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TRANSNATIONAL PROJECTS OF EMPIRE IN FRANCE, *C.*1815–*C.*1870*

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Rather than renouncing empire after the fall of Napoleon, this essay argues, French liberal thinkers expressed a sustained preference for a strategy based on transnational connections, or what imperial historians describe as informal imperialism. The eulogy of European Christian civilization exemplified by François Guizot's lecture at the Sorbonne in 1828 served not only to legitimize French global ambitions, but also to facilitate cooperation with other European imperial powers, especially Britain, and indigenous collaborators. Liberal enthusiasm for the spread of Western civilization also inspired the emergence of a French version of free-trade imperialism, of which the economist Michel Chevalier proved a consistent advocate. Only when such aspirations were frustrated did liberals reluctantly endorse colonial conquest, on an exceptional basis in Algeria after 1840 and on a global scale after 1870. The allegedly abrupt liberal conversion to empire in the nineteenth century may instead be construed as a tactical shift from informal to formal dominance.

Historians of modern ideas of empire have focused their attention on the desirability and legitimacy of territorial empires. The debate about European liberalism and imperialism in the nineteenth century is a case in point, giving pride of place, for example, to the justification of British rule in India by John Stuart Mill and of the French conquest of Algeria by Alexis de Tocqueville.[1] Yet

* Thanks are due to Jeremy Adelman, Christophe Charle, Richard Drayton, Emma Rothschild, Edward Shawcross and the anonymous referees for their helpful comments and suggestions on earlier versions of this article. Translations of quotations originally in French are my own, although I have consulted and often followed contemporary translations when they were available.

[1] Jennifer Pitts, "Political Theory of Empire and Imperialism", *Annual Review of Political Science*, 13 (2010), 211–35. On the debate about liberalism and imperialism see Andrew Sartori, "The British Empire and Its Liberal Mission", *Journal of Modern History*, 78 (2006), 623–42; and Duncan Bell, "Empire and Imperialism", in Gareth Stedman Jones and Gregory Claeys, eds., *The Cambridge History of Nineteenth-Century Political Thought* (Cambridge, 2011), 864–92. Key works include Uday Singh Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire:*

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since John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson's article on the "imperialism of free trade" in 1953, historians of empire have had to contend with the hypothesis that territorial conquest was but one manifestation—perhaps not the most significant—of European expansionism and that imperial domination could be "informal" as well as "formal".[2] Even when modern practitioners of imperial and world history criticize the theoretical vagueness of "informal empire", they insist that the study of Europe's imperial domination needs to extend beyond territories placed under formal European sovereignty.[3] To reflect this concern, this essay argues, historians of ideas about empire ought to examine contemporary projects of informal or transnational domination. Such an approach makes it possible to advance an interpretation alternative to the alleged "liberal turn to empire" in the mid-nineteenth century, as a more modest tactical shift from informal to formal dominance.

Due to the collapse of the Bourbon and Napoleonic territorial empires between 1763 and 1815, reinventing global expansion as a trans-European and informal endeavour had extraordinary appeal in nineteenth-century France. Liberal intellectuals under the Restoration and July Monarchy continued to believe in the value of extending the reach of French power throughout the non-European world. Only rarely, however, did this belief lead to projects of territorial expansion: the conquest of Algeria was viewed as an exception rather than as the first building block of a vast territorial empire. This liberal preference for informal empire survived the fall of the constitutional monarchy and was adopted enthusiastically by the Second Napoleonic Empire, a regime that pursued a policy of global interventionism while eschewing large territorial annexations.[4]

The liberal belief in the possibility of empire without annexation was predicated on the inherent seductiveness of European moral and economic

A Study in Nineteenth-Century British Liberal Thought (Chicago, 1999); Sankar Muthu, *Enlightenment against Empire* (Princeton, NJ, 2003); and Jennifer Pitts, *A Turn to Empire: The Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France* (Princeton, NJ, 2005).

2 John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson, "The Imperialism of Free Trade", *Economic History Review*, 2nd ser., 6 (1953), 1–15; see also William Roger Louis, ed., *Imperialism: The Robinson and Gallagher Controversy* (New York, 1976).

3 John Darwin, "Imperialism and the Victorians: The Dynamics of Territorial Expansion", *English Historical Review*, 447 (1997), 614–42; Ann Laura Stoler, "On Degrees of Imperial Sovereignty", *Public Culture*, 18 (2006), 125–46; Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper, *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton, NJ, 2010), esp. 11–17.

4 David Todd, "A French Imperial Meridian, 1814–1870", *Past and Present*, 210 (2011), 155–86; on the significance of collaboration between European imperial powers see Richard Drayton, "Masked Condominia: Collaboration vs Competition in the Trans-European History of Imperialism", unpublished paper given at the Ecole des hautes études en sciences sociales, 16 May 2013.

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civilization, of which France allegedly offered the finest specimen. Three core elements of this belief may together be said to constitute a preference for informal empire. First came a reconceptualization of the relationship between civilization and Christianity. While Enlightenment apologists of civilization had often considered Christianity with suspicion or hostility, liberal thinkers from François-René de Chateaubriand to François Guizot placed a new emphasis on the civilizing virtues of Christianity and proclaimed the superiority of European Christian civilization over other stagnant or retrograde civilizations. A second element was the special status of France and Britain as the natural leaders of this vibrant Christian civilization, who should collaborate to ensure its global dissemination, by persuasion if possible and by forceful means if necessary. Historians have often neglected the intensity of the French liberal elite's belief in the merits of an Anglo-French global partnership because the exuberant Anglophobic rhetoric of the far left and the far right has attracted more attention. But the liberal intellectuals and statesmen who shaped French policy, from Charles-Maurice de Talleyrand and Guizot to Alphonse de Lamartine and Michel Chevalier, were stalwart defenders of the *entente cordiale*. The third element was the surprisingly broad endorsement of a French version of "free-trade imperialism". For all their frequently noted reservations about laissez-faire economics within France, French economists could be as enthusiastic as their British counterparts about the removal of obstacles to Western economic expansion and the founding of settler colonies outside Europe.

The intellectual origins of France's second colonial empire after 1870 therefore lay in a tactical transition from transnational to territorial expansion rather than in the abrupt conversion of the liberal intelligentsia to imperialism. Contrary to what Raoul Girardet, an eminent historian of ideas but also a disillusioned partisan of French Algeria until 1962, claimed in *L'idée coloniale en France* (1972), the project of a new colonial empire did not emerge out of an intellectual climate of liberal "indifference" and "disdain" for "overseas ventures".[5] Liberal opposition to territorial aggrandizement cannot be equated with anti-imperialism, because it was almost always combined with enthusiastic support for more economical forms of asymmetrical relationships with the extra-European world: these ranged from participation in the exploitation of territories under British rule, to pan-European protectorates over vast areas of the globe, to the promotion of a specifically French economic and cultural suzerainty over certain countries. Moreover, only in civilized Europe did French liberals categorically rule out an aggressive extension of French sovereignty. In the rest of the world, informal dominance was preferred. Yet when the appeal of French civilization did not

[5] Raoul Girardet, *L'idée coloniale en France de 1871 à 1962* (Paris, 2005), 23.

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suffice to restore France's imperial status, most liberals proved willing to endorse annexation, exceptionally in Algeria after 1840 and more durably on a global scale after 1870.

I

The concept of civilization, refashioned by early nineteenth-century French intellectuals, facilitated the formulation of transnational projects of empire. When it was coined in the second half of the eighteenth century, the word *civilisation* was used always in the singular and served primarily as a tool of philosophical and historical analysis to highlight human accomplishments in a wide array of cultural contexts, in the vein of Voltaire's *Essai sur les moeurs* (1756).[6] After 1815, *civilisation* became a hierarchical concept, often used in the plural to distinguish between Europe's progressive civilization and those of others, which were described as stagnant or retrograde.[7] The new usage went together with a reappraisal of Christianity's role in the moral and material progress of Europe and a stress on the more perfect version of civilization achieved by France.

The *Histoire des deux Indes*, the multi-authored best-seller of prerevolutionary Europe edited by Abbé Raynal, may paradoxically be viewed as laying the foundation of this discourse. The work's moving condemnation of the atrocities committed by Europeans outside their continent and its scathing critique, drawn from Physiocratic theory, of the mercantile policies that underpinned the colonial system are well known.[8] But it is also remarkable for its pan-European treatment of colonial expansion since the fifteenth century: specific colonies or national empires are usually dealt with in separate sections, but the results of each nation's colonial ventures are compared and ranked from the worst (the Portuguese and

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6 Marcello Verga, "European Civilization and the 'Emulation of the Nations': Histories of Europe from the Enlightenment to Guizot", *History of European Ideas*, 34 (2008), 353–60; Pierre Force, "Voltaire and the Necessity of Modern History", *Modern Intellectual History*, 6 (2009), 457–84.

7 Reuel Lochore, *History of the Idea of Civilization in France, 1830–1870* (Bonn, 1935), 9–17; Brett Bowden, *The Empire of Civilization: The Evolution of an Imperial Idea* (Chicago, 2009), 23–46; see also special issue on 'Civilisations : Retour sur le mot et les idées', *Revue de synthèse*, 129 (2008). On ideas of European identity see Anthony Pagden, ed., *The Idea of Europe: From Antiquity to the European Union* (Cambridge, 2002).

