The integration of difference in French Indochina during World War II: Organizations and ideology concerning youth

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We are actually the only group of whites in the Far East which has conserved its independence and authority. This situation, paradoxical from certain points of view, is due in great part—no matter what people say—to the French colonizing sense. We are indeed the only colonial people which does not content itself with exploiting a conquered or protected territory by arms, but endeavors to bring to its colonial subjects a material and intellectual development such that these people can be progressively developed into imperial subjects in the same way as us.1

Captain Robbe, Chief of the Information, Propaganda, and Press Service in Indochina during World War II, August 26, 1942, Hanoi

This article offers a historical study of the peculiar case of Indochina during World War II to explore a striking paradox about citizenship and race within France and this colony. Specifically, at the very same moment that France was contributing to the Holocaust, it was celebrating multi-racialism in Indochina. This paper presents the policies governing the integration and exclusion of various ethnocultural groups in Indochina during World War II. While the authoritarian and exclusionary policies of the Vichy regime have commanded extensive research and analysis, less attention has been paid to the policies and practices surrounding citizenship, race, and imperialism in this colony at the time.2 Here, as at home, two dimensions of France collided: a republican tradition competed with an authoritarian insurgency, and longstanding universalistic practices and policies faced amendment and outright rejection. But important differences separated the core from the colony. Whereas Vichy officials in France attempted to “purge” the nation of Jewish people (mainly on the

grounds that they were an unassimilable and dislikable ethnicity),
colonial officials invited Cambodians, Laotians, and Vietnamese to
join and integrate themselves into the French empire, albeit at some
physical distance from Paris.\footnote{3}

This imperial polity provides two comparative cases of apparently
contradictory policies of nationality across locale. In redefining
Frenchness across a range of political contexts, the Vichy regime con-
fronted problems with moral, political, and national security compo-
nents. This complex dilemma resulted in contradictory policies: the
state excluded Jews from the polity based on a definition of citizenship
drawn from blood lines, while promoting the incorporation of indige-
nous natives based on their political allegiance. In Indochina, the
result was a hybrid of authoritarianism and a limited universalism
that was, for its time, relatively ambitious. In fact, France during this
period developed its most exclusionary citizenship policies of the cen-
tury in the métropole concurrently with its most integrationist policies
of the century in Indochina.\footnote{4}

The literature on citizens’ rights has followed T. H. Marshall’s work
and portrayed citizenship and rights as part of a “plane of equality.”
Rogers Brubaker has presented French citizenship in just this light of
“plane equality.” Brubaker maintains that, since the French Revolution,
citizenship in France has been grounded in “common rights and obli-
gations.”\footnote{5} My study, on the other hand, by looking at French Indochina,
shows various levels of citizenship within the colony. The rights T. H.
Marshall considered as making citizenship were incompletely extended
to accomplish state purposes in Indochina during World War II.

The demands of war, as Charles Tilly has demonstrated, lead state
officials alternatively to repress opposition groups or to grant their
subjects new benefits—both in order to command their subjects’
allegiance. Such gestures are intended to build stability in time of
widespread social disruption.\footnote{6} For instance, the governor general of
Indochina opened more administrative posts and higher functions to
the indigenous elite; in 1941 he created a federal Council with twenty-
five indigenous council members in the hope of creating a genuine
protectorate.\footnote{7} War stimulates state-building, and the nature of the
new institutions depends on the availability of resources within civil
society—in this case, preexisting youth corps and cadres, which author-
ities incorporated into a new umbrella youth organization. Another
cause also animated these discrepant policies: the Japanese victory in
Southeast Asia and in the Pacific in 1941–42 posed a sharp ideological challenge to "white" authority in the region.

The French military first occupied what was thought to be a commercial colony of commerce in the 1860s, while settlers arrived in the 1870s. As was typical in colonies governed by western states, there were four important sets of Western actors in Indochina: the navy/military, civil servants, merchants/businessmen, and missionaries. These groups planted the roots of colonization and accounted for most of the 59,000 French people who lived in Indochina in 1940. During World War II, in addition to this typical, if multifaceted, French colonial population, the region hosted the newly arrived Japanese occupiers. About 35,000 soldiers camped on Indochinese soil, mainly in urban areas. The Kempeitai or military police arrived in December 1941 with the mission of ensuring the security of the Japanese army. An Office of Information in the Diplomatic Mission as well as some schools taught the Japanese language. Japanese-sponsored reviews written in quoc-ngu (the Vietnamese written system rendered in a Roman alphabet) promoted the invaders’ Pan-Asian ideas. Military parades, athletic competitions, concerts, films, fairs, and exhibitions promoting the cultural life and military power of the Japanese nation – and demystifying the white man’s superiority – were organized by the Information Services of the Japanese Embassy and the Information Bureau of the Southern Army General Headquarters. From 1942 on, these forces strongly pushed the theme of “Asia for Asians.”

