commanded to refrain from arresting Malagasy citizens in lieu of referring cases to local authorities. When crime occurred between Malagasy and French citizens, both governments would confer “to complete judgment of the case.” If the plaintiff were a Malagasy citizen, the trial would occur in a local tribunal; were the plaintiff a Frenchman, it would be held in the French Residence. Any commercial or contractual disputes involving a French citizen or company and the Merina government would be judged in Madagascar by a mixed tribunal. Finally, the French navy would not disembark troops on the island for any military exercises; both governments would name delegates to delimit the French controlled bay of Diego-Suarez; and the treaty itself would be transcribed in both French and Malagasy, with each version of equal weight.236

Le Myre de Vilers reviewed the counterproposal in a telegram to the Foreign Minister. He noted that the Prime Minister, “knowing the importance that we attach to foreign relations,” had offered the French a limited measure of satisfaction. The Resident General also highlighted the proposed continuance of Malagasy control over the granting of commercial concessions and the registry of contracts. He particularly noted that the Prime Minister hoped “to induce us to renounce our requirements in that which touches military forces; on this last point, it would have been impossible for him to accept our propositions; the Queen would not have ratified the Treaty.”237 This comment is intriguing, as that the Queen held little actual power while the Prime Minister had

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236 *Affaires de Madagascar 1885-1895*, Le Myre de Vilers to Hanotaux, 28 October 1894, Counter-proposal of Hova Government, 53
237 *Affaires de Madagascar 1885-1895*, Le Myre de Vilers to Hanotaux, 5 November 1894, 56
commanded the state since 1864, and also considering that she was his wife, and the second queen he had married. Of the two, Rainilaiarivony was the more enduring political figure. There is little reason to believe that the French diplomat, having had prior experience of Malagasy politics, was unaware of any of this. Yet Le Myre de Vilers remained convinced that the Queen, perhaps fearing the destruction of her own personal legitimacy, would defy her husband to avoid endorsing the free operation of a foreign military upon her sovereign land.

Unfortunately, obstinacy only served to invite invasion. Before hostilities commenced, the European power and the Merina kingdom sought a diplomatic solution. However, both the French emissary and the Malagasy Prime Minister operated under tight constraints imposed by their respective domestic political contexts. Negotiations foundered as common ground proved inaccessible.

### iii. French Reaction to Events in Madagascar

The failure of negotiations triggered a forceful response. The French reaction to reports of growing instability in Madagascar can be examined largely through the action of the French Assembly. In the Third Republic, much power lay in the hands of the bicameral legislature—a legacy of the fall of the Second Empire, and the chaotic formation of a Republic under siege. Revolt within the Chamber of Deputies frequently toppled ruling cabinets. Two ministries of Jules Ferry foundered on the shoals of opposition to Empire. In 1885, the Chamber restrained the Government’s ambitions in

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238 See Chapter 3 for changes in the composition of the French Chamber and Senate between 1885 and 1893, and the rise of le parti colonial.

239 In 1881, following annexation of Tunis, and in 1885, as detailed in Chapter II.
Madagascar. The 1890s were an entirely different climate. Rather than arrest the imperial aims of an activist cabinet, the French Chambers not only supported expansion overseas from 1891 to 1896; they also pressed the standing ministry to adopt more aggressive policies. By the 1890s, the anti-colonial voices that typified the Chamber of 1885 had been marginalized and overwhelmed, while the loudest acclamations were reserved for staunch members of *le parti colonial*.

The case of Madagascar exemplifies this shift in French political thought. In 1885, a surge in anti-colonial opinion constrained an already modest expedition, forcing the conclusion of an ambiguous treaty of limited scope. In the 1890s, a pro-expansionist Assembly goaded the government to aggressive action; passed in a single vote a credit exceeding the expense of the entire first expedition; authorized a large military deployment to a distant and largely unprofitable island; and, against the wishes of the government, rejected a treaty establishing a French protectorate in favor of complete annexation of the island.

Parliamentary records show that the dominant impulse of the French Assembly was to support expansionary measures of various forms. On the 29 of October, 1891, the Chamber of Deputies voted for a proposition—suggested by a deputy, and not by the government—to establish allocate 100,000 francs “destined to favor French immigration to Madagascar,” to defend French rights, and to pursue further French establishment on the island. François de Mahy, who had twice served as Minister of the Marine and had long advocated colonization of Madagascar, defended the proposition before the assembly. His discourse is equally notable for the evidence of an ideological
commitment to imperial expansion and the frequent goading by interrupting deputies, who consistently encouraged de Mahy to call for more forceful action.

François de Mahy adopted a line of argument typical of 19th century European imperialists: emigration weakened France by “a mortal waste of blood and gold,” while a colonial project could redirect “the current of emigration that today carries itself elsewhere, to the detriment of France.” Though he pressed the importance of the issue, M. de Mahy diminished his own aims, stating, “I do not claim a very energetic policy”. Another deputy objected to this approach: “You are wrong not to claim an energetic policy!”

“I would like to do so,” M. de Mahy assured his colleague, “but,” he demurred, “I am not going to ask for an extremely energetic policy.” While M. de Mahy spoke cautiously of the measure, other deputies in the chamber urged a more aggressive stance. At one point, de Mahy attempted to reconcile any who might fear that the credit might lead to more aggressive or expensive measures. Rather than assuage concerns of overextension, he only aroused the spirits of the expansionists.

“Therefore, messieurs, in voting this augmentation of credit you will do nothing imprudent”, De Mahy insisted. “The Government will be able to act with all the prudence that it wishes—I do not wish to say with all the timidity that it wishes—but, finally, I accept even timidity.” The transcript of the debate notes “strong denials” from the Chamber. The Minister of Foreign Affairs objected:

“But I, I do not accept it.” Another deputy, M. le colonel baron de Plazanet, concurred: “You go too far in saying timidity, dear colleague!” De Mahy, responded to the loud support for his higher ambitions:

240 Annales. Chambre des députés. Débats parlementaires. October 29, 1891, 113
“And I declare to you that it is not an oratorical trick that I employed to bring the Chamber to this manifestation that it comes to make, and which shows very clearly that it does not want a policy of timidity. (Strong approval) But what do you want! such is the habit! We had in Madagascar a policy of extreme timidity, which brought about a result…

“A Deplorable (result)!“ another deputy interjected.241 A short time later, a M. de Cazenove de Pradine advised de Mahy to “Demand much firmness (from the government) to have a little. “242 De Mahy’s response, and the interruption it provoked, indicate how far the debate concerning the allocation of a credit had exceeded its original scope, and show the extent to which the Assembly instinctively pushed the Government towards expansionary policies. François de Mahy responded directed to his interjector:

My dear colleague...I understand this interruption...but I cannot associate myself with it. I am not an adversary of the Government; I do not come here to make an act of opposition; I come only, messieurs, to ask the Government to use the force which you will give it if I have the good fortune to obtain your acquiescence, to accomplish in the Indian Ocean a better policy that that which was implemented up to the present…243

Baron de Plazanet shouted: “A French policy!” This assertion of the intrinsic connection between an expansionary colonial policy and French patriotism went unopposed. In 1885, Clemenceau had lambasted Jules Ferry for wasting French blood and treasure on foreign adventures, and succeeded in taunting the Minister out of office. By 1891, even minor measures of imperial expansion were associated with patriotism in the Chamber of Deputies without any objection.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs, then M. Ribot, made an unusual spectacle in Republican politics, by accepting the funds offered by the legislature with a reservation:

“Without doubt, the honorable M. de Mahy does not intend to oblige the government to use this credit immediately and without examination?” The proffered...

241 Annales. Chambre des députés. Débats parlementaires. October 29, 1891, 113
funding, evidently, had resulted from enthusiasm from the Legislature rather than a pressing need expressed by the Ministry. Nevertheless, Ribot concluded that, if the intention of the proposition was merely to demonstrate “that we will not have a policy of abandoning (Madagascar)…” and if this is the “moral and political significance” attached to the measure, the Foreign Minister resolved to accept the unrequested funds.²⁴⁴

Before the vote, a final exchange between a deputy and a moderator of the debate exemplified the gap between the actual content of the proposition, and the manner in which the pro-colonial deputies regarded it. While announcing the vote, a reporter referred to the proposition as a budgetary measure. A supporter objected: “It is not a budgetary vote, but a vote of principle!” The credit passed by a wide margin.