8 Anthony Pagden, *Lords of All the World: Ideologies of Empire in Spain, Britain and France c.1500–c.1850* (New Haven, 1995); 156–77; Muthu, *Enlightenment*, 72–121; Pernille Røge, "Political Economy and the Reinvention of France's Colonial System, 1756–1802" (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Cambridge, 2010), chap. 2; on the early implementation of these ideas see Emma Rothschild, "A Horrible Tragedy in the French Atlantic", *Past and Present*, 192 (2006), 67–108; and François-Joseph Ruggiu, "India and the Reshaping of French Colonial Policy (1759–1789)", *Itinerario*, 35 (2011), 25–43.

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the Spanish) to the least bad (the British). Some sections, such as Book Eleven on African slavery, dealt with "European" overseas activities, and the overall impression left by the work of colonization as a collective endeavour by Western, Atlantic European states.[9] Furthermore, as several analyses pointed out, even the most critical passages, authored by Denis Diderot, left open the possibility of more benevolent sorts of colonization: Britain's more enlightened colonial policies, especially the self-government granted to European settlements in North America, were held out as a possible model for future colonial ventures, despite the condemnation of British resistance to the independence of the Thirteen Colonies in the third edition of the work in 1780.[10]

Such support for the independence of European settlements should not be interpreted as hostility to all forms of imperial venture, but only as the condemnation of European domination over other Europeans. This became clear in French commentaries on the independence of American colonies in the next decades. The views of Talleyrand, a major influence on French foreign policy in this era, are characteristic. While in exile in the United States in 1795, the former bishop of Autun observed that despite the destruction of the "links between subject and sovereign", "interests" as well as "habits" (language, laws, tastes) "made of each American an Englishman, and made him tributary to England with a compelling force, which no declaration or recognition of independence could overcome". Thanks to independence, Britain enjoyed all the benefits of a highly profitable and rapidly expanding market, and no longer bore the costs of defending it.[11] After Talleyrand returned to France, his *Essai sur les avantages à retirer de colonies nouvelles* (1797) described the independence of all colonies in the Americas as "inevitable" and recommended the foundation of new French colonies in Asia or Africa. But he insisted that such colonies should enjoy a complete freedom of government, on the model of the "independent" colonies of ancient Greece. The benefits of the new colonization would accrue from "the powerful tie of a common origin": "At a great distance, every other relation becomes in time illusory."[12] In a work of propaganda commissioned by Napoleon, *De l'état de la France en l'an VIII* (1800) a close collaborator of Talleyrand, Alexandre d'Hauterive, would elaborate upon the possibility of using language

9 Guillaume Thomas Raynal, *Histoire philosophique et politique des établissements et du commerce des Européens dans les deux Indes*, 5 vols. (Geneva, 1780), 3: 91–236.

10 Denis Diderot, *Political Writings* (Cambridge, 1992), 198–204.

11 "Lettre de Talleyrand à Lord Landsdowne", 1 Feb. 1795, repr. in Michel Poniatowski, *Talleyrand aux Etats-Unis, 1794–1796* (Paris, 1967), 345–59.

12 Charles Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord, *Essai sur les avantages à retirer de colonies nouvelles, dans les circonstances présentes* (London, 1808), 42–3.

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and habits rather than territorial acquisitions as privileged means of spreading French influence across Europe and the globe.[13]

The Abbé de Pradt, a prolific publicist who also worked with Talleyrand, was more specifically concerned with French influence overseas. He concurred that the independence of European colonies in the Americas was inevitable and even desirable, because "self-government" would increase their prosperity and capacity to consume European goods: the aim of colonies was "to draw a profit" and whether such profit derived "from sovereignty or commerce [did] not matter". Pradt only made an exception for Caribbean colonies, because once independent their predominantly African populations were more likely to become pirates than to become steadfast consumers of European products. To maintain the European character of the other colonies, Pradt recommended the continuation of emigration to the Americas and the foundation of new schools to educate the new countries' elites. Such institutions, which might be established in the disused Catholic monasteries of the French Atlantic coast, would constitute "enduring bonds between France and all the known colonies".[14] What mattered to Pradt as well as to Talleyrand was the preservation of superior European—if possible French—values, languages, habits and tastes, rather than political dominion.

The growth of pan-European or Eurocentric ideas facilitated this disconnection of the benefits of overseas expansion from sovereignty. The rise of Eurocentrism in the late eighteenth century has sometimes been associated with the messianic overtones of the radical Enlightenment and French Revolution. Comte Volney's writings are often noted for their unflattering descriptions of Islam as well as their influence on Napoleon's Egyptian expedition of 1798. Volney's prediction that the Ottoman Empire would soon crumble certainly helped to nurture French projects in the Middle East during the Revolution.[15] The first recorded usage of "Occident" in the sense of Western Europe and its overseas offshoots can be found in Condorcet's *Esquisse d'un tableau historique des progrès de l'esprit humain* (1795), a work which also called for the foundation of new "colonies of citizens" in Africa and Asia.[16] But the Eurocentrism of radical *philosophes* remained tempered by their hostility to Christianity. In his reverie

[13] Emma Rothschild, "Language and Empire, *c.*1800", *Historical Research*, 78 (2005), 208–29.

[14] Dominique de Pradt, *Les trois âges des colonies, ou de leur état passé, présent et à venir*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1801–2), 2: 132–3, 160–64, 529–32; see also Pradt, *Des colonies, et de la révolution actuelle de l'Amérique* (Paris, 1817).

[15] Henry Laurens, "Le siècle des lumières face à l'Empire Ottoman", in Laurens, *Orientales*, 3 vols. (Paris, 2007), 1: 57–85, 59–60.

[16] Henry Laurens, "Histoire, anthropologie et politique au siècle des Lumières, le cas de l'orientalisme islamisant", in Laurens, *Orientales*, 1: 15–29, 16; Pitts, *A Turn to Empire*, 168–73.

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on the regeneration of mankind, the *Ruines, ou méditations sur les révolutions des empires* (1792), Volney, for instance, disparaged equally all the world's religious and political dogmas. In such works, the superiority of French civilization appeared recent and, to a large extent, contingent.

By contrast, the reappraisal of Christianity and the new emphasis placed by some authors on its essential contribution to the progress of civilization after 1800 helped to harden the sense of European and French superiority over the rest of the world. A highly influential work in this respect was François-René de Chateaubriand's *Génie du christianisme* (1802), which defended Christianity in general and Catholicism in particular, against the attacks of the *philosophes*, as the main source of European material and moral improvement: "In every country, civilization has invariably followed the introduction of the Gospel. The reverse is the case with the religions of Mohammed, Brama and Confucius, which have limited the progress of society and forced man to grow old while yet in his infancy." A prominent example in the book of the civilizing influence of Catholicism around the globe was that of the missions, which fostered the progress of "arts, sciences and commerce" in the Levant, America, India and China.[17] In the *Itinéraire de Paris à Jerusalem* (1811), Chateaubriand, while lamenting the degeneration of the East as a result of Muslim superstition and tyranny, collected evidence of the civilizing influence of French crusaders and missionaries since the eleventh century.[18]

The denigration of Turkish military despotism in the *Itinéraire* was also a veiled critique of the authoritarian and expansionist turn taken by the Napoleonic regime. Talleyrand, Hauterive, Pradt, Volney and Chateaubriand were all initially supporters of Napoleon, before breaking with him at various stages between 1803 and 1812: they favoured the expansion of French power, but not under the form of military conquest. The Napoleonic occupation of foreign territories might have accentuated the cultural arrogance of France's administrative elite and fostered the growth of a more ethnic conception of civilization.[19] But the collapse of the Napoleonic regime was hailed by most liberal intellectuals, including Benjamin Constant in the *Esprit de conquête* (1814), as a triumph of commercial civilization. In order to consolidate the permanent victory of commerce over war, Pradt commented on Constant's pamphlet, Europe now needed to extend

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17 François-René de Chateaubriand, *Génie du christianisme*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1966), 2: 138, 214.

18 François-René de Chateaubriand, *Itinéraire de Paris à Jérusalem* (Paris, 2005), 337–48, 373–8.

19 Stuart Woolf, "French Civilization and Ethnicity in the Napoleonic Empire", *Past and Present*, 124 (1989), 96–120.

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commercial opportunities and "carry civilization to all the places which it has not yet reached".[20]

It was under the Bourbon Restoration of 1814–30 that a new meaning of *civilisation* emerged, referring to a specific cultural system anchored in a religious tradition.[21] In a series of lectures delivered at the Sorbonne in 1826, Théodore Jouffroy, the translator of Thomas Reid and Dugald Stewart, discerned three "systems of civilization", which dominated the globe apart from the regions still peopled by "savages": Christianity, Islam and Brahmanism, the latter term encompassing Chinese and Japanese as well as Indian culture. Jouffroy was a sceptic, but religion, he argued, led to the emergence not only of "a form of worship", but also of "a specific civil order, specific politics and specific customs". "In a word", he concluded, "every religion gives birth to a civilization". Christian civilization was "the truest, and as a result the most powerful", and would eventually "absorb the other two". Three nations stood "at the head" of Christian civilization: Germany, specialized in science; England, specialized in the practical use of knowledge; and France, specialized in philosophy. But France, being more scientific than England and more practical than Germany, also held the most eminent role of this "majestic and holy" alliance, that of "pivot of civilization". European statesmen, he concluded, should henceforth abandon the "narrow ideas of patriotism" and work for "the civilization of the world by the unity and ideas of Europe".[22]

The Eurocentric reconciliation of the Enlightenment discourse of civilization with Christianity reached a climax in another set of lectures given at the Sorbonne two years later by François Guizot.[23] These lectures are better known for the intellectual enthusiasm they elicited at the time and their influence on the thought of Alexis de Tocqueville, Karl Marx and John Stuart Mill.[24] But they also proclaimed the superiority of "European and Christian civilization" over "the other civilizations which have developed themselves in the world". Ancient civilizations, Guizot argued, were prone to rapid decline (Greece) or stagnation (Egypt, India) because they tended to rely on a single "social

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20 Dominique de Pradt, *Du congrès de Vienne* (Paris, 1816), 35–6, 242–5.