As was often the case in the “age of empire,” Indochina was an arbitrarily defined political entity created by the French state that contained a diverse array of linguistic, religious, and ethnic groups. One common feature of these societies was their religious philosophical systems, which combined Indian and Chinese influences. Buddhism was the predominant religion of Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam. In the Vietnamese case, Buddhism was more or less the main state ideology until the fifteen century, when it was displaced by Confucianism as an official ideology. Confucianism became the intellectual and ideological foundation of this country and had substantial influence on Vietnam’s social organizations and its government. The French viewed Confucianism and Buddhism as instrumental tools to the working of a colonial state. Under Pétain, this view was further implemented to reinforce French rule in Indochina.
Marshal Philippe Pétain was brought to power following the military defeat of June 1940. The Republic’s parliamentary regime was replaced by the authority of the Chief of State, who was advised by ministers responsible only to him. Admiral Jean Decoux became the Vichy’s governor-general of Indochina in July 1940 until March 1945. The Japanese state regarded the French defeat of June 1940 as an opportunity to expand its power over Indochina, and Tokyo attacked the northern part of the colony on 22 September 1940. Indochina was ill prepared to resist Japanese attack, which resulted in the stationing of Japanese troops in Indochina while France kept its national sovereignty over this territory. On March 10, 1945, the Japanese, worried about a growing support for the Gaullist Free French movement among French military personnel in Indochina, overthrew the French colonial regime.

What accounted for this bizarre marriage? Why did authorities’ redefinition of imperial citizenship differ so fundamentally from developments in the Unoccupied Zone? This article highlights the effect of international security concerns – more specifically Vichy’s struggle to retain sovereignty from German and Japanese occupiers in France and Indochina, respectively.

**Policies regarding the Jewish population in France and in Indochina**

Several factors combined to facilitate the passage of anti-Semitic laws in Unoccupied France during the early forties. First, the arrival of many foreigners in France in the 1930s gave the country the world’s highest immigration rate. In addition, the Depression helped to revive a tradition of French antisemitism. The humiliating defeat of June 1940, and Vichy’s misbegotten desire to regain administrative control from German hands, also helped account for the passage of anti-Semitic laws. The October 1940 *Statut des Juifs* [“Statute on the Jews”] expelled Jews, based on the explicit criterion of race, from top positions in the civil service, from the officer and noncommissioned officers corps, and from work dealing with public opinion, i.e., teaching, entertainment, and journalism. The Vichy law defined a Jewish resident as one with only two grandparents “of the Jewish race.” A 22 July 1940 law created a commission to inspect all the naturalizations granted since 1927, in an effort to rescind French nationality from about 6,000 Jews and 9,000 others. At the economic level, the aryization law of 22 July 1941 empowered the state to transfer ownership of
Jewish property to non-Jewish trustees; the latter could sell it to non-Jewish buyers or liquidate it if it was declared non-essential to the national economy. Apart from a few exceptions, the goal of the Vichy regime was not to exterminate Jewish people, but rather to rid the nation of the foreign Jews disgorged in Unoccupied France by Germany. Vichy’s policies of gathering Jews into concentration camps, however, starting a filing system of information on Jews, and — by 1942 — of stamping the word “Jewish” on identity and individual ration cards, and gathering Jewish people for eastward deportation made France an important accomplice to the German project of extermination. Vichy’s laws that enabled exclusion and later extermination were based on a definition of nationality as the product of bloodlines; neither one’s prior legal status as citizen nor one’s prior political allegiance were sufficient to retain formal integration into the polity. The new stance was in complete opposition to the French assimilationist tradition of citizenship.

This antisemitic legislation — “Statute on the Jews” — was fully implemented in Indochina. In a circular dated November 1940, the governor general of Indochina named all the professions prohibited to Jews, as well as the conditions governing these prohibitions. Those affected by the law had two months to resign. State employees were also asked to declare if they were affected by this new law, and on what grounds. By October 1, 1942, officials terminated the employ of fifteen European state employees for being Jewish. As in the métropole, however, officials granted exemptions, such as the one issued to Georges Coédes, who worked at the French School of the Far East. The Résident Supérieur of Tonkin described this employee as one whose knowledge and presence would contribute to creating a counterbalance to Japanese influence within the Buddhist Association of Tonkin. Other Jews in Indochina were not so lucky; several were repatriated to France while at least two lost their French citizenship. Regarding children, the colony adopted another French law, by July 1941: no more than two percent of public school students could be Jewish.