In 1894, it was Ministry of Foreign Affairs that brought issues concerning Madagascar to the attention of the Chamber. The deputies responded with no less enthusiasm. On the 22 of January, 1894, as reports of diplomatic tension and violence against French citizens increased in frequency, the Chamber voted unanimously to “uphold French rights” on the island. The proposition resolved that the Chamber would support the Government in efforts to “maintain our situation and our rights in Madagascar, to reestablish order, to protect our nationals, (and) to uphold respect for the flag.”²⁴⁵ The measure also allowed the allocation of an addition 200 troops to garrison Réunion, and the same number to the crucial Malagasy port of Diego Suarez.

By November, the French Government had resolved for drastic action. On November 13, 1894, the Ministry deposed before the Chamber of Deputies a proposition to allocate 65 million francs for a military expedition in Madagascar. The expense would

²⁴⁴ *Annales. Chambre des députés. Débats parlementaires.* October 29, 1891, 114
²⁴⁵ *Affaires de Madagascar 1885-1895,* Casimer-Perier, Président du Conseil, to M. Larrouy, Résident général, 26 January 1894, 27
exceed that of all credits afforded to the French military operations in Madagascar between 1883 and 1885. Those measures had met increasing resistance. The exposition by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, then Gabriel Hanotaux, and the subsequent debate in the Chamber, reveal the fundamental issues at hand, the breadth of support for imperial expansion in the Indian Ocean, and the lack of anti-colonial resistance.

Gabriel Hanotaux identified two central problems that, in his view, now necessitated forceful military intervention and the establishment of a protectorate. The first, as previously noted, concerned the perceived failure to implement the second article of the Treaty of 1885, which granted France complete control over the foreign affairs of Madagascar, including the right to act as an intermediary between the Court of Emyrne and the European Powers. Hanotaux highlighted the issue of the *exequatur*, and of the internal insecurity. Hanotaux noted the general failure of the Merina state, including the low standard of public infrastructure, as well as physical attacks by bandits, which had dampened the enthusiasm for French commercial investment on the island. He also mentioned that the incidents of physical violence against French citizens in recent years included six murders, and that none of these crimes had been followed by an adequate search or a single arrest.

As in 1891, the Chamber of Deputies evinced even more enthusiasm for expansion than the Government itself. When Hanotaux attempted to reassure the Chamber that the decision to take military action “had not been made save that the most pressing motives had pushed (the Government) to make such a determination,” a deputy

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246 Cited above: “not a question of pure form…but a basic question…” Annales, November 1894, 245

247 In the records, deputies and ministers would refer to the sitting ministry as the Government, distinguished from the Chamber or the Senate.
interjected that the decision should have been made sooner. Hanotaux understood the zeal of the Chamber, and acknowledged that “debates raised on this subject always bore witness to the desire to see a more energetic policy affirmed in the great African island.”

The Foreign Minister discussed several courses of action that had been proposed in the wake of the failure of negotiations and the evacuation of the French resident from the inland capital: invasion, evacuation, and blockade. Hanotaux argued that a full-scale invasion, followed by the establishment of a protectorate system, would resolve the crisis in the manner best suited to French interests. He rejected evacuation out of hand. Another proposition advocated the occupation of strategic ports, including Tamatave, Majunga, and Diégo Suarez. The French would be able to control trade “while expanding little by little towards the interior”. This strategy would spare major expense, and could potentially enable any French commercial objectives that involved shipping and trade, rather than exploitation of the islands interior resources. However, Hanotaux questioned the efficacy of this proposal: “This solution has a grave inconvenience: it ends nothing. It is not the immediate expedition, it is true; but it is the constant expedition.” A coastal occupation would not even grant “the élan of a decisive campaign.” Hanotaux also rejected the suggestion that the coastal occupation would secure essential commercial interests, restore French reputation, and resolve the insecurity of French colonists.

We will lose much of (our standing) the world, we will spend much money, our influence will not make progress, commerce will suffer, and it will be necessary to finish, one day or another, by resolving the dilemma of a complete evacuation or a decisive action. (Très bien! Très bien!) But on that day the expedition will confront an adversary prepared,

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249 Proposed by Boucher and supported by Montmart
hardened, emboldened, better organized and better led, and, by consequence, (will be carried out) in far more difficult conditions.  

Deputy Boucher proposed this very course of action as an “intermediate policy”, synthesizing the extremes of occupation and evacuation. Eugène Henri Brisson, the former Prime Minister who had succeeded Jules Ferry and presided over the conclusion of the first Madagascar affair in 1885, delivered the most striking condemnation of this proposed solution. Brisson remained a respected figure in French political life, and would be voted president of the Chamber of Deputies in December 1894; he would hold that seat until 1898, when he again served as Prime Minister. His name carried particular weight, and his personal expertise beyond question, so that his opinion reverberated in the chamber when he rose to speak against the Boucher proposal.

This intermediate policy, permit me to say, this policy of so-called blockade, I know it, as, suffering from the inability to do better, I have practiced it. (Strong applause) I practiced it, I say, not being able to do better, I practiced it and I can recognize the inefficacy. (Renewed applause)

In emphasizing that he followed the route of a blockade policy—although he actually concluded the policy, but did not inaugurate it—because of enforced necessity, and not personal desire, Brisson clearly underlines the sharp distinction between the anti-colonial Chamber of the previous decade before and the Chamber of 1894. The last credit proposed for the Madagascar expedition had passed by only six votes. This offered little latitude aggressive measures. Yet while Brisson had found himself constrained by the attitudes of his legislature, the cabinet of Charles Dupuy was encouraged. Brisson acknowledged the difference and called on the Chamber to deliver the credits by a convincing margin, noting that, in his premiership,
...I found myself, in an analogous situation, in the presence of a hostile commission which rejected the credits that I proposed, and I had the bad fortune to not obtain the vote for the credits except a majority of six votes.

M. Camille Pelletan interjects—Because of the elections!

M. Henri Brisson continues—ah well! That which I ask, I will not say to my friends, but if there is a single colleague on whom my voice could have some influence, it is not to give to this Government, which I combat, not without occasional rudeness, a majority which could leave, either to the visible enemy, or to more discreet rivals, hope that the resolutions of the Republic could one day change.\(^{253}\)

This credit, passed by a margin far slimmer than any previous, was the last to finance the Madagascar expedition before the conclusion of the unsatisfactory Treaty of 1885.

Brisson referred with regret to the first military operation as a wasted expenditure totaling 26 million francs. Yet he spoke to the chamber in support of an initial allocation of 65 million francs, a sum that was bound to increase substantially over time. Nonetheless, Brisson argued that the more desirable outcome merited a larger investment; he decried the 26 million as utterly worthless, as it did not expand the limits of French authority.

By the time debates concluded on the 24 of November, 1894, only the radical fringes had spoken in favor of complete evacuation: the noted daily *Journal des Débats Politiques et Littéraires* wrote that “no one, in the Chamber, supported the pure and simple abandonment of Madagascar; at most a few socialists would have voted for this solution”.\(^{254}\) Several socialists did make their voices heard. Deputies Bepmale and Toussaint forwarded two typical socialist objections: that the expedition was waged for the private profit of influential capitalists, and that the money would be better spent on domestic programs focused on the working class. Ultimately, they only succeeded in illustrating the dramatic marginalization of anti-colonialism since 1885.

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\(^{253}\) *Annales. Chambre des députés. Débats parlementaires.* 24 November 1894, 454

\(^{254}\) *Journal des Débats Politiques et Littéraires,* 25 novembre 1894, Chambre des députés
M. Bepmale stood to declare: “I will not vote for the credits, not wishing to impose pecuniary sacrifices on the country which will only profit a few agitators or privileged capitalists.” In 1885, Georges Clemenceau had accused the Ferry Ministry of treason against the state, considering the imperial operations that they had initiated as against French interests, to support of the assembly. Now, loud dissent arose from around the Chamber, in response to a lesser accusation.

Auguste le prince d’Arenberg, an avowed monarchist and prominent member of le parti colonial, responded vigorously: “You do not have the right to say that!” M. Bepmale replied, “I express my opinion, without asking you to share it.” He then voiced another consideration concerning the proper use of military force.

I add that, if I was convinced that we would found in Madagascar a colony, prosperous and remunerative for the mother country, still I would not vote (for the credits), not recognizing the right to spill the blood of a single child of France for any cause other than the defense of the homeland.256

This declaration met with more assent. M. Toussaint offered an additional objection that contrasted the ardor for expenditure for overseas expansion with the reluctance of the same Chamber to establish a fund for the unemployed.

You have refused us the 5 million that we had asked to come to the aide of unemployed workers, under the pretext that you did not have the necessary funds at your disposition, and today you solicit a first credit of 65 million, which will be followed later by other supplementary credits. In these conditions, my friends of the Worker’s Party and I, we will vote against the credits.257

The radicals resisted alone, striking chords dissonant to an audience captivated by the imperial symphony. Within a decade, the anti-colonial opposition had been reduced to the fringes of French political life.