21 Lucien Febvre, "Civilisation: Evolution d'un mot et d'un groupe d'idées", in Lucien Febvre *et al.*, *Civilisation: Le mot et l'idée* (Paris, 1930), 10–59.

22 Théodore Jouffroy, "De l'état actuel de l'humanité", in Jouffroy, *Mélanges philosophiques*, 2nd edn (Paris, 1838), 92–133, 97, 102, 120–21, 129.

23 On Guizot's significance in the history of French liberalism see Pierre Rosanvallon, *Le moment Guizot* (Paris, 1985); and Michael Drolet, "Carrying the Banner of the Bourgeoisie: Democracy, Self and the Philosophical Foundations to François Guizot's Historical and Political Thought", *History of Political Thought*, 32 (2011), 645–90.

24 Larry Siedentop, "Introduction", in François Guizot, *The History of Civilization in Europe* (London, 1997), vii–xxxvii.

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principle", whereas the diversity of Christian Europe engendered continuous dynamism. Similarly, "Immobility [was now] the characteristic of moral life" for "most of the populations of Asia". As for the Arabs, "tyranny" was "inherent in [their] civilization", as a result of the Muslim "confusion of moral and material authority".[25] In a second series of lectures the following year, Guizot claimed, in the manner of Jouffroy, that France held a special place in European civilization. Britain excelled at "material progress" and Germany at "intellectual progress", but France excelled at combining both harmoniously: "her civilization has reproduced more faithfully than any other the general type and fundamental idea of civilization. It is the most complete, the most veritable, and, so to speak, the most civilized of civilizations."[26]

II

Even when they described France as the most perfect exemplar of European civilization, French advocates of informal empire acknowledged Britain's extraordinary contribution to the progress of mankind and its diffusion around the globe. After the Napoleonic Wars, they also became keenly aware of Britain's hegemony outside Europe. To help France recover its rank and participate in the global expansion of European civilization, they therefore argued for a policy of cooperation with its traditional rival.

As early as 1801, Pradt had argued that the French should celebrate rather than lament British expansion in India, because Britain's conquests were "more *common* than *particular*, more *European* than *English*", and would eventually benefit all European countries.[27] In 1814, Henri de Saint-Simon proposed the merging of Britain and France into a single state, in order to preserve European peace and enable France to access British markets: "The empire of the sea will also be France's and extend [its] commerce, increase [its] industry."[28] The near coincidence of the Revolution of 1830 and British electoral reform stoked hopes that a progressive *entente cordiale*, an expression first recorded in 1828, would facilitate the resurgence of French influence overseas.[29] After the overthrow of the Bourbons in 1830, cooperation with Britain and the prevention of a revolutionary

25 François Guizot, *Histoire de la civilisation en Europe* (Paris, 1985), 61, 74–6, 103.

26 François Guizot, *Histoire de la civilisation en France*, 2nd edn, 4 vols. (Paris, 1840), 1: 8–12, 21.

27 Pradt, *Trois âges*, 452, emphasis in the original text.

28 Henri de Saint-Simon and Augustin Thierry, *De la réorganisation de la société européenne*, repr. in Pierre Musso, ed., *Le Saint-Simonisme, l'Europe et la Méditerranée* (Houilles, 2008), 21–70, 64.

29 Raymond Guyot, *La première entente cordiale* (Paris, 1926); Roger Bullen, *Palmerston, Guizot and the Collapse of the Entente Cordiale* (London, 1974), 1–24.

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war became the official policy of the July Monarchy of 1830–48. In his *Mémoires*, Guizot, one of the new regime's leading political figures, described the taming of France's "posthumous passion for adventure and conquest" in Europe as its main foreign-policy objective, combined with the "formation of a public, European and Christian law" in cooperation with Britain.[30] But hostility to conquest did not imply the abolition of military coercion. In an explanation of France's intervention in the Papal States in 1832, Guizot argued that, even within Europe, civilized powers had a duty to intervene when governments flouted the fundamental standards of "modern civilization": "There is a level of bad government which nations, whether great or small, educated or ignorant, will not, in these days, endure."[31]

Michel Chevalier, young graduate of the Ecole polytechnique and editor of the Saint-Simonian periodical *Le Globe*, wholeheartedly supported the new regime's foreign policy.[32] While the conflicts of the past eight hundred years were almost all due to the rivalry between Britain and France, he argued, the triumph of progressive forces in the two countries rendered possible a "close political alliance", dedicated to the material and moral improvement of the world.[33] But the eradication of war in Europe would increase instead of eliminate the need for "intervention" beyond national borders, because progress required and entailed "a continuous exchange of sentiments, ideas and material products between nations" and "from this triple current which always ebbs and flows, waxing and waning without end, there results an unremitting *intervention* between man and man, city and city, nation and nation, continent and continent". In this conception of progress as the result of constant interactions, France had a special role to play, because it was "the Coryphaeus that precedes and leads the multitude". After Greece and Rome, it was destined to pursue "the mission of civilizing peoples".[34]

Chevalier outlined how Europeans, at peace among themselves, should now export material and moral improvement to "the entire world", and more particularly south and east of the Mediterranean, because "Christian nations are not the only ones that crave for progress today". His training as an engineer made Chevalier an early believer in the power of new transport technologies to

30 François Guizot, *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de mon temps*, 8 vols. (Paris, 1858–67), 4: 3–5.

31 Guizot, *Mémoires*, 2: 292.

32 Jean Walch, *Michel Chevalier, économiste saint-simonien* (Paris, 1975); Michael Drolet, "Industry, Class and Society: A Historiographic Reinterpretation of Michel Chevalier", *English Historical Review*, 123 (2008), 1229–71.

33 Michel Chevalier, "Loi des 80,000 hommes: La France et l'Angleterre", *Le Globe*, 8 Dec. 1830; repr. in Chevalier, *Politique européenne* (Paris, 1831).

34 Michel Chevalier, "L'intervention", *Le Globe*, 17 Dec. 1830; repr. in Chevalier, *Politique européenne*, original emphasis.

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increase Europe's capacity to transform the rest of the world. Five years before the opening of France's first railway line, he expounded the project of a vast network of railways and steam navigation, centred on Europe but reaching deep into Africa and Asia. The network could be completed, he believed, in fifteen years and at the relatively reasonable cost of eighteen billion francs. Distances would shrink: a traveller, "starting from Le Havre in the early morning, will be able to have lunch in Paris, supper in Lyon and catch, on the same evening in Toulon, a steamship bound for Algiers or Alexandria". Parallel networks of telegraphic lines and banks would further increase interactions between nations and continents. This acceleration of the movement of individuals, ideas and commodities would alter "the constitution of the world": "what is today a vast nation will be an averagely sized province". Thanks to its geographical position, between the Atlantic and the Mediterranean, France would amply benefit from this revolution, but England, "the queen of industry", would retain its essential role: "The railway from Le Havre to Marseille will serve as a bridge for the passage of powerful Albion, its engineers and its treasures."[35]

Chevalier remained vague about the political consequences of these imminent transformations, perhaps because of the Saint-Simonian scorn for traditional diplomacy. Alphonse de Lamartine, a liberal royalist and future republican, who held some sympathies for Saint-Simonian ideas, gave a possible interpretation on his return from a journey across Greece, Turkey and Syria in 1832–3. In his maiden speech at the Chamber of Deputies, he confirmed Chateaubriand's diagnosis that the decay of the Ottoman Empire was irreversible and called for an active regeneration of the region by European powers: "a general and collective protectorate of the West upon the East" should form the basis of a new "system" of "public law". Provinces of the Ottoman empire would then be handed over as "partial protectorates" to the major European powers: the Balkans to Austria, Asia Minor to Russia, Syria to France and Egypt to Britain. Yet the rights of European powers would be limited: each would only enjoy "partial sovereignty"; freedom of religion would be guaranteed; and in the eventuality of a war in Europe, these protectorates would be treated as neutral territories. Such European protection over the East would not be based on "the right of might and conquest", but on "the right of civilization" (*droit de civilisation*).[36] The accomplishment of his

35 Michel Chevalier, "Politique générale", 3rd and 4th articles, *Le Globe*, 5 and 12 Feb. 1832, repr. in Chevalier, *Le système de la Méditerranée* (Paris, 1832).

36 Alphonse de Lamartine, "Sur l'Orient", 4 and 8 Jan. 1834, speeches repr. in Lamartine, *La Question d'Orient: Discours et articles politiques (1834–1861)*, ed. Sophie Bash and Henry Laurens (Paris, 2011), 87–105; see also "Résumé politique", in Alphonse de Lamartine, *Voyage en Orient* (Paris, 2011), 944–67.