The Vichy initiatives were intended as act of revenge, as the regime sought to capitalize on the defeat of June 1940 by scapegoating and punishing those it saw as responsible, i.e., democrats, freemasons, Jews, and anti-clerics. This conservative revolution therefore reflected “the politics of exclusion.” Indeed, Vichyists condemned the tolerant and cosmopolitan Third Republic for promoting diversity that divided people along lines of class, politics, alien status, and doctrine. Leaders
hoped an intensive corporatism would end class conflict, and in so doing proposed to replace squabbling politics with obedience and hierarchy. And as for aliens and outsiders, they proposed to put an end to the easy cosmopolitan hospitality of the Third Republic. 23

The French revolution of 1789 emancipated Jews and Protestants, who in returned supported strongly the different republican regimes in France. After the victory of the Third Republic in 1871, Jews began to arise as important statesmen. Thus, the appearance of the antisemitic myth of the “Jewish Republic” while some observers believed that Jews, Protestants, and Freemasons were the ones who concocted 1789. 24 Two Frances were at stake, a rational, secular, republican one open to all citizens opposed to a locally rooted, Catholic, and essentialist nation. Neither nonwhites nor other ethnic groups suffered from targeted legislation in the Unoccupied Zone. 25 Viewing Jewish people as embodying the unassimilable and the republican tradition, nativist officials aimed the harshest treatment at Jews in the early 1940s. 26 A similar situation was obtained in Indochina. The francocentric National Revolution applied exclusionary edicts to Jews, but did not develop or apply such policies to Asian ethnicities.

The integration of difference in Indochina: Organizations and ideology concerning youth

Since French imperialism in Indochina struggled to overcome the challenges posed by the presence of Japanese troops propagating the idea of “Asia for Asians,” as well as the menace of Thai irredentism and budding indigenous nationalisms, colonial leaders configured “nationality” policy with great care. They redefined and invigorated the roles of supporters and collaborators by devising new techniques, such as establishing youth corps, to sustain the imperial authority. Officials used such institutions to pursue the National Revolution’s ideals – a conservative and harmonious society based on a hierarchical social order ideally rooted in rural, traditional, and socially homogenous communities – by offering a more inclusive definition of Frenchness. The colonial state’s discursive redefinition of French identity emphasized cultural pluralism, and thus was more contiguous to the Third Republic’s agenda. Officials also considered, but never implemented, significant constitutional revisions: extending French citizenship to native subjects, and creating an imperial citizenship and an imperial house of parliament. 27 Europeans often talked about creating imperial
rights and the implication was that some common rights should undergird the entire empire. Despite the propaganda, they were never able to implement it.

Why? Most simply, the empire was critical to the vision of Pétain. For major powers and their politicians, colonies and territories were important components of national strength – they had served as both the ends and the means of most recent wars. The Vichy government of Marshal Pétain attempted to preserve its image as a great power during German occupation by defining the nation as incorporating not only France, but also the empire.28 As historian Charles-Robert Ageron put it, in this sense the colonies served as a powerful “compensating myth.”29 The Chief of the Information, Propaganda, and Press summarized the relationship between colonial inclusion and state strength:

We must realize ... that this war will give birth to blocks; that the French Empire could be one of them and that it will have for a foundation the notions of “unity in diversity,” and of “amplified regionalism” which preceded over the construction of France itself.30

Vichy continually emphasized the loyalty and unity of the colonies from 1940 to 1944, despite the fact that they were slowly losing their sixty million inhabitants to political developments beyond their control.31 Two elements of the overarching strategy required attending to youth mobilization. First, the role of the empire in Pétain’s political program (national resistance and survival in the face of occupation) required the mobilization and indoctrination of determined, patriotic youth. Second, the regeneration of the defeated polity through the National Revolution especially required healthy, obedient, and conservative youngsters.

In the Indochinese case, state officials had to face the Japanese ideological challenge to “white” authority. At the time, Japan adopted a cursory, but parallel antisemitic rhetoric to the one implanted in Indochina. Japanese antisemitism was “the imaginary devil” since so few Jews lived in Japan. Before the middle of the nineteenth century, no Jews resided in Japan and there were no Japanese Jews during the era of World War II. Japan did not embrace an official antisemitic ideology, however. In spite of the publication of a large number of Japanese antisemitic writings, Japanese officials showed tolerance toward Jews in Japan and in the occupied territories. By presenting itself as the defender of racial equality, the Japanese state could not adopt an ideology supporting the persecution of an ethnic group. Besides, as in
Indochina, the number of Jews living in East Asia was too small to be a real challenge. The parallel between both powers is interesting, because it suggests that the Jewish question was basically trivial in the Asian context. It was a rhetorical gesture rather than a real commitment to define sovereignty in terms of racial inclusion and exclusion. The other case — that is the inculcation of French "values" in an Asian population — is as much more important, indicating the continuities of pre-Vichy and Vichy traditions.