255 Persell, French Colonial Lobby, 9
256 Annales. Chambre des députés. Débats parlementaires. 24 November 1894, 455
257 Annales. Chambre des députés. Débats parlementaires. 24 November 1894, 455
Evacuation, anathema to the spirit of the day, would not be considered. No bill was forwarded to abandon the island. The Boucher proposal of coastal occupation presented therefore the only viable alternative to invasion; the measure met a heavy defeat, by a vote of 168 for to 381 against. As Le Journal put it: “The division of voices, in truth, produced itself in very unequal proportions. The government, and also the commission that supported it with great energy, finally obtained a crushing majority.” 372 deputies voted for the credit of 65 million francs. The Senate confirmed the vote by a greater margin: 267 against 3.

Amid strident declarations, the measured remarks of one deputy were particularly prescient; his insight drew little applause, and failed to affect the course of events. Rejecting the various appeals to the national honor, deputy Delbet attempted to conduct a rational discussion of national, political, and commercial interests. He noted a central discrepancy between means and ends: the use of force, thought intending to establish peace, could also engender protracted anarchy. “Our mission …(will be) to reestablish order in this country…(but) war is organized disorder”. Delbet added that the initial expense would certainly not suffice, and noted current inability of the Government to balance a budget or enact “the most urgent social reforms”. In any event, he foresaw an occupation, not believing that “2000 soldiers thrown in Tananrive will suffice to guard this city of 100,000 inhabitants and the entire island, (which is) larger than France!” Delbet described the protectorate system, which the Government had proposed but hardly defined, as “rather vague and quite insufficient.” In the aftermath of the conflict, the pro-

258 Journal des débats politiques et littéraires, 25 November 1894, Chamber of Deputies
259 Annales. Chambre des députés. Débats parlementaires. 24 November 1894, 432
expansionist deputies would heartily agree, and reject the protectorate in pursuit of full annexation.
Chapter V: Second Madagascar Affair continued
Theory and Practice: Expedition and the March to Annexation

“…it is a failure of diplomacy, concerned with preserving peace, to hand over to the military when neither the essential interests of the country nor the national honor is at stake.”\(^{260}\)

--Le Myre de Vilers, writing to a friend in Paris following the end of negotiations

The French government launched a military operation with precisely constrained intentions. However, the expedition became a microcosm of imperial excess. In the aftermath, ideologues assaulted the protectorate system and pressed for annexation. The descent of the island into chaos only strengthened their case. Ultimately, the spiral of events in Madagascar, and the force of opinion in France, led to full annexation. The anarchy of the island was resolved by the forceful and effective measures of Joseph Galliéni, a pioneer of counterinsurgency doctrine who would utterly reform the island over nine years.

i. Intent of the Expedition

The French Government appointed General Duchesne to lead the expedition. His instructions, received from Gabriel Hanotaux on the 29\(^{th}\) of March 1895, clearly indicate the goals of the excursion. The aims are notable in their restraint, in comparison with the eventual outcome of total annexation. The principal objective was to maintain, rather than to extend, French privileges and status on the island. Hanotaux wrote that, “We have no other intention than to assure (our) uncontested status as Protector State in Madagascar…it has appeared to us that this result could not be obtained except by a direct

\(^{260}\) Brown, *History of Madagascar*, 227
military action to the seat of power of the Malagasy Government." The Foreign Minister determined that an assault on the capital would likely suffice to obtain the submission of the Merina. The General departed bearing arms and a treaty. The treaty, which would be recognized in French alone, was relatively conservative in its pursuit of French advantages. Hanotaux designed the document to reinforce “the advantages that precedent treaties had conferred on us,” and to establish guarantees “against the return of difficulties which…motivated the expedition” but not to extend French dominion broadly.262

As during negotiations, Hanotaux kept a tight hand on the reigns and assigned his general a specific mission of limited scope. He ordered Duchesne to occupy Tananarive and only to pursue operations in the countryside only if the court were to flee the capital and attempt to organize resistance.263 Hanotaux repeatedly emphasized the necessity of restraint; in particular, that he preserve the existing apparatus of the Merina state. First, the Queen must retain her throne so that the French could benefit from her legitimacy. Serving as a figurehead “known and accepted by the population,” the continued presence of the Queen would ease the burden of governance. Otherwise, the Foreign Minister wrote,

As a result we would have to take in hand, more or less directly, administration of the country, and the Government of the Republic wishes to prevent an eventuality that would cause her to assume responsibilities of any nature and would engage her in excessive expenses.264

261 Affaires de Madagascar, 1885-1895, Hanotaux to Général Duchesne, Commander in chief of the expeditionary corps of Madagascar, 60
262 Affaires de Madagascar, 1885-1895, Hanotaux to Général Duchesne, 60-61
263 Affaires de Madagascar, 1885-1895, Hanotaux to Général Duchesne, 61
264 Affaires de Madagascar, 1885-1895, Hanotaux to Général Duchesne, 62
Hanotaux clearly defined the desire of the Government to avoid full administrative control of the island from the outset of the military operations. In addition to maintaining the queen as a figurehead, Hanotaux commanded that Duchesne maintain the basic political organization already in place so that it could serve as a “useful aid for the functioning of our Protectorate.” The French would take direct administration only over the customs offices at major ports. Finally, while the expedition did seek to disarm the troops and population located in Imerina, Duchesne was not charged with the pacification of regions troubled by restive tribes.  

Hanotaux’s telegram contained the full text of the treaty to be imposed after Merina submission. The terms of the document would abnegate crucial aspects of Malagasy sovereignty: France would formally represent Madagascar in all foreign relations; France would have the right to maintain unlimited military forces on the island; and the Resident General would indirectly control interior administration. The treaty returned to the issue of public works, commanding that the “Queen of Madagascar proceed with the reforms that the French Government judges useful to the exercise of her Protectorate, as well as the economic development of the island and the progress of civilization.” But while enforcing certain infrastructure projects, the treaty also codified limitations on French public expenditure for the island’s development and administration, stating that any expenses for public services or payments of prior debt would derive from the revenues of the island.  

Hanotaux consistently sought to establish a protectorate that could sustain itself, rather than a full colony that might draw funds from the metropole.

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265 Affaires de Madagascar, 1885-1895, Hanotaux to Général Duchesne, 63
266 Affaires de Madagascar, 1885-1895, Projet de Traité, 65-66
Beyond finances, the social structure of the island posed several quandaries. While Duchesne occupied himself with military operations, Hanotaux charged an Adjunct to the Resident, M. Ranchot, with the enactment of civil reforms. The principal changes would concern “the amelioration of the corvée system, the progressive suppression of slavery, and the organization of the judicial administration.” The Foreign Minister believed that the practice of forced labor had come to be exploited by private interests for personal gain, and had become a cause of political turmoil as a result. The failings of the justice system had been a cause for French complaint since 1883. Hanotaux even addressed the same issue of property rights that had helped to spur conflict in the prior decade, commanding Ranchot to transform the current system of 99-year leases to “a regime better conforming to the regulations in use in all the civilized countries.” Concepts of civilization also spurred French support for emancipation. Hanotaux identified slavery, along with the corvée, as “one of the bases of the social organization of Madagascar”. Removing both would prove destabilizing. Yet Hanotaux betrayed an ideological rather than pragmatic motivation for the decision. He wrote to Ranchot that:

The principles of our civilization and our national traditions require that slavery disappear from a land submitted to French influence. France is not going to Madagascar solely to make her rights respected, but also to make an act of civilizing power. (Italics added.)

Such a statement, if made in public or in the Chamber of Deputies, could be understood as an appeal to the sensibilities of le parti colonial, or to the popular notion of the civilizing mission. However, this letter contained private instructions publicized only in the “Yellow Book” of French diplomatic records. This would hardly be the ideal

267 Affaires de Madagascar, 1885-1895, Hanotaux to Ranchot, 69
268 As established in the treaty of 1885. See Chapter II.
269 Affaires de Madagascar, 1885-1895, Hanotaux to Ranchot, 70
forum for the dissemination of political rhetoric. Hanotaux would include this letter, among many other telegrams dispatched between himself and Ranchot, Duchesne, and Le Myre de Vilers, in *L’affaire de Madagascar*.\(^\text{270}\) However, his intention in the publication of that book was to prove the long-standing intentions of the Government to establish a protectorate system in Madagascar, and to oppose the movement in the Chamber for complete annexation. By 1895, the ideology of *la mission civilisatrice* had fully pervaded imperial discourse; it even tinged the official correspondence of a man who publicly opposed the colonial movement’s push for a costly annexation he had long sought to avoid.