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programme, Lamartine insisted, should rely on a solid alliance between Britain and France, "the two powers which have initiated every progress in the world".[37]

The new transnational thinking about the expansion of Europe was sometimes grounded in racial distinctions, which drew connections between national groups as often as they set up barriers between others. Yet "race" remained a fluid concept, which combined, in various proportions, cultural and biological considerations.[38] In Chevalier's *Lettres sur l'Amérique du Nord* (1836), for example, *race* served as a loose synonym for *civilisation* or referred to combinations and subdivisions of civilizations. The product of a two-year journey in the United States, Canada, Mexico and Cuba, the *Lettres* were a study of European efforts to colonize and improve the New World.[39] Alexander von Humboldt hailed the work as a "treatise of the civilization of the peoples of the West".[40] This study, the introduction explained, intended to throw up useful lessons in view of the imminent assertion of Western civilization's dominance over Eastern civilization, "the greatest event in the history of man". In addition to the East and the West, Chevalier described "the Arab race" as an "intermediate civilization", which might serve Europe as "a powerful ally in its efforts to seize and hold Asia, or to transmit to [Asia] the means of working out its own regeneration".[41]

Chevalier also subdivided European civilization into three "races": "Latin", "Teutonic", and "Slavic", corresponding respectively with the Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox branches of Christianity. His main concern, at this crucial juncture in world history, was the declining contribution of the Latin race to Western expansion, by comparison with the dynamism of the Teutonic Anglo-Americans and Slavic Russians. France should therefore aim to redress the balance in favour of its own group. It was "the head of the Latin group" and "its protector": "to [France] it belongs to rouse [Latin nations] from the lethargy into which they are plunged in both hemispheres . . . and to enable them again to take a stand in the world". The expeditions of Egypt and Algiers suggested that France was, in addition, destined "to encourage the new spirit, which seems to be reanimating the Arabs, and through them to shake the East". France's mission of regeneration would be accomplished by "education" and local "intermediaries", since Latin

37 Alphonse de Lamartine, "Sur les affaires d'Orient", 1 July 1839, in Lamartine, *La question d'Orient*, 151–62, 159.

38 Martin S. Staum, *Labeling People: French Scholars on Society, Race, and Empire, 1815–1848* (Montreal, 2003), 122–57.

39 Jeremy Jennings, "Democracy before Tocqueville: Michel Chevalier's America", *Review of Politics*, 68 (2006), 398–427.

40 Moncure Robinson, "Obituary Notice of Michel Chevalier", *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 19 (1880), 28–37, 30.

41 Michel Chevalier, *Lettres sur l'Amérique du Nord*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1836), 1: viii.

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and Arab peoples would naturally welcome France's benevolent protection.[42] The *Lettres* sometimes expressed nostalgia about the territorial empire lost in 1763, especially the Saint Lawrence and Mississippi valleys: "we were occupying the most fertile, best-watered, and finest portion of North America . . . there is left to us, alas! nought but vain and impotent regrets". But Chevalier recognized the superiority of the English over French settlers and argued that France's defeat in the Seven Years War had accelerated the "progress of civilization" in North America.[43] French emigration, he suggested, served the cause of civilization better in independent states than in colonial dependencies. For instance, Chevalier was enthusiastic about the prospects of French immigration in Mexico.[44]

Guizot, Lamartine and Chevalier therefore imagined a civilizing empire that would rely not on territorial expansion, but on collaboration with an equally civilized partner (Britain) on the one hand and adherents of civilization in countries (Latin and Arab) who had a special affinity with France on the other. This was not an entirely fanciful project. In the 1830s, French influence, for example, seemed preponderant in Muhammad Ali's Egypt. But the Eastern crisis of 1840 demonstrated the limits of this strategy: the radical opposition of Britain to Egypt's plans of territorial expansion at the expense of its Ottoman suzerain resulted in humiliation for Muhammad Ali and his French protectors.[45] The crisis shook but did not alter the support of advocates of informal empire for cooperation with Britain. Guizot took the reins of a new ministry intent on preserving peace and repairing the damage done to the Anglo-French relationship. Rejecting calls for war to avenge French honour, he asserted, "France's means of influence consist in . . . conquering everywhere, not territories, but minds and souls."[46] The young Alexis de Tocqueville opposed Guizot's policy of appeasement in 1840. But in later parliamentary debates about the suppression of the slave trade, he confessed that he shared the attraction to an "intimate and permanent union" of Britain and France and the "idea of these two great peoples, so great in mind, enveloping, in a way, the universe within their vast embrace, and forcing it to remain in repose and peace".[47]

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[42] Chevalier, *Lettres*, 1: x–xiv.

[43] Chevalier, *Lettres*, 2: 109–10.

[44] Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, Fonds Enfantin, MS 7705, fol. 16, Chevalier to Béranger, 1 Apr. 1835.

[45] Henry Laurens, *Le royaume impossible: La France et la genèse du monde arabe* (Paris, 1990), 29–54.

[46] François Guizot, *Histoire parlementaire de France*, 5 vols. (Paris, 1863–4), 3: 291 (18 Nov. 1840).

[47] Quoted in Mary Lawlor, *Alexis de Tocqueville in the Chamber of Deputies: His Views on Foreign and Colonial Policy* (Washington, DC, 1959), 74.

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III

The project of French global expansion by informal means had an economic as well as a moral and intellectual dimension. Free-trade imperialism, consisting in support for new settler colonies in allegedly virgin lands as well as for the forceful removal of obstacles to the circulation of Western capital and commodities elsewhere, has usually been associated with British economists such as Edward Gibbon Wakefield, Herman Merivale or John Stuart Mill.[48] Yet since Turgot and Raynal, French economists had been sanguine about the advantages to be derived by the global intensification of commercial exchanges. After 1815, they also increasingly drew on the notion of a superior European civilization to justify the coercive expansion of market institutions across the globe by Britain and France.

The notion that before the 1870s French economists were consistently hostile to colonization or empire remains widespread.[49] A major source of confusion has been the radical critique of colonial trade restrictions or the *exclusif* by Jean-Baptiste Say, a tutelary figure of nineteenth-century French economics. It is true that Say, drawing on the arguments of the Physiocrats and Adam Smith against mercantilist legislation, consistently defended the independence of European colonies in the Americas, from the first edition of his *Traité d'économie politique* (1803) onwards. But after 1820, he began to consider European expansion in Africa and Asia more favourably.[50] In 1824, probably under the influence of James Mill's *History of British India*, he defended British dominance in the subcontinent because "the people of Asia" did not "think it possible to live without a master" and were better off under a British than an Asian despotic government. Modern Europeans, Say rejoiced, were "destined to subdue the world, as they [had] already subdued the two Americas", but "by the inevitable ascendancy of knowledge, and the unceasing operation of [their] institutions" rather than "by force of arms".[51]

In a footnote to the 1826 edition of his *Traité*, Say even called for "the creation of independent states of European origin" in North Africa: "the Mediterranean will be an immense lake, furrowed by the commerce of the wealthy nations, peopling its shores on every side." Offering further evidence that the liberal

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48 Bernard Semmel, *The Rise of Free Trade Imperialism: Classical Political Economy, the Empire of Free Trade and Imperialism* (Cambridge, 1970); Duncan Bell, "John Stuart Mill on Colonies", *Political Theory*, 38 (2010), 34–64.

49 Girardet, *L'idée coloniale*, 26–7; Philippe Steiner, "J.-B. Say et les colonies ou comment se débarasser d'un héritage intempestif", *Cahiers d'économie politique*, 27–8 (1996), 153–73.

50 Anna Plassart, "'Un impérialiste libéral?' Jean-Baptiste Say on Colonies and the Extra-European World", *French Historical Studies*, 32 (2009), 223–50.

51 Jean-Baptiste Say, "Essai historique sur les origines, les progrès et les résultats probables de la souveraineté des Anglais aux Indes", *Revue encyclopédique*, 23 (1824), 281–99, 297–9.

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condemnation of territorial expansion did not apply to the extra-European world, Say described such colonies as an alternative to Napoleon's "spirit of conquest and domination": "The vast means at the disposal of Napoleon might have been successfully directed to this grand object, and he would now enjoy the reputation of having civilized, enriched and peopled the world, instead of having devastated it."[52] Say's support for settler colonies remained grounded in a desire to spread European civilization rather than to revive French formal power overseas: in his *Cours complet*, he insisted that Europeans of English descent were the best colonizers, whereas nations "distinguished by their social talents rather than by talents useful to society", a transparent allusion to the French national character, were "not fit to found colonies".[53]

We do not know what Say, who died in 1832, thought of the 1830 expedition of Algiers. His successor as professor of political economy at the Collège de France, Pelegrino Rossi, only briefly alluded to the possibility of turning colonization in Africa into "a work of civilization".[54] But Say's disciple and successor as professor at the Conservatoire des arts et métiers, Adolphe Blanqui, was more explicit, becoming a staunch advocate of European supremacy in North Africa and of free colonial trade. In his *Histoire de l'économie politique* (1837), Blanqui cited Say to condemn colonial rule as archaic and ineffectual: "it is not necessary to be master of a country in order to establish advantageous relations with it".[55] But the condemnation only applied to the old colonial system, not to settler colonialism. In a report on the economic prospects of Algeria in 1840, when the French government embarked on a policy of full occupation, Blanqui welcomed the end of "forbearance" for the indigenous populations: "We must provide for, or rather hasten the time when we can do without their assistance. Indeed, they are the only impediment to colonial development." Blanqui recommended "evicting" most Muslims from Algerian soil and adopting "the system of colonization by Europeans". Citing as an example the repeal of colonial trade restrictions in British colonies, he also demanded the abolition of preferential tariffs in North Africa: "The freedom of trade should be, in my opinion, the most powerful auxiliary of colonization."[56]

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[52] Jean-Baptiste Say, *Traité d'économie politique: Édition variorum des six éditions (1803–1814–1817–1819–1826–1841)*, *Oeuvres Complètes*, I, 2 vols. (Paris, 2006), 2: 646–7.