From 1940 to 1945, officials built a youth initiative according to the French model, borrowing ideas and techniques from the métropole, in the hope that these new institutions would better integrate natives into the French imperial system. The goal was to build faithful imperial subjects and conservative political organizations by stimulating patriotic feeling and channeling it toward France and Marshal Pétain. Such activities also promised to divert youth from subversive political movements. Participation in youth organizations mushroomed in Indochina over these five years, gaining over a million members. The Governor General of Indochina reported 600,000 members in February 1944 alone.

Within each colony, youth movements were first organized at the provincial level around a "Local Chief" and some provincial schools. At the colony level, a broad umbrella organization called "Youth of French Empire" [Jeunesse d'Empire Français] united existing movements such as the Scouts and various Christian and new secular groups, sporting leagues, "school youth groups" [jeunesse scolaire], and "local assemblies" [sections de rassemblement]. The local assemblies were a means to control and organize youth who belonged neither to the school groups and sporting leagues, nor to a specialized youth organization, such as the Scouts. Youth of French Empire, an exact analog to the métropole's Youth of France [Jeunesse de France], carried the same motto as the original: "United and Strong in Order to Serve." These organizations aimed to teach youngsters to obey instructions, to develop a spirit of social solidarity, to foster harmony among ethnicities, and to hold patriotic values. They carried Vichy's focus on youth as the force that would make France stable and strong after the humiliating defeat of 1940. Other youth movements created after 1940 varied somewhat in the different locales: "Young Campers" [Jeunes Campeurs] in Cochinchina, "Young Teams" [Jeunes Equipes] in Tonkin, or "Youth of Annam" [Jeunes d'Annam], or "Young Laotians" [Jeunes Lao].
The Indochinese government saw these movements and organizations in part as a means to join together Indochinese and European youth. 36 "Youth of French Empire," like "Youth of France," in fact spoke of giving youth a shared soul. 37 Generally, European youth lived separately from the native population, since expatriates attended boarding schools on the home continent or schools and vacation camps in removed, temperate hill-stations, such as Dalat, Vietnam. 38 But in a break from this tradition, Decoux tried to redraw the boundaries of the French and native identities of youngsters through "the fusion of the two societies." 39

When the Indochinese government, attempted to bring together various segments of youth, through organizations and rhetoric that rejected the racial divisions found in the French nation, the colonials in effect endorsed Jules Ferry (1832–1893) and other Third Republican politicians' justification of colonization as a regime based on the inequality of (but also on the constructive collaboration between) various races. In this view of the mission civilisatrice, the "superior" white race had a duty to civilize and uplift "inferior" races. 40 For Navy Captain Ducoroy, the head of the Indochinese youth and sport initiative, the motto "United and Strong in order to Serve" meant "united without distinction of race, origin, fortune, religion." 41 As he repeatedly argued, the goal of the enterprise was to promote

Collective physical education, freely consented to, in the Union of all French and Indochinese without distinction of race, religion, social class; and the obligation to help one another, in order to overcome with the least damage these rough years of ordeal, while respecting tradition and loving the French tri-color. 42

In opposition to the racial policy of Vichy for Jews, regarding the Indochinese youth, colonial officials embraced the rhetoric of the founding French Republic based on universalism, unitarianism, and inclusiveness, which assigned religion to the private sphere, and ignores ethnicity as a licit category for the state. 43 The authorities also made a point of emphasizing the universalistic tendencies of indigenous religions and cultures. For example, an "Annamite" youth movement called "the Buddhist Children's Group" sprang up in 1942. Some of its chiefs had received training in the new state schools for sports instructors and youth cadres. A 1942 decree recognizing Annam's Buddhist Children's Group grounded its work in two sets of guiding principles.
The goal of this group consists of the complete education (physical, intellectual, professional, moral and spiritual) of monks, followers, and the Buddhist Youth … within the context of the laws dictated by Buddha and the directives of the Commissariat General.

The administrative literature that summarized the doctrine and goals of Annam’s Buddhist Children’s Group emphasized the religion’s idea of compassion (especially in serving others) as well as one’s duties toward “parents, schoolmasters, friends, the homeland, all human beings and