**ii. The Expedition**

The enthusiasm of the French assemblies gave birth to a murderous disaster.\(^\text{271}\) 15,000 French troops disembarked. Nearly six thousand died. French soldiers fell at a higher rate in Madagascar they would in the First World War.\(^\text{272}\) Fewer than twenty-five fell in combat. The rest died of disease, most from dysentery and malaria; adequate supplies of quinine could have prevented many of the casualties. The war cost more French lives than any previous colonial conflict.\(^\text{273}\)

Nearly every aspect of the expedition invites ridicule and astonishment in equal parts. The allocation of 15,000 soldiers to a politically fragmented island—whose natives

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\(^\text{270}\) Not to be confused with Affaires de Madagascar, Documents Diplomatiques, cited extensively here. L’affaire de Madagascar, published by Hanotaux in 1896, includes many documents from Affaires de Madagascar, Documents Diplomatiques, will be discussed in-depth later in this Chapter.


\(^\text{273}\) Daughton, *Empire Divided*, 174
possessed little by way of modern weaponry, and less by way of effective tactics or training—reflected political dynamics in France, rather than military necessity in Madagascar. The Ministry of the Marine would normally be charged with the expedition. But domestic enthusiasm for the war aroused the envy of the Ministry of War, which, as historian Hubert Deschamps put it, “wishing its part of the glory,” demanded an attachment of its own men. This included the 200th regiment, an oddity assembled by drawing lots among each garrison in France, so that “all could participate in a national task.”  

French industry made a similar imposition upon the expedition, leading to the inclusion of five thousand “Lefebvre wagons”. These military vehicles had proven their utility on the flat plains of the Sudan, but the rugged terrain of Madagascar rendered the technology useless. Nevertheless, and perhaps due to domestic pressure, the General Duchesne remained wedded to the concept of the cars for several months. He ordered the painstaking construction of a road, beginning in the Betsiboka region. Unfortunately, this happened to be a “the most unhealthy region of the island.” The vehicles were soon renamed “fever wagons”. After much frustration, Duchesne renounced motor vehicles in favor of livestock. On the 14th of September, the veteran of Algeria and Tonkin led a “light column” of 4,000 soldiers, 3,000 mules, and 1,500 mule drivers. The column carried only 22 days of rations; this proved more than sufficient.

If certain aspects of the French approach left something to be desired, the Merina leadership displayed utter incompetence. While the French built a road in a swamp, the Prime Minister occupied himself by repeatedly replacing generals, making inflammatory

275 Deschamps, *Histoire de Madagascar*, 230  
276 Deschamps, *Histoire de Madagascar*, 231
speeches; mobilizing schoolchildren; destroying the Jesuit observatory, and publicly immolating a deserter.\textsuperscript{277} Desertions continued nonetheless: in addition to lacking training or confidence in their leaders, the Malagasy troops were only sporadically fed. The Merina army, although numerous, suffered from poor weaponry, organization, and administration. Commanders often failed to inspire confidence. The relations between soldiers and generals reflected the social dynamic of Merina society; the wealthy could purchase an exemption from combat, or send a slave in their stead. Promotions rarely reflected competence in the field.\textsuperscript{278}

The Merina did possess several effective generals, notably Rainandriamamandry, who gained experience resisting the French in the 1883-1885 war. But the Prime Minister feared to elevate a rival. He rarely sent a general to the field with adequate numbers or effective weaponry, holding excessive reserves of both manpower and armaments in the capitol.\textsuperscript{279} During the intervening years between 1885 and 1894, the Prime Minister had made substantial arms purchases and hired several competent British officers to train his men in modern warfare. Yet, during the combat itself, he feared the reaction of oligarchs were a foreigner to be charged with command. Ultimately, the greatest weakness of the Merina army was the lack of sufficient discipline, experience, or training to stand under fire. Merina forces frequently retreated after the first encounter with French artillery. The Malagasy did offer resistance at a few points, but counterattacks were usually short-lived, bloody, and ineffective. One assault at Marovoany\textsuperscript{280} littered the field with Malagasy, prompting the sudden emergence of

\begin{footnotes}
\item[277] Deschamps, \textit{Histoire de Madagascar}, 231
\item[278] Brown, \textit{History of Madagascar}, 225
\item[279] Brown, \textit{History of Madagascar}, 226
\item[280] Translated as “many crocodiles”. Brown, 227
\end{footnotes}
hundreds of crocodiles from the Betsiboka River. The scattered Merina troops reformed only to flee again in the night, reportedly startled by “the clatter of a metal bucket dropped by a servant girl”.  

The most serious counteroffensive occurred on June 28th and 29th, when 5,000 Malagasy assaulted an entrenched French advance guard of 200 men. Superior numbers met repeating rifles; the Merina were repulsed, leaving 200 dead. As Duchesne’s light column advanced, the English mercenary Major Graves was granted command, and organized a formidable fortification on a 3000 foot mountain in Andriba. In the words of historian Mervyn Brown, who penned a colorful account of the expedition, “this position should have been impregnable”. Yet, after an initial exchange of artillery fire, the inexperienced Malagasy troops fled *en masse*. The road to the capital was left undefended, yet the queen announced to her people that she “would far rather die in my palace than yield to the French”.  

Duchesne arrived at Tananarive on the 30th of September; the capital surrendered under the first bombardment.  

French politicians and pressed celebrated their meager triumph. However, the unanticipated cost of the expedition, in blood and treasure, drove calls for the imposition of a harsher treaty than that originally proposed and sent with the French General. On the 18th of September 1895, Hanotaux wrote to Duchesne with a modified draft. He reasoned that, considering “the sacrifices that the prolonged resistance of the Hovas imposed upon us” the prior treaty no longer appeared appropriate in France. He now proposed that,  

281 Brown, *History of Madagascar*, 227  
282 Brown, *History of Madagascar*, 228  
283 Deschamps, *Histoire de Madagascar*, 231  
284 Daughton, *Empire Divided*, 174  
285 As noted earlier, the only effective resistance came from French tactics, Madagascar’s geography, and tropical diseases.
once the General had obtained the submission of the Merina, the “Act which will put hostilities to an end must be signed by the Queen or the Chief...and no longer by you.” Hanotaux emphasized that this distinction would remove the “bilateral character” of a signed treaty, replacing it instead with a unilateral “submission of the Hovas to our Protectorate.” Otherwise, the new document contained few modifications: only the deletion of the preamble, the second clause of the fourth article, the sixth article save the second paragraph, and the seventh article.\textsuperscript{286} This would remove references to the bilateral nature of the agreement; the French commitment to defend the Queen of Madagascar against threats to the tranquility of her realm; the requirement that all public works be paid of revenues from the island; and the delimitation of the territories of Diégo Suarez.\textsuperscript{287}

However, this telegram did not arrive until the seventh of October. M. Ranchot responded immediately, writing that the Queen had already signed the original accord. He wrote that,

\begin{quotation}
General Duchesne judges it impossible to return to the accomplished fact. I share this opinion. The Malagasy Government would not comprehend a unilateral contract. We have just now passed the first phase of a very delicate situation without too many difficulties. The agitation abates; but it would revive, if the Treaty were put in question.\textsuperscript{288}
\end{quotation}

In addition, Ranchot argued that the imposition of a unilateral treaty would lead inevitably to direct rule of the island. Like Hanotaux, Ranchot feared that annexation could result accidentally, and that in imposing partial rule the French were skirting the edges of a costly abyss; a misplaced step could cause a tumble.

\textsuperscript{286} Affaires de Madagascar, 1885-1895, 72-3
\textsuperscript{287} For full draft Treaty, Affaires de Madagascar, 1885-1895, 65-66
\textsuperscript{288} Affaires de Madagascar, 1885-1895, Ranchot to Hanotaux, 7 October 1895, 73-4
The unilateral contract, permitting to neglect the Malagasy Government, would conduct us fatally to direct administration and we are in a position here to appreciate, at the moment, what a crushing charge France would assume. This would be the continuation of the expedition for several years. 289

The last analysis proved prescient. The restraint of the original treaty surprised the Queen, the Prime Minister, and the court. Ranchot wrote that they “expected a more rigorous treatment…not understanding the interest that we have in avoiding taking in hand direct administration of Madagascar that would impose considerable pecuniary sacrifices on us.” 290 Eventually, the lack of “rigorous treatment” would also arouse a different form of surprise in France.