[53] Jean-Baptiste Say, *Cours complet d'économie politique pratique*, 6 vols. (Paris, 1828–9), 4: 460.

[54] Pelegrino Rossi, *Cours d'économie politique*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1840–51), 2: 374–84.

[55] Adolphe Blanqui, *Histoire de l'économie politique*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1837), 1: 348.

[56] Adolphe Blanqui, *Rapport sur la situation économique de nos possessions dans le nord de l'Afrique* (Paris, 1840), 32, 52–4, 70, 82.

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Another figure frequently cited to illustrate the alleged hostility of French political economy to empire is Frédéric Bastiat, the utopian free-trader who founded, in the wake of the British Anti-Corn Law League's triumph in 1846, an Association pour la liberté des échanges. But Bastiat may be considered France's Richard Cobden, whose own radical anti-imperialism did not prevent other British free-traders from upholding a more assertive conception of free trade, compatible with the foundation of settler colonies and gunboat diplomacy.[57] Futhermore, although Bastiat was unambiguously opposed to the colonization of Algeria, his criticisms focused on the inefficiency rather than the inequity of colonial rule. His ostensibly anti-colonial view—"A nation without possessions beyond its borders has got the entire world as its colonies"—could be interpreted as an endorsement of informal empire.[58]

Bastiat's efforts to spread the Cobdenite gospel of free trade in French public opinion floundered.[59] But it is significant that the handful of liberal intellectuals who expressed sympathy for his campaign included those interested in the global spread of French civilizing influence. Guizot and Lamartine, for example, were not well versed in economic theory. Yet both shared a sense that greater commercial openness would be beneficial to the promotion of French interests abroad. Guizot represented a protectionist constituency of linen producers in Normandy, Lisieux, and his conservative majority strongly inclined towards protectionism. In this context, his moderate expression of support, in 1846, for commercial reform, was bold: "commercial freedom has salutary results; it encourages the multiplication of relations between nations, and consolidates and prolongs general peace".[60] In 1847, Lamartine delivered a more effusive speech at a free-trade meeting in Marseille. His conviction that tariff protection was the work of "a devil", and free trade "the law of God", was dictated by his "heart" rather than the "algebra of political economy". Free trade, he concluded his address to the local merchants, was the natural consequence of commercial expansion: "The sails of your ships, your mastheads, the fumes of your countless steamships, continuously write, on your clear sky and the waves of every sea, the triumphant dogma of free trade."[61]

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57 Anthony Howe, *Free Trade and Liberal England* (Oxford, 1997), 86–92; David Todd, "John Bowring and the Global Dissemination of Free Trade", *Historical Journal*, 51 (2008), 373–97.

58 F. Bastiat, "De l'influence des tarifs français et anglais sur l'avenir des deux peuples", *Journal des économistes* 9 (1844), 244–71; see also Bastiat, "L'Algérie", in Bastiat, *Ce qu'on voit et ce qu'on ne voit pas* (Paris, 1850), 61–7.

59 David Todd, *L'identité économique de la France: Libre-échange et protectionnisme* (Paris, 2008), 331–54.

60 Guizot, *Histoire parlementaire*, 5: 132–3 (11 May 1846).

61 *Discours de M. de Lamartine à la réunion publique de l'association pour la liberté des échanges* (Paris, 1847), 2, 5, 7–8.

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Similarly, it was a desire to see France emulate British dynamism rather than a strict adhesion to Ricardian political economy which prompted Chevalier to embrace free trade in the mid-1840s. The ex-Saint-Simonian was not an orthodox defender of free-market economics. Upon learning, in 1840, that Chevalier would succeed him at the Collège de France, Rossi allegedly quipped, "It will give him ... an opportunity to learn political economy."[62] Chevalier's lessons at the Collège retained a distinct Saint-Simonian flavour. His inaugural lecture redefined political economy as the science that should guide Europe's "civilizing invasion" of the rest of the world, while subsequent lectures insisted on the benefits of state intervention for the development of transport infrastructures, credit institutions and professional education.[63] Chevalier was also lukewarm about free trade. Having dismissed tariff questions, in the 1830s, as "really secondary", he supported, in his lectures, a moderate relaxation of trade restrictions, but "without jeopardizing national labour, which indeed deserves [the state's] full protection".[64] Only in 1846 did the abolition of the British Corn Laws lead him to describe France's protectionist policy as an "absurdity in the time we live in", and he made a modest contribution to Bastiat's campaign.[65]

Chevalier's adhesion to free trade was important because, as economics editor of the main liberal daily, *Le journal des débats*, he was well placed to influence public opinion, and because, as a close adviser of Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte after 1852, he soon became able to implement his views. Chevalier's support for Louis-Napoléon's coup of 1851 might cast doubt on his commitment to liberal political institutions. Yet a large number of British intellectuals with impeccable liberal credentials, including Thomas Macaulay and Walter Bagehot, also endorsed the Bonapartist regime as a necessary bulwark against anarchy and socialism, and mused that the French might be unfit for British-style parliamentary institutions.[66] Chevalier was, if anything, more optimistic about the prospects of political liberty in France. As councillor of state after 1852 and senator after 1860, he was noted for his frequent defence of individual freedoms.[67] Although he conceded that "Anglo-Saxon" peoples were probably more apt at "self-government" than Latin ones, he warmly supported the parliamentary

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62 Alphonse Courtois, *Notice sur la vie et les travaux de Michel Chevalier* (Paris, 1889), 14; see also the hostile review of his lectures in the organ of the Société d'économie politique, the *Journal des économistes*, 1 (1842), 204–8.

63 Michel Chevalier, *Cours d'économie politique*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1842–50), 1: 26, and 2: 5.

64 Chevalier, *Lettres*, 1: 149–50; Chevalier, *Cours*, 1: 224.

65 *Journal des débats*, 8 April 1846; *Deuxième séance publique de l'association pour la liberté des échanges* (Paris, 1846), 9–13.

66 Vincent Wright, *Le Conseil d'état sous le Second Empire* (Paris, 1972), 48, 118.

67 Georgios Varouxakis, *Victorian Political Thought on France and the French* (Basingstoke, 2001), 80–81, 88–9.

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evolution of the Bonapartist regime after 1860, arguing that only "Orientals" would never be able to adopt "the representative system". In "European and Western nations", "personal government" could only ever be a "temporary expedient", while France in particular ought to restore parliamentary institutions because "peoples who want to preserve their influence and authority, not to fall and be considered among the states of the second or third order, are bound to adopt the representative system unreservedly".[68]

The same concern with the preservation of French authority and influence informed his support for economic reforms. Above all, he wished to ensure that France would supervise, alongside Britain, the ongoing process of global economic integration—or what his biographer described, fifteen years before the coinage of globalization and *mondialisation*, as the "planétarisation de l'économie".[69] After Bastiat's death in 1850, he became the leading exponent of free trade south of the Channel. His observations on the 1851 universal exhibition in London highlighted the growing irrelevance of the national market for thinking about economic processes:

> Here is some muslin that was perhaps woven in Saxony with yarns from Manchester spun from a mix of cotton from Surat in India, Mobile in the United States, and Egypt; it is going to be embroidered in Nancy, before being sold in Philadelphia, or Canton, or Batavia, after having transited by the warehouses of New York, Hong Kong or Singapore

But the waning of economic borders did not abolish power politics. On the contrary, European states ought to emulate Britain's adoption of free trade in order to face the intensification of "universal competition". The French, the Germans and the Americans had no need to fear the superiority of British industry, because innovation, capital and entrepreneurs circulated freely across the "Western civilization". By contrast, "Eastern" and "Muslim" civilizations were lagging behind and would be increasingly confined to the production of raw materials for Western industry.[70] The decline of Eastern polities, Chevalier warned in a new edition of his *Cours d'économie politique*, derived from their lack of openness: "China shows, through the state of its industry no less than the state of its sciences, its arts, and its civil, political and military institutions, what is the fate of nations that isolate themselves."[71]

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68 Michel Chevalier, *La constitution de l'Angleterre* (Paris, 1867), 7, 28.

69 Walch, *Michel Chevalier*, 101.

70 Michel Chevalier, *L'exposition universelle de Londres: Aperçu philosophique* (Paris, 1851), 7, 11, 15–17; see also his *Examen du système commercial connu sous le nom de système protecteur* (Paris, 1852).