But first began a period of quiescence. On October 14, 1895, Ranchot wrote that “popular life” in Tananarive had “retaken its normal course.” He reported no conflict between French troops and local residents in the capital. However, the same calm had not been “reestablished among the population of the provinces.” 291 Ranchot reported whispers of rebellion, but surmised that no indigenous force posed a serious threat to French control. 292 The moment of calm would pass. Dormant discontent soon erupted into violence in the countryside of Madagascar and debate in the assemblies of France. Despite its enactment on the island, the Chamber of Deputies refused to ratify the Treaty of Tananarive, while murmurs of resistance became into acts of rebellion. A vocal group of expansionists, dissatisfied with the terms of the Treaty, pressed for annexation; the

289 Affaires de Madagascar, 1885-1895, Ranchot to Hanotaux, 7 October 1895, 14 October 1895, 73-4
290 Affaires de Madagascar, 1885-1895, Annexe I, Note for the General in chief, 14 October 1895, 75
291 Affaires de Madagascar, 1885-1895, Annexe III, Note for the General in chief, 14 October 1895, 79
292 Affaires de Madagascar, 1885-1895, Annexe II, III, Note for the Général in chief, 14 October 1895, 79
development of prolonged insurgencies only strengthened their argument, until the
formal imposition direct administration in August 1896.

iii. Colony or Protectorate:

A delayed telegram may have altered the course of Malagasy history—or it may
have been an inconsequential detail in an inexorable spiral of imperial entrenchment.
Strong forces—the disorder of the island, and the expansionary mood in Paris—pressed
for annexation. The Treaty of Tanarive met immediate resistance among the fierce
partisans of colonization. The Journal des débats wrote that “resolute partisans of
annexation and adversaries of the protectorate launched a campaign” against the treaty
nearly immediately after news arrived of its contents. Their objections confirmed
Hanotaux’s shrewd understanding of domestic sentiment. He had written to Duchesne to
prevent the signature of a bilateral agreement, knowing that, in light of the cost of the
expedition and the inclinations of the legislature, a treaty would draw opposition that a
unilateral declaration would not. As Hanotaux foresaw, annexationists targeted the
bilateral nature of the accord, arguing that it implicitly recognized the Merina
government as a sovereign entity with rights and privileges to Madagascar. This legal
acknowledgement would limit the scope of French dominion.

On the first of November 1895, the ministry of Alexandre Ribot was
overturned and replaced by that of Léon Bourgeois. The Journal des Débats implicated

293 Journal des Débats, Matin 3 Novembre 1895, Madagascar
294 Succeeded Dupuy 28 January, 1895
“discontentment caused by the treaty” of Tananarive” among several causes. The colonial question had vexed yet another government, with one essential difference; unlike in 1881 or 1885, the Cabinet was assaulted for its restraint rather than for its excesses. Gabriel Hanotaux lost his post, succeeded by renowned chemist Marcellin Bertholet. Like his Hanotaux, Bertholet sought to limit French entanglement in Madagascar. Speaking before the Chamber of Deputies, and facing a growing movement for annexation, he echoed the sentiments of his predecessor: “We do not believe that it is necessary or desirable to substitute a French administration for an indigenous administration”. Nonetheless, he did express a desire, sympathetic to the wishes of le parti colonial, to modify the Treaty of Tananarive. When Alexandre Ribot denounced the statement as an assault upon his legacy, the Chamber moved to approve the declarations of the government by a vote of 426 to 52. Evidently, any attack on the protectorate system—or perhaps the deposed Prime Minister—would garner loud support in the Chamber.

Expansionist deputies continued to press for direct control; they would realize their aim in parts over the course of several months. The movement to annexation began with a minor coup in the form of a decree, issued 11 December 1895, which detached the administration of Madagascar from the Foreign Ministry and reassigned it to the Minister

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295 *Journal des Débats*, Matin 3 Novembre 1895, Madagascar
296 Both ministries of Jules Ferry fell amid acrimony spurred by colonial issues: in 1881, concerning Tunisia, and in 1885, principally concerning Tonkin
297 He would hold the post of Foreign Minister again from April, 1896 to June, 1898
298 Known particularly for the Thomson-Bertholet principle of thermochemistry
299 *Affaires de Madagascar, 1885-1895*, Declaration read by M. Bertholet, Minister of Foreign Affairs, at the séance of the Chamber of Deputies of 27 November 1895, 80
300 Editorial, “Madagascar Treaty Dispute.” *New York Times*, Nov. 27 1895
of the Colonies. The measure theoretically abnegated Merina sovereignty and placed greater control over the administration of the island in the hands of committed colonialists. However, as the island had not been formally declared a colony, the legal implications of the announcement were ambiguous.

Although out of office, Hanotaux continued to fight the tide of opinion. The former Foreign Minister penned an exposition that would appear in the *Revue de Paris* on January 1, 1896. As the foremost advocate of the protectorate system, his views illustrate the general public debate on the subject, and the role of his adversaries in advancing annexation. He wrote to explain “the intentions of the preceding cabinet in that which concerns the given issue of the expedition of Madagascar, and the future organization of the new French possession.” It had become apparent that the Chamber was actively pursuing the path towards direct administration that he had frequently struggled to avoid. Now, he warned, the organization of the island was being prepared

...under the treatment of the Ministry of colonies, in different conditions that those that we had foreseen, now, to say all in a word, that the treaty of Tananarive is, without debate, cast into the past, into history, to which it now belongs...

Hanotaux wrote bitterly of the public repudiation of his efforts. Yet he argued effectively that the protectorate system had been conceived before the invasion, and that it would require substantially less expenditure than annexation. Attempting to revive the protectorate system, Hanotaux first discussed how it could be defined. His formulation

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301 *Journal des débats*, second page, édition du soir, 11 December 1895
303 In which he served as Foreign Minister
304 Hanotaux, *L’affaire de Madagascar*, 255
reveals himself as an advocate of strategic restraint. “The protectorate, in effect, does not define itself. It is a state of fact, and that is all.” He wrote:

It does not define itself, because the protectorate is nothing else, to say truly, than a restriction, a limitation, a moderation that, in her own interest, the victorious power imposes on herself at the moment of her victory, in the measure that suits her, that she could, in virtue of the right of war, go just to the end of her conquest.  

The protectorate represents national self-control. The annexations sought to glut in victory, asserting dominion, and wasting the energies of the Empire. In contrast, Hanotaux called for discipline.

The former Foreign Minister employed comparative studies to establish both the viability and the desirability of the protectorate system. First, he contrasted the Madagascar campaign with French travails in the Sudan. The island expedition resolved itself with a single march to the capital. In the Sudan, nomadic opponents fled incessantly. He implied that this demonstrated that Madagascar, unlike Sudan, could be largely controlled from a single strategic position. A small military installation would suffice to control a proxy government, which could exert direct control over the periphery. He then evoked the divergent destinies of colonial activity to hail the superiority of indirect administration. “After sixty years of efforts and struggles,” Algeria remained obstinate, while “after fifteen years, Tunisia is prosperous and calm”: “voilà, the result of the two systems”.

The application of the Tunisian model in Madagascar would demand, above all, the conservation of “the existing government in the defeated country.” The authority and

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306 Hanotaux, L’affaire de Madagascar, 265
307 Hanotaux, L’affaire de Madagascar, 265-266
308 This argument is also made by M. Martineau in Revue Politique et Parlementaire. Extracted in Journal des débats, 4 November 1895. Martineau also emphasizes the comparative expense of direct control, and employs the example of Tunisia.
309 Hanotaux, L’affaire de Madagascar, 270
prestige of the local administration could assure "among the subjects, voluntary obedience." In particular, the traditional and religious authority of the Queen should be appropriated to reduce the costs of military pacification and of continual administration. If the system were enforced, Hanotaux predicted that, “in fewer than 15 years, as in Tunisia,” the fractured island would be led towards a growing prosperity by no more than “a few functionaries reimbursed from the local budget”.

The former Foreign Minister painted an optimistic picture. Any system of indirect administration would struggle to construct a stable polity from a divided and impoverished island in which the vast majority of the population suffered under slavery or serfdom. However, indirect rule would certainly impose a lighter financial burden on the French Empire. Yet Hanotaux noted that his opposition prized other concerns above accounts. He referred to his “irreducible adversaries…the declared annexationists.” They desired direct control for its own intrinsic value, and did not disguise their inclination. Hanotaux wrote, “it is impossible to open their eyes. They took (their) position frankly. What they want is direct administration: it is \textit{fonctionnarisme}\textsuperscript{312} teeming in the island; it is a complete redesign of the country”.

The ardent annexationists were motivated by considerations of ideology over those of strategy. Control became an end, rather than a means, of foreign policy.