71 Michel Chevalier, *Cours d'économie politique*, 2nd edn, 3 vols. (Paris, 1855–66), 2: 524.

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Chevalier's views were in harmony with those of France's new emperor. Louis-Napoléon had redefined "Napoleonic ideas" as the condemnation of continental or colonial conquests, combined with the active promotion of material and moral progress in France, Europe and the world.[72] Hence his claim, in the speech announcing his intention to restore the imperial regime in 1852, that "L'Empire, c'est la paix", and that his "conquests" would be moral and economic rather than territorial.[73] Chevalier could fairly describe himself as the "architect" of the regime's economic policies.[74] He negotiated the Anglo-French treaty of commerce of 23 January 1860, which paved the way for a network of European, and to some extent global, bilateral free-trade agreements.[75] In 1861, Chevalier steered through the Senate the law that finally abolished France's colonial *exclusif*.[76] Confirming his status as economic icon of Bonapartism, he headed the French delegation to the 1862 London universal exhibition and presided over the jury of the 1867 Paris universal exhibition.[77] Yet the version of free trade propounded by Chevalier was compatible with the use of coercion, provided that it served the cause of Western industrial civilization. The regime's propaganda drew extensively on his view of France as the protector of Catholicism, Latinity and free trade to justify its military enterprises against Russia (1853), China (1856) and Austria (1859), and in Syria (1860).[78]

Chevalier's strident advocacy of the attempt to create a French-protected Mexican monarchy in 1861–7 illustrates his complicity with the Bonapartist

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72 Napoléon-Louis Bonaparte, *Des idées napoléoniennes* (Paris, 1839), 153–7, 173–80; Bonaparte, "Nos colonies dans l'océan Pacifique", *Progrès du Pas-de-Calais*, 14 June 1841, repr. in Napoléon III, *Oeuvres de Napoléon III*, 5 vols. (Paris, 1856–1869), 2: 3–8; Bonaparte, *Canal of Nicaragua* (London, 1845), repr. in Napoléon III, *Oeuvres*, 3: 375–533.

73 "Discours de Bordeaux", in Jean Tulard, ed., *Pourquoi réhabiliter le Second Empire* (Paris, 1998), 143–5.

74 Chevalier to the Comte de Persigny, 22 April 1856, cited in Drolet, "Industry, Class and Society", 1236.

75 Arthur L. Dunham, *The Anglo-French Treaty of Commerce and the Industrial Revolution in France* (Ann Arbor, 1930), 29–63; Peter T. Marsh, *Bargaining on Europe: Britain and the First Common Market* (New Haven, 1999).

76 Centre des Archives d'Outre-Mer, FR CAOM 30 COL 10, *Documents officiels relatifs à la loi sur le régime douanier des colonies* (1861), 106–8.

77 Michel Chevalier, *L'industrie moderne, ses progrès et les conditions de sa puissance (Exposition universelle de 1862)* (Paris, 1862); and Chevalier, ed., *Rapports du jury international*, 10 vols. (Paris, 1868).

78 François Manchuelle, "Origines républicaines de la politique d'expansion coloniale de Jules Ferry (1838–1865)", *Revue française d'histoire d'outre mer*, 75 (1988), 185–206; Maike Thier, "The View from Paris: 'Latinity', 'Anglo-Saxonism', and the Americas, as discussed in the *Revue des Races Latines*, 1857–64", *International History Review*, 33 (2011), 627–44.

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version of free-trade imperialism.[79] When Chevalier visited Mexico in 1835, he was impressed by its agricultural, mineral and commercial potential, and attributed the country's economic stagnation to the misguided adoption of republican and federal institutions after its independence, whereas its predominantly Latin character required a unitary monarchy.[80] Alarmed by the annexation of Texas in 1845 and further Mexican territory in 1848 by the United States, Chevalier denounced the "spirit of conquest" of the "Anglo-American Empire" and accused French governments of having failed to fulfil France's "mission" of "protector of Catholic states and Latin nations".[81] His anxiety resonated with the fears of Guizot, who sought in vain to preserve an independent Texas as a buffer against American territorial ambitions: "it is our interest that the Spanish race, the southern Catholic race, retains its importance, its strength in the New World, that it does not fall under the yoke of, and is not devoured by, the Anglo-American race".[82] When the Second Empire seized upon Mexico's default on its financial obligations in order to intervene militarily, Chevalier insisted in defence of the expedition that it aimed not at conquering the country, but at substituting "a perfectly independent and liberal monarchy" for "a nominal and worthless republic". The establishment of a progressive government that satisfied the Latin yearning for prestige and authority would turn Mexico from "a nation useless to mankind" into "a major state that counts in the balance of the world".[83] Although the French-backed government collapsed ignominiously in 1867, the venture sponsored by Chevalier can be seen as the hubristic apex of French aspirations to transnational empire.

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79 Christian Schefer, *La grande pensée de Napoléon III: Les origines de l'expédition du Mexique (1858–1862)* (Paris, 1939); Michele Cunningham, *Mexico and the Foreign Policy of Napoleon III* (Basingstoke, 2001).

80 Michel Chevalier, "Lettres sur le Mexique", *Journal des débats*, 20 July, 1 Aug., 7 Aug. and 15 Aug. 1837; see also Chevalier, *L'isthme de Panama* (Paris, 1844); and Chevalier, "Des mines d'argent et d'or du Nouveau Monde", *Revue des deux mondes*, 16 (1846), 980–1035 and 17 (1847), 5–51.

81 Michel Chevalier, *Le Mexique: Extrait de l'Encyclopédie du XIXe siècle* (Paris, 1851), 31–2, 36–9.

82 Guizot, *Histoire parlementaire*, 5: 20–21 (12 Jan. 1846); on French anxieties about Mexico, see Guy-Alain Dugast, *La tentation mexicaine en France au XIXe siècle: L'image du Mexique et l'intervention française (1821–1862)*, 2 vols. (Paris, 2008).

83 Articles in *Revue des deux mondes*, also published as Michel Chevalier, *L'expédition du Mexique* (Paris, 1862), 3, 48–9; an expanded version was published as *Le Mexique ancien et moderne* (Paris, 1863) and translated into English (1864) and Italian (1864).

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IV

French advocates of informal empire usually made one important exception to their condemnation of conquest: Algeria, most of which was brought under direct French rule, at a heavy human and material cost, between 1840 and 1848. But it is important to note that many contemporaries viewed Algeria precisely as an exception, justified by the failure of a policy based on more informal means of dominance, rather than as the prelude to a wider territorial empire in Africa. Initial French projects in Algeria did not significantly infringe on the principled rejection of conquest. Until the late 1830s, the July Monarchy only attempted to control major ports and a few surrounding areas for small-scale French settlements. The majority of the former Regency was left to govern itself and it was hoped that emulation of European settlers would lead to the gradual assimilation of indigenous populations to French civilization.[84]

Even Benjamin Constant, the most eloquent critique of Napoleonic imperialism, might have supported such a scheme of colonization. Jennifer Pitts described Constant as a stalwart opponent of imperial expansion, both within and outside Europe. It is true that in the *Esprit de conquête*, Constant did not explicitly exclude the acquisition of extra-European territories from his denunciation, but nor did he explicitly include them. His use of expressions such as "the far ends of the earth" does not guarantee what Pitts described as "the global scope" of his critique because, when the pamphlet was written in 1813–14, such an image was as likely to evoke Napoleon's Russian campaign as overseas conquests. As noted by Pitts, Constant shared the perception of Muslim Ottomans as "a horde of barbarians" and of their "stationary" empire as "eclipsed by civilization".[85] The only short text that he wrote before his death on the expedition of Algiers—while wishing for the victory of French forces and refusing "to respect the quality of sovereignty in a barbarian", the dey of Algiers—castigated the expedition as a reactionary scheme to drum up patriotic feelings on the eve of a crucial general election. But Constant, after dismissing the quarrel between Charles X and the dey as an "affaire d'honneur", suggested that he would support the expedition if it led to the colonization of the Regency: for it to become an "affaire nationale",

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84 Charles André Julien, *Histoire de l'Algérie contemporaine*, vol. 1, *La conquête et les débuts de la colonisation (1827–1871)* (Paris, 1964), 64–163; Jennifer Sessions, *By Sword and Plow: France and the Conquest of Algeria* (Ithaca, NY, 2011), 177–207.

85 Pitts, *A Turn to Empire*, 173–85; see also Jennifer Pitts, "Constant's Thought on Empire and Slavery", in Helena Rosenblatt, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Benjamin Constant* (Cambridge, 2009), 115–45; and, on Algeria as a turning point in French liberal thought on empire, Pitts, "Republicanism, Liberalism, and Empire in Post-revolutionary France", in Sankar Muthu, ed., *Empire and Modern Political Thought* (Cambridge, 2012), 261–91.