\textsuperscript{310} Hanotaux, \textit{L'affaire de Madagascar}, 271
\textsuperscript{312} Fonctionnarisme—a pejorative term for the promotion of the authority and/or quantity of functionaries, or bureaucrats. Functionaries were often targeted for abuse by opponents of colonial expenditure.
\textsuperscript{313} The promotion of increasing the scale or scope of bureaucratic management
Hanotaux himself acknowledged the appeal of these arguments; a colony could not be judged by its balance sheet alone. “Transporting and perpetuating in new countries her name, her language, her influence, her thought, a civilized nation accomplishes much already if she thus prolongs her own existence in space and in time.” Contrasting emotions with calculation, he asked if one demands of a mother how she profits from her children.\textsuperscript{314} In the era of colonial fervor, imperial ideology had captured the political center, while opposition to colonialism was pushed to the radical fringes.\textsuperscript{315} Even the most prominent opponent of annexation agreed that the extension of imperial control had intrinsic value—a core principle of expansionist thought.

Yet Hanotaux attempted to divorce the question of colonial system from judgment of colonization itself. The protectorate is preferable for it “husbands vanquished populations in lieu of oppressing them…relieves and develops them in lieu of brutalizing and destroying them.” This more “mutable system,” he wrote, could better manage the adaptation of “barbarous races to the superior civilization” that imposes itself upon them.\textsuperscript{316}

He also acknowledged the preference of popular opinion for a harsher settlement, which had inclined the Ribot cabinet to attempt to demonstrate more clearly that the French were “absolute masters” of the island.\textsuperscript{317} It was in this same spirit that he had telegrammed the General Duchesne on the 18\textsuperscript{th} of September; his central goal was to transform the bilateral treaty into a unilateral submission. Yet while the form of the

\textsuperscript{314} Hanotaux, L’affaire de Madagascar, 273
\textsuperscript{315} The debates mentioned previously, concerning the outset of the expedition, illustrate this dynamic.
\textsuperscript{316} Hanotaux, L’affaire de Madagascar, 274
\textsuperscript{317} Hanotaux, L’affaire de Madagascar, 286-287
document would have changed, “the base remained the same”; the Ministry of Foreign Affairs still sought “a Protectorate with all its consequences.”

Finally, Hanotaux argued that the desires of the Assembly and the public reflected a domestic perspective that differed substantially with the viewpoint of those on the scene—the theoretical considerations of Paris did not match the informed view of the military. He cited the letter of an unnamed officer, which denied the existence “in all of the expeditionary corps, (of) a single partisan of the annexation of Madagascar. All believe in the future of the protectorate.” This claim is impossible to verify, yet it reveals what Hanotaux perceived to be the motivations of the annexationists: “emotions,” and “convictions”, rather than a rational calculation of strategic interest. He did not dismiss the validity of these sentiments, but he did portray them as a potent threat to an established peace. “We could think differently in Paris,” he wrote, “under the (influence) of a legitimate emotion, excited by a lively polemic of the press. But, there…we must not imperil the results by necessities of form”.

As a contemporary actor with considerable investment in the issue, Gabriel Hanotaux’s analysis may be accused of bias. He certainly did not write dispassionately. Yet the historical consensus supports his last point: the debate concerning Madagascar was formed more by opinion in the metropole than reality on the island. In his History of French Colonial Policy, Stephen H. Roberts wrote that: “…as in 1885, policy was determined less by the facts of the particular problem which confronted France than by the considerations of general theory in Paris…”

318 Hanotaux, L’affaire de Madagascar, 288
319 Hanotaux, L’affaire de Madagascar, 289
320 Hanotaux, L’affaire de Madagascar, 290
Under these conditions, the concrete Malagasy issue was swept into the discussion of general theory, and the actual policy decided, not by the facts of the situation, but by the fluctuating opinions which were shaping general French colonial policy…\(^{321}\)

Hanotaux may have convinced the historians; he failed to persuade his contemporaries. His audience remained indisposed to imperial restraint. Attempting a compromise, Bertholet arranged the signature of a new treaty on the 18 of January, 1896.\(^{322}\) The document reproduced, word for word, the unilateral act that Hanotaux had attempted, and failed, to communicate to Duchesne before the cessation of hostilities. Bertholet also sought to advance French claims diplomatically. He issued as circular to London, Berlin, Vienna, Saint Petersburg, Rome, Madrid, Washington, Stockholm, and Lisbon, to announce that France had occupied and “taken definitive possession” of Madagascar.\(^{323}\)

This new formulation, placing Madagascar somewhere between colony and protectorate, accomplished little and raised substantial legal ambiguities. An international dispute soon forced a definitive resolution. The ambassadors of Great Britain and the United States wasted little time in inquiring as to the effect of the new formulation on the rights of their citizens in the island. Both powers had arranged treaties with the Queen of Madagascar, and wished to guarantee their continuing legitimacy. Prime Minister Léon Bourgeois responded on the 31\(^{st}\) of March that any prior treaties arranged with the Merina government were now null and void. The American Ambassador then requested whether treaties arranged between France and the United States would therefore take effect on the new French possession. The question, in

\(^{321}\) Roberts, *History of French Colonial Policy*, 386
\(^{322}\) *Affaires de Madagascar, 1896*, Declaration of the Queen of Madagascar, 18 January, 1896, 5
\(^{323}\) *Affaires de Madagascar, 1896*, Declaration of the Queen of Madagascar, 18 January, 1896, 6
essence, was whether or not French laws now applied to Madagascar—a central aspect of the assimilation doctrine. On the second of May, Ambassador Olney demanded a categorical declaration on the validity of Franco-American agreements on the island.\footnote{Journal des débats, 22 June 1896, Chambre des députés} By the time the diplomatic tangle had fully matured, a new Cabinet had been seated under Jules Méline.

Hanotaux would regain his former seat under the new ministry. Shortly before the change in power, Hanotaux attempted to have the last word. He ultimately would, in a manner contrary to his original intent. In March 1896, he published a book titled \textit{L’affaire de Madagascar}. The work largely comprised substantial documentation of his discourses in the Chamber and his correspondence concerning Madagascar in his function as Foreign Minister. He intended to demonstrate that the Government had established the protectorate system in advance, and that the Chamber had assented to that form when authorizing of the credit for the expedition. Yet, to his outrage, “a resolution made in Paris\footnote{This refers to the circular issued on February 11.} has modified, from top to bottom, at once the formulas of the treaty and the conditions of our establishment on the great African island.”\footnote{Hanotaux, \textit{L’affaire de Madagascar}, ii}

He recalled that the General Duchesne and Resident General Ranchot had implemented the protectorate system, apparently to good effect. The Prime Minister had been replaced, yet the queen and ministers remained and “transmitted to the population” French commands, “which would have been badly understood or poorly interpreted if the had come by another way or in another form.” Despite the deterioration in conditions then apparent on the island, Hanotaux continued to argue the relative fiscal prudence of indirect rule. However, he ceded to reality: “what is done is done….as the queen has
signed as second treaty, it is not a question of making her sign a third. The protectorate regime is discarded; the system of annexation carried it away. We will judge that one by its results.”

Hanotaux published *L’affaire de Madagascar* in March, and returned to the Foreign Ministry in April with his support for the protectorate system evidently undimmed. However, international politics would force his hand; Hanotaux himself enshrined annexation. The demands of the British and American ambassadors went unanswered in the closing hours of the Bourgeois Ministry. As mentioned previously, Bertholet formally responded to the American ambassador on the 16th of April with the dual pronouncement that the treaty between Queen Ranavalo and the United States had been invalidated by the French seizure of Madagascar, and that the Government of the Republic would extend the application all Franco-American conventions to Madagascar, as in any French possession. The Bourgeois Cabinet fell on the 28th of April. The final reply of Mr. Olney, requesting a formal declaration of the legal effect of these treaties on the great isle, arrived on the 2nd of May, with the Méline Ministry already enshrined.

The new Cabinet faced an uncomfortable decision; they could attempt to reverse the diplomatic correspondence of their predecessors, or follow an undesired path. Hanotaux explained the predicament to the Chamber:

“I ask you if it were possible (for the Méline Cabinet), without upending from top to bottom the work of its predecessors, without renouncing results already obtained, to return to the Protectorate formula which had been its preference, but which was destroyed in substance and in form?

On the 30th of May, he deposed a proposition with a single article declaring Madagascar and its dependant isles a French colony. The “exposition of motives”, signed by Mèline

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327 Hanotaux, *L’affaire de Madagascar*, xxiii
328 *Journal des débats*, 22 juin 1896, Chambre des députés
as president of the council, André Lebon, the minister of the colonies, and Gabriel Hanotaux, claimed the intention to modify the formulation, but not the actual form, of administration in the island. Annexation would remove legal ambiguities, and had arrived as a response to “reservations formulated by several powers”. However, the proposition would not enforce “any modification in that which concerns the method of application in the internal government and administration of the island.”

Le Myre de Vilers, speaking on behalf of the administration, emphasized that the French role would remain indirect. “The local organization will be preserved,” he declared, “but we will lead it.” Annexation would not necessitate assimilation. He defined the first as legal incorporation within the national domain; assimilation would involve the importation of French domestic institutions into the island. The latter would founder on the distinct mores of the “collectivist” islanders, bringing nothing but violent response from the local tribes. Still they clung to the illusion of partial detachment.

The Government would have to reconcile the desire for limited involvement with popular views of the “civilizing mission”. When Le Myre de Vilers spoke of refraining from assimilative actions while “introducing principles of humanity and solidarity, which are the honor of France”, he could not remain silent on the issue of slavery. Law and opinion certainly had not. The vast majority of the Chamber either desired immediate abolition or kept their own counsel, while the decree of March 3rd, 1848, had formally proscribed slavery in all French colonies and possessions. Yet an astonishing portion of

329 Journal des débats, 16 June 1896, Chamber of Deputies
331 Journal des débats, 16 June 1896, Chamber of Deputies
332 Ultimately, General Joseph Galliéni would arrive with a mandate pour franciser, or to “gallicize”, the isle.
333 Journal des débats, 16 June 1896, Chamber of Deputies
the total population lived in bondage; emancipation would upend an unsteady and inequitable social structure. The Government feared further chaos, but shuddered to sustain a slave state. Le Myre de Viliers peppered his discourse with platitudes—

‘Wherever the French flag flies, man recovers his liberty”—but maintained the necessity of a gradual transition. Masters would protest, and the liberated slaves, unmoored and unemployed, could swell the ranks of the outlaw bands troubling the countryside. He judged that “the law should not be executed in Madagascar overnight.”

The Chamber differed. Both annexation and abolition were presented for a vote on the 21st. A proposition for “immediate emancipation” passed unanimously; advocates of a transition period, realizing the futility of a contrary vote and the electoral risk of supporting slavery, either abstained or aligned with the majority. Though hardly unanimous, annexation passed with overwhelming support. Hanotaux himself considered that “sovereignty had changed hands” following the unilateral actions of the Bourgeois cabinet, as French laws had been extended to Malagasy soil. Nonetheless, the words must have stung the throat of the preeminent opponent of annexation when he announced to the chamber: “The Government proposes to you to declare by law that the Island of Madagascar and its dependent islands are henceforth a French colony.” Yet in this moment he called upon the imperial strains of his prior discourse, claiming that, while entering the island “in the current of civilization,” France had a right to claim just compensation for her “sacrifices.” The Chamber roared approval, and passed the proposition declaring Madagascar a French colony by a margin of 312 against 73.

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334 *Journal des débats*, 22 June, 1896, Chamber of Deputies
335 *Journal des débats*, 16 June 1896, Chamber of Deputies
336 *Journal des débats*, 22 juin 1896, Chamber of Deputies
The following day, the *Journal des débats* reflected upon the escalation of French entanglement on the distant African island: “From the beginning of this Madagascar affair we entered into a spiral; each revolution of the wheel drives us further.”

iv. Unrest

The various pronouncements of annexation—in January, in June, in September—offer a muddled portrait of legal wrangling. Although opposition to the Treaty of Tananarive began immediately, and, as Roberts put it, “general theory” motivated the annexationists more than the particulars of the situation in Madagascar, events on the island were not rendered irrelevant. Disorder in Madagascar strengthened the forces in France that were already conducting the march towards annexation. Ironically, the actual act of annexation would coincide with, and augment, the apex of rebellion.

As Deputy Delbet had foretold in November 1894 when he warned his colleagues, “war is organized disorder,” the dramatic march to the capital failed to resolve the instability that had spurred the invasion itself. Ten months of occupation did not settle the restive isle. In August 1896, reports of murders, attacks on convoys and on the property of Europeans continued to arrive in France. Many roads to the plateau were insecure.

The state of affairs immediately following the capture of the capital gave cause for an optimism that reality would soon betray. The surrender of the Merina government brought a moment of calm. General Duchesne implemented the protectorate. Yet, as the

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338 The word translated as “spiral” is “engrenage”, which has a mechanical connotation and is often used to mean a pair of gears.
339 *Journal des débats*, 22 juin 1896. Madagascar
prior section examined, a system of administration that met little opposition on the island fell under assault in France. The actions of the Bourgeois Ministry to attempt a compromise measure between protectorate and annexation so irritated the successful General that he came to “consider it within his dignity to demand his replacement.”

A civilian Resident General Hippolyte Laroche arrived in January 1896. The French military force had dwindled significantly during the period of calm. Only 200 officers, 2,400 soldiers from France or Algeria, and 1,800 indigenous troops remained under French command. By the end of March, rebellion had erupted in the northern and southern frontiers of Imerina. Two Merina governors led their districts in disobedience—Rabezavana in the north and Rabozaka in the northeast—while an outlaw by the name of Rainibetsimisaraka marshaled resistance in the south. Much of the disorder merely consisted of general lawlessness: kidnappings, attacks on convoys, and banditry increasingly troubled the countryside.

Yet some groups had political rather than criminal intent. These became to be known as the *menalamba* for their red dress. Of the interior of the island, only Tananarive and its surrounding area were still under direct French control by the fall of 1896. The coastal areas remained fairly calm, but merchants who strayed inland risked assault. Any traveling convoy required an armed escort, as roads became increasingly perilous. The rebels effectively encircled the capital and attempted to starve it.

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342 Journal des débats, August 8 1896, Madagascar
344 Brown, *History of Madagascar*, 227
345 You, *Histoire, Organisation, Colonisation*, 162
Although unable to sever the road from Tamatave, they attempted to prevent rice cultivation in the surrounding land. Mervyn Brown would describe the capital as a “besieged city where night after night the horizon was ablaze with the flames of burning villages and churches.”

Annexation in the summer only worsened the situation, by depriving local authorities of revenue.

The French initially responded by destroying villages and rice-fields in restive regions. These repressive techniques transformed a series of discrete movements into xenophobic, nationalistic resistance aiming to drive foreigners from the island and restore the indigenous faith.

The movement in general focused on particularly the restoration of the indigenous faith. A British missionary on the island described the religious character of the revolt:

> Those who rose were led by fanatical sorcerers and such like, and their object was to drive, not only the French, but all white men of whatsoever nationality out of the country, and restore the old political and religious regime. Their numbers swell rapidly, especially as they forced into their service all the able-bodied men they came across.

In fact, the French incursion provoked the first stirrings of national unity among the various Malagasy peoples.

The island suffered greater chaos ten months after the conclusion of the expedition than prior to the opening of hostilities. The period of repose that had followed the submission of the Merina government led some contemporary observers to blame French policy for subsequent disorder. In particular, many lamented the withdrawal of General Duchesne and the premature institution of a civilian governor. The *Journal des*

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347 Brown, *History of Madagascar*, 233
348 Rid, “Counterinsurgency”, 748
débats reflected that: “when General Duchesne entered Tananrive, the situation was clear, power was concentrated in (his) hands, and …the protectorate regime established itself without too many difficulties.”  

However, “parliamentary intrigues” changed the system of governance, alienating the general, and dividing authority between military and civil leadership. Both powers would soon be reunited in the capable hands of an experienced soldier, Joseph Galliéni.

v. Galliéni

The pretense of indirect rule died when Joseph Simon Galliéni landed on the 28th of September, 1896, and began to remold the island with great efficiency. General Galliéni had established his credentials through prior service in Senegal, Sudan, and in Tonkin, and would become a pioneer of counterinsurgency operations. Though famed as a colonial general and governor, he was to gain repute outside of France for his involvement in the First Battle of the Marne, when, serving as military governor of Paris, he organized the “taxi-cab defense”, requisitioning every tax in the city to move the entire garrison of the capitol to the Front. The General then briefly served as Minister of War, before retiring and succumbing to illness in 1916. Long before his contribution to the Great War, a far younger Galliéni replaced the General Veyron as the head of military operations in Madagascar, while also assuming authority over civil matters following the departure of M. Laroche. He would leave a lasting imprint on the history of the island and in the annals of the French Empire. Stephen H. Roberts, a frequent critic of French policy, wrote that “Galliéni, perhaps the greatest figure in French colonial

351 Journal des débats, 8 August 1896, Chamber of Deputies
352 Journal des débats, 8 August 1896, Chamber of Deputies
353 You, Histoire, Organisation, Colonisation, 159
354 Brown, History of Madagascar, 233
history, really made Madagascar,” and, through the wide adoption of his methods elsewhere, “if there was a turning-point in the history of French colonization, it was when he landed in Madagascar.” A rebel leader and nationalist deputy in the Malagasy assembly would call him a “constructive man”.356

Galliéni received two mandates: to crush the rebellion and to Gallicize the island. He took several initial steps towards both aims, then began to institute a policy that today serves as a relevant example of counterinsurgency doctrine. On the 27th of September, 1896, Galliéni declared a state of siege in the Imerina and Betsileo regions. Suspecting the complicity of Merina nobility in the ongoing rebellion, he then publicly executed the Minister of the Interior and an uncle of the queen “to discourage the others”. He quickly demoted the Queen of Madagascar to Queen of the Merina, dismissing the claim to wider authority that the French had long promoted. In February he abolished the monarchy entirely and exiled Queen Ranavalona III to Réunion.