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he contended, "an undisputed, indisputable colonization should be the prize of victory and the fruit of the sacrifices risked" by the Bourbon regime.[86]

The colonization that Constant had in mind probably resembled the ancient Greek system of small settlements, offered as a model for North Africa by a like-minded adversary of the Restoration, Jean-Charles Simonde de Sismondi.[87] French publicists and politicians put forward a wide array of projects for the former Regency in the early 1830s, but the concept of small-scale European settlements peacefully spreading the moral and material benefits of civilization was one of the most influential. Lamartine, among others, supported it. The poet–politician considered the capture of Algiers "the most just conquest ever accomplished by a nation" because it eradicated white slavery and piracy from North Africa. But in 1836, when the governor of French possessions in North Africa, General Bertrand Clauzel, planned to extend effective French rule over the interior of the colony, he protested against a policy of "expropriation" and "extermination". Instead of colonization by French settlers over the entire territory, Lamartine defended a system of "colonization by the natives", under the mere "suzerainty" of France.[88] Similarly, Guizot denounced Clauzel's policy as "bellicose, jealous" and overly concerned with extending "official French domination". Instead, Guizot advocated a policy of "limited occupation", which consisted in "establishing ourselves firmly in specific regions rather than hastily proclaiming French sovereignty by force" throughout the Regency. Guizot therefore warmly endorsed the Tafna treaty of May 1837, which recognized the emir Abd al-Qadir's pre-eminence in western Algeria.[89]

Yet after he came to power in 1840, Guizot presided over the expansion of effective French rule to nearly the entire Regency, condoning in the process the use of methods that violated the elementary conventions of *jus in bello*. In his *Mémoires*, Guizot was unapologetic, misleadingly describing himself as an unswerving advocate of territorial conquest in Algeria.[90] Guizot's change of heart mirrored the evolution of Alexis de Tocqueville, from the latter's defence of self-government for the territories under Abd al-Qadir's influence in 1837 to his advocacy of the harsh repression of resistance to French rule in 1841.[91] Two

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86 Benjamin Constant, "Alger et les élections", 20 June 1830, repr. in Constant, *Positions de combat à la veille de juillet 1830*, ed. Ephraïm Harpaz (Geneva, 1989), 190–92.

87 Jean-Charles Simonde de Sismondi, "De l'expédition contre Alger", *Revue Encyclopédique* 46 (1830), 273–96; and Simonde de Sismondi, *Les colonies des anciens comparées à celles des modernes* (Geneva, 1837).

88 Alphonse de Lamartine, "Sur Alger", 2 May 1834, and "Sur la colonisation d'Alger", 11 June 1836, in Lamartine, *La question d'Orient*, 106–10, 129–36.

89 Guizot, *Histoire parlementaire*, 2: 473–82 (10 June 1836), and 3: 170–72 (8 June 1838).

90 Guizot, *Mémoires*, 6: 385–403.

91 Pitts, *Turn to Empire*, 207–12.

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main factors account for the conversion of Guizot, Tocqueville and others to territorial conquest. First, having taken advantage of the Tafna treaty to build up his fiscal and military resources, Abd al-Qadir broke the peace in 1839 and inflicted a series of major setbacks on his would-be suzerains: the lack of willing collaborators discredited the option of domination by intermediaries. Second, the decision to engage in a fully fledged war of conquest was almost certainly a reaction to the humiliation experienced by France during the Eastern crisis of 1840: hence Tocqueville's insistence, in the opening lines of his 1841 essay, that the "abandonment" of Algeria was impossible because it would reinforce the sense of French "decline".[92]

The Algerian exception, however, did not undermine liberal distrust of territorial conquest. Explaining his decision to block the projected conquest of Madagascar after 1840, Guizot cited the disasters of Louisiana, Canada and India as evidence that the French lacked the enterprising skills necessary for "large territorial and colonial settlements". Not that France, he argued, should remain, "absent and inactive around the globe"; on the contrary, "in every place where European and Christian civilization is carried and spreads, France must play its part and spread its own genius". But such a policy of global influence was better served by the acquisition of maritime stations or *point d'appuis* for the support of French commercial or missionary activities.[93] Guizot's government indeed acquired several new *comptoirs* in Africa and the Indian and Pacific Oceans. But even this form of expansion, Guizot argued in relation to Tahiti, should take the form of a "protectorate" rather than the extension of France's "direct and complete sovereignty".[94]

Lamartine, too, retained profound misgivings about territorial expansion. In June 1846, he delivered an impassioned speech against French policy in North Africa since 1840. Paying homage to Edmund Burke's critique of the British administration in India, Lamartine denounced the project "of governing this Arab nationality under conditions of direct, uniform, European rule" as a chimera, and the atrocities committed by the French army as a "system of extermination". Yet the poet did not advocate Algerian independence. Instead, he recommended the replacement of military by more humane civilian authorities and a return to a system of government of indigenous populations based on "suzerainty" rather than "sovereignty". Lamartine was hostile to territorial conquest but not to an active French policy in Muslim lands: on the same day, he delivered another speech, which urged the government to defend more effectively the interests

92 Alexis de Tocqueville, "Essay on Algeria", in Tocqueville, *Writings on Empire and Slavery*, ed. Jennifer Pitts (Baltimore, 2001), 59–116, 59.

93 Guizot, *Mémoires*, 6: 272–5.

94 Guizot, *Histoire parlementaire*, 4: 259–60 (29 Feb. 1844).

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of Maronite Christians, "this seed of population and alliance" for France, in Ottoman Syria.[95]

It is even possible to view Amédée Desjobert, described as a "leftist" and "republican" adversary of empire by Pitts, as another defender of the preference for informal empire.[96] Desjobert was only a leftist in the sense that as a deputy under the July Monarchy he sat with Odilon Barrot's very moderate *Gauche dynastique*. Nor was he a sincere republican after 1848, since he endorsed Louis-Napoléon's coup of 1851 and served as a Bonapartist deputy until his death in 1853. In his early works on Algeria, Desjobert did not advocate a full French withdrawal from North Africa. On the contrary, he recommended the continued occupation of several "points maritimes", combined with a close alliance with Abd al-Qadir, whom he viewed as an agent of centralizing civilization. He also wished to surround Abd al-Qadir with French delegates, who, on the model of Muhammad Ali's French advisers in Egypt, would help the Algerian leader turn his country into a *foyer de civilisation*, while scores of Algerians educated in France would return to North Africa as "civilizing missionaries". Such a collaborative "Arab system" of French domination in Algeria would, he concluded, strengthen France's hand in Eastern affairs.[97] Only after 1840, when the adoption of unrestrained violence by the French ruined the chances of a system based on cooperation, did Desjobert unreservedly advocate withdrawal, and he did so on the grounds that occupation weakened French power and prestige as well as for humanitarian reasons.[98]

Chevalier, for his part, expressed only limited interest in Algerian affairs. In 1831, he advocated handing the new colony over to Britain on the grounds that the English were a better "colonizing people" than the French.[99] While travelling in North America, the sight of prosperous French Canadian settlements persuaded him that France should keep and colonize its North African possession.[100] But his most significant contribution to debates about Algeria was his patronage of another ex-Saint-Simonian, Ismayl (born Thomas) Urbain, a *métis* from Guyana who converted to Islam and rose to become the leader of the *arabophile* party in Algeria. Urbain wished to limit European immigration and protect indigenous land property. His ideas inspired the project of an "Arab Kingdom", an attempt of the Bonapartist regime to reverse the policy of territorial conquest and propound

95 Alphonse de Lamartine, "Sur l'Algérie" and "Sur la Syrie", 10 June 1846, in Lamartine, *La question d'Orient*, 270–317.

96 Pitts, *Turn to Empire*, 185–9.

97 Amédée Desjobert, *La question d'Alger* (Paris, 1837), 307–36.

98 Amédée Desjobert, *L'Algérie en 1844* (Paris, 1844), 153–9.

99 "Alger", *Le Globe*, 10 Nov. 1831; repr. in *Politique européenne*, 119–27.

100 Chevalier, *Lettres*, 2: 126–32.

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instead the emergence of an autonomous Algeria under French protection.[101] Chevalier supported the policy "wholeheartedly".[102] But the combined hostility of Republicans at home and settlers in Algeria, together with the turmoil caused by the great famine of 1866 in North Africa, derailed the project. In a different way from the disaster of the Mexican expedition, the failure of the Arab Kingdom policy in Algeria seemed to indicate, by the late 1860s, the limits of French informal power overseas.

V

The doubts elicited by Mexico and Algeria about the merits of a civilizing enterprise relying on influence and collaboration were compounded by the rapid rise of Prussian power on the European continent. The shocking defeat by Prussia in 1870 accentuated the liberal crisis of self-confidence in the superiority of French civilization and its natural seductiveness. Liberal intellectuals gradually came to recognize the necessity of territorial annexations overseas as a means of perpetuating France's civilizing mission. Ironically, it was Paul Leroy-Beaulieu, a former advocate of informal empire and Chevalier's son-in-law, who rehabilitated territorial conquest and laid the foundations of the Third Republic's colonial doctrine.

After 1865, Chevalier himself began to fear that Prussia's expansionist policy might lead to a new European "civil war". He therefore called for the creation of a European "tutelary organization", which would fix the principles of "European public law" and prevent the eruption of new conflicts between nation states.[103] True to his principles, he was the only senator who voted against the declaration of war on Prussia in July 1870. The fall of the Second Napoleonic Empire left him profoundly disillusioned. He lost faith in international law as a means of regulating competition between European powers, attributing Europe's regression to Britain's failure to recognize its interest and cooperate with France to stop Prussian aggressions: "France's power succumbed at the great expense . . . of [Britain's] own", because toppling British hegemony would become the next objective of a united Germany. The blustering diplomacy of the United States suggested that international law did not "stand a better chance in the Western

101 Annie Rey-Glodzeiguer, *Le royaume Arabe: La politique algérienne de Napoléon III, 1861–1870* (Algiers, 1977); Michel Levallois, *Ismaÿl Urbain: Une autre conquête de l'Algérie* (Paris, 2000).

102 Michel Chevalier, *Discours sur l'Algérie* (Paris, 1865), 3–5.

103 Michel Chevalier, *La guerre et la crise européenne* (Paris, 1866), 40; Chevalier, *Rapports du jury international*, dxiv–dxvi.

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hemisphere than in ours" and confirmed his fears about the global waning of European as well as French influence.[104]

Concern over France's decline was, if anything, more acute in the ranks of the liberal opposition to the late Bonapartist regime. The champion of representative institutions and acerbic critique of the Mexican enterprise, Anatole Prévost-Paradol, gave an apocalyptic description of France's diminished global status in his 1868 best-seller, *La France nouvelle*: the irresistible rise of Germany in Europe and dissemination of "Anglo-Saxons" over the globe seemed to condemn France to *déchéance*. To reverse this trend, he argued, the acquisition of "trading posts" was insufficient. Instead, France needed to augment its "material place" and "physical strength". Only an "increase in population" and an "increase in territory" could ensure that "the name French [will] still count for something" in the future. France's last chance, Prévost-Paradol argued, was Algeria, which could become the kernel of a "Mediterranean empire". The emergence of a veritable "African France" required the removal of legal protections for indigenous Algerians to encourage European immigration and further territorial expansion, beginning with Tunisia and Morocco. Only at this price could France avoid a destiny of "shameful insignificance".[105]

After the disasters of the Franco-Prussian War and the Commune, Ernest Renan, the liberal philologist, offered his own remedies to reverse France's decline in *La réforme intellectuelle et morale* (1872). This influential text included an apology of colonial conquest on the model of British India as "a necessity of the first order": "While conquests between equal races ought to be condemned, the regeneration of inferior or bastardized races is part of the providential order of mankind." Renan's exhortation was not devoid of civilizing undertones, but, unlike earlier reflections on the superiority of European or Christian civilization, it held little prospect of universal fraternity. Instead, it described Europeans as "a race of masters and soldiers", who ought to govern the Chinese "race of workers ... with justice" and be "good and human" with the African "race of land labourers".[106]

Prévost-Paradol and Renan's strident calls for territorial expansion illustrate how the sense of decline at the turn of the 1870s called into question the project of informal empire. But the case of Paul Leroy-Beaulieu's gradual rallying to colonial conquest is more important because it shows how even a former prominent advocate of informal expansion came to endorse the necessity of territorial conquest, suggesting that the turn to territorial empire was primarily

[104] Michel Chevalier, *Du droit international, de ses vicissitudes et de ses échecs dans le temps présent* (Paris, 1873), 16, 19.

[105] Anatole Prévost-Paradol, *La France nouvelle* (Paris, 2012), 301–5.

[106] Ernest Renan, *La réforme intellectuelle et morale* (Paris, 2011), 95–6.

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grounded in tactical considerations rather than a profound shift in conceptions of development or perceptions of extra-European cultures. It is also significant because Leroy-Beaulieu is considered a major contributor to the colonial doctrine of the Third Republic. He acquired this status thanks to the success of *De la colonisation chez les peuples modernes*, the successive editions of which (in 1874, 1882, 1886, 1891, 1902 and 1908) served as a reference for the emerging colonial studies of French academic institutions.[107] However, the work was not, at least initially, a blueprint for the colonial programme of the Third Republic. Although the first edition was published four years after the fall of Napoleon III, the work was originally an essay written between 1866 and 1868 for a prize competition in political economy organized by the Académie des sciences morales et politiques. Leroy-Beaulieu was awarded the prize in March 1870, but the Franco-Prussian war and the subsequent political turmoil delayed its publication until 1874.[108]

The original manuscript is unfortunately missing from the Académie's archives. But it is likely that the text published in 1874 is essentially the text submitted before the competition ended on 31 December 1868, apart from the explicit addition of fifteen pages, out of nearly six hundred in total, on the development of Algeria after 1870: none of the facts and statistics elsewhere in the book refer to a later period and the Académie's report on the submission suggests that Leroy-Beaulieu did not modify his views in the version published in 1874.[109] This first edition was in fact still typical of the free-trade imperialism of French economists before 1870, condemning mercantilist regulations but also territorial conquests, apart from the settler colonies of Britain (Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the Cape) and France (Algeria). Tellingly, Leroy-Beaulieu's main patrons during his youth were Guizot, because Leroy-Beaulieu *père* was the mayor of Lisieux in Guizot's parliamentary constituency; and Chevalier, whose daughter Cordelia Paul Leroy-Beaulieu married in May 1870. The most frequently cited authors in the 1874 edition were British advocates of free-trade imperialism (Robert Torrens, Wakefield, Merivale) and Chevalier himself.

The only suggestion, in the first edition of *De la colonisation*, that France should expand its colonial demesne is the conclusion of the passage added in 1874, in which he expressed the hope that "by joining Algeria to Senegal, we shall one day

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107 Pierre Singaravélou, *Professer l'empire: Les "sciences coloniales" en France sous la IIIe République* (Paris, 2011), 46–7.

108 Ann Murphy, *The Ideology of French Imperialism, 1871–1881* (Washington, DC, 1948), 108; Dan Warshaw, *Paul Leroy-Beaulieu and Established Liberalism in France* (DeKalb, IL, 1991), 83.

109 Archives de l'institut, Académie des sciences morales et politiques, 2D5, minutes, 19 March 1870.

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dominate and civilize all the north-west of Africa".[110] This reflected a reappraisal of territorial expansion, which Leroy-Beaulieu began to advocate in the press in 1873: "in the future as in the past, the power and influence of a people will be proportionate to the quantity of territory it will be able to occupy, exploit, and civilize in countries that are now barbaric."[111] Leroy-Beaulieu remained hesitant in the following years, still expressing a preference, in 1879, for the colonization of Africa by a "moral and civilizing influence" rather than by "conquest". But after 1880, when he succeeded his deceased father-in-law as professor of political economy at the Collège de France and the formation of a more radical republican ministry made him fear a bellicose policy of *revanche* against Germany, his support for colonial expansion became more consistent. Hence the numerous and substantial alterations to the second edition of *De la colonisation* in 1882, which described existing French colonies as "embryos of territorial empires" and created, alongside commercial colonies and plantation colonies, the new category of "colonies of exploitation", where capital instead of settlers would bring about material and moral improvement.[112] Informal empire, after all, was not sufficient if France wished to retain its rank and propagate its civilization.

* * *

Projects of transnational and informal empire were an important sequence in the history of European ideas about empire. Taking them into consideration helps to elucidate the conversion of many self-described progressive thinkers from radical critique of the coercive methods of early modern empires in the eighteenth century, to a more or less qualified endorsement of the legitimacy of imperial conquest in the nineteenth century. A belief in the possibility of spreading European civilization by peaceful means frequently preceded a disillusioned recognition that such a project necessitated, in most cases, imperial rule. Liberal thinkers, from Constant to Leroy-Beaulieu, retained a steadfast preference for informal means of dominance as less costly and more humane. But except in the case of other civilized European countries, they rarely ruled out, in the last resort, conquest or colonization. Rather than an abrupt change of heart, it was the sometimes limited success of attempts at informal dominance, new geopolitical circumstances, and the growing technological gap between Europe and the rest of the world which led such thinkers to alter their calculation of the relative costs and benefits of colonial conquest. The frustration of aspirations to informal empire

110 Paul Leroy-Beaulieu, *De la colonisation chez les peuples modernes* (Paris, 1874), 355.

111 *Journal des débats*, 27 Feb. 1873, quoted in Warshaw, *Paul Leroy-Beaulieu*, 54.

112 Warshaw, *Paul Leroy-Beaulieu*, 86–105.

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should be considered a significant factor behind the resurgence of support for territorial empire in the second half of the nineteenth century.

But such an outcome was not inevitable and ideas about transnational and informal imperial projects in the mid-nineteenth century also need to be studied for their own sake. The contours of the informal empire conjured by French thinkers after the fall of Napoleon were not as precise as historians of ideas might wish: such vagueness was a direct consequence of rejecting the ostensibly neater politics of sovereignty in favour of cultural and economic connections of various types across national borders. In order to clarify the principles and mechanisms of French informal imperialism, it would be useful to study the reception and practical usage of such ideas by the agents of French informal expansion, for example France's numerous diplomats, thanks to the rich records of the Archives du ministère des affaires étrangères. It would also be necessary to analyse how these ideas were received and often reinterpreted in other European countries and among collaborators of French informal imperialism, in particular in the regions redefined at the time by French diplomacy—in order to stress their cultural or geographical proximity to France and Western Europe—as *Amérique Latine* and *Proche Orient*.

Recognizing the significance of projects of transnational and informal empire may also encourage historians of French imperialism to offer a new account of the transition from the early modern Bourbon empire in the Americas to the modern Republican empire in Africa and Asia. French global ambitions between 1815 and 1880 were neither suspended nor confined to Algeria. Instead, they privileged an informal economic and cultural approach, exemplified by a fivefold increase of commodity exports and twelvefold increase of capital exports between 1840 and 1880, and by an active policy to consolidate the status of French as the lingua franca of high culture and civilization in eastern Europe, the Mediterranean and the Americas and to promote it in Asia and Africa. France's informal empire was, to some extent, imagined, and it encountered several setbacks. But from a global perspective, it was a remarkably successful venture, which left as rich a legacy as the territorial empires of the Bourbons, Napoleon I or the Third Republic, and experimented with a type of imperial control often deployed by the superpowers of the twentieth century.

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