Galliéni wrote that his entire policy was “to make Madagascar French, to sap the English influence, and to lower the pride and power” of the Merina elite. His technique, which became a model for modern counterinsurgency efforts, rested on twin pillars: the “tache d’huile,” or oil stain, and the “politique des races”. Both concentrated on the treatment of civil society, rather than on the conduct of military operations against highly mobile opponents. The “first preoccupation,” Galliéni would

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357 In text as “franciser”
358 Origins…Counterinsurgency (Madagascar, Histoire, Organisation, Colonisation, 161)
359 Brown, *History of Madagascar* 234
360 Ganiage, *L’expansion coloniale* 196
362 Rid, “Counterinsurgency,” whole.
instruct his officers on the first of October, was to “bring back the population’s calm and its confidence.” This entailed the constant “combination of political action with military action”. Galliéni wrote that he sought to “enter into intimate contact with the populations, exploring their tendencies, their mentality, and striving to satisfy their needs in order to attach them through persuasion to the new institutions”.

The method of the “oil stain” had a lasting impact on the counterinsurgency doctrine. The image evokes the gradual permeation of influence. The French general wrote that the technique consisted of “progressively gaining territory in the front only after organizing and administering it in the rear.” This approach placed a greater emphasis on administrators than on soldiers, although Galliéni did not lack for violent adversaries, from bandits, nativist insurgents, and independent tribes. Nonetheless he succeeded in uniting the island in 1903; a significant rebellion occurred in 1904, but Galliéni was able to pacify the island before his departure a year later.

The “policy of the races” consisted in ending the hegemony of Merina nobility in favor of a managed “balance of power” between tribes. Perhaps most essentially, the policy was both variable and pragmatic. Galliéni applied a customized approach to the circumstances of each tribe and region. He also opposed assimilation on the island, arguing against the importation of French institutions wholesale and the idea that the island could be amenable to substantial immigration. In contrast, the General focused almost entirely on the indigenous institutions, writing that the “precept of one of our

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365 Galliéni, Neuf ans à Madagascar, 47, trans. in Rid, “Counterinsurgency”, 750
366 Galliéni, Neuf ans a Madagascar, 326. Trans. in Rid, “Counterinsurgency”, 756
367 Randrianja & Ellis, Short History, 158
368 Roberts, History of French Colonial Policy, 392
369 Roberts, History of French Colonial Policy, 391
historians that the power of tradition fructifies new institutions is profoundly true in colonial administration.”

Although he had been sent to enforce annexation, Galliéni also established a particular form of indirect rule. This new formula of administration would become the archetype for a new model of colonial rule that, under the broad term association, would replace

His methods proved exceptionally effective. Stephen Roberts estimates that “99 per cent of the country was in armed revolt” when Gallieni arrived. The French only had effective control of the ports of Majounga, Diego-Suarez, and Tamatave. Yet, with only 7,000 men, Gallieni secured the surrender of the three main rebel leaders and took control of the territories of the former Merina kingdom by early 1898. He united the island for the first moment in its history by 1902. Galliéni then revived and empowered indigenous political institutions under his “politique des races”. By 1904, local tribal councils were responsible for their own governance in the entirety of former Merina territories.

Galliéni focused on the health system, educational infrastructure, and economy of the Madagascar. He founded a medical school within two months of his arrival, and ordered the establishment of a free health service. By 1903, 603 schools served 50,000 pupils, largely offering vocational education in lieu of the theoretical studies the French tended to introduce in other colonies. A few statistics reveal the astounding economic progress made in the nine years of the General’s tenure. From 1896 to 1905, total trade increased from 2 million francs to 43 million; the island’s central budget, drawn from

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370 Gallieni, Neuf Ans à Madagascar (1908), p. 274, trans. in Roberts, 393
371 Roberts, History of French Colonial Policy, 395
372 Ganiage, L’expansion coloniale 197
373 Roberts, History of French Colonial Policy, 400
374 Roberts, History of French Colonial Policy, 403
internally generated revenues, climbed from 5.5 million francs in 1899 to 24.5 million in 1905, with nearly 10 million francs in reserves. An island troubled by outlaws, politically fractured, nominally ruled by a feeble, contested, and indebted monarchy founded upon the twin pillars of slavery and serfdom was utterly remade in nine years.

The legacy of Galliéni is not uncomplicated. Ethical considerations would exceed the scope of this essay; however, controversy merits mention, and the public executions of two Merina nobles for the purposes of a political statement drew criticism in Paris. Solofo Randrianja and Stephen Ellis critique the administrator for “the imposition of the conventional French colonial vision of a civilizing mission,” and denigrate his statistically impressive record of economic growth as the output of a “…a fragile, state-dominated economy single-mindedly reoriented to serve French interests, and an exhausted population”. Mervyn Brown highlighted the divisive effects, and intent, of the “politique des races;” the General’s forceful methods of “pacification;” and the use of force labor in public infrastructure projects: nonetheless, he concluded that “his total achievement was remarkable.” When Gallieni left Madagascar in 1905, he left a stable, pacified, and united polity. Gabriel Hanotaux would remark that, “Galliéni received an insurgent forest; he made it a tranquil and prosperous colony.” The dialectic of between colony and protectorate did not cease with formal annexation. Although theory in Paris demanded direct rule, reality in Madagascar responded to another approach. Galliéni’s pragmatic adoption of indirect rule, predicated

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375 Roberts, History of French Colonial Policy, 405
376 Randrianja and Ellis, Short History 160
377 Brown, History of Madagascar, 240
378 Roberts, History of French Colonial Policy, 237
379 Roberts, History of French Colonial Policy 404-5 It may bear mention, if only as a point of interest, that 5,863 Malagasians volunteered to fight for France during the First World War, a figure oddly close to the French casualty total from the expedition.
on the partial return of authority to local governance and the separate treatment of
different tribes, essentially instituted a series of protectorates within the new colony.
Galliéni was sent to pacify the island following the formal declaration of direct control;
he accomplished that aim through a technique of indirect rule.
Chapter VI. Conclusion

This essay considered a question often posed in one manner—what causes empires to expand?—in the reverse, and considering only a single variable—what is the impact of imperial ideology on colonial expansion, and how does it exert influence? An examination of the history showed that the essential problems in 1894 did not differ substantively from those present in 1883. In both periods, issues arose concerning the application of French privileges prescribed in a prior treaty—to private property ownership in 1883, and to control of foreign affairs—and surrounding the physical insecurity of French citizens and commercial interests. In 1894, the French Legislature reacted far more strongly: committing more money to the expedition; sending a substantially more impressive military force; and, after the conflict, pushing the government beyond its initial intentions to install a protectorate regime to the eventual complete annexation of the island.

The different results between 1885 and 1894 were spurred less by changing dynamics in Madagascar than by the dominant theory in Paris. While the earlier incidents occurred in an atmosphere of fierce debate over colonial expansion, the next decade is commonly viewed as the apex of imperial fervor in France and across Europe. However, there were limits to the effect of ideology. Expansion in Madagascar did not represent the fulfillment of an imperial project; the dominance of the imperial idea in French political thought influenced the political reaction of the metropole to events in the periphery rather than structuring a design. And there were strong limits to the extent to which the French imperial vision could impose itself on the great island. In fact, the
successful adoption of Galliéni’s techniques of indirect rule, *tache d’huile*, and *politique des races* in Madagascar would reshape the dominant system of French colonial administration. In this case, realities in the periphery reshaped the theory of the metropole.

The case studies considered here expose the power and limits of changes in political thought. By the 1890s, France had acquired an inclination to expand, and followed that inclination when presented with opportunities. In the case of Madagascar, a powerful ideological commitment to the extension of imperial control manifested less in the active seeking of opportunities to expand than in the enthusiastic response to events produced by crises in the periphery, rather than designed in the center. The swift ascent of imperial thought, from the challenge of 1885 to a dominant in 1894, remolded the reflexes of the state. Ideology endowed the Third with an imperial disposition; this disposition would define the political reflexes of the state.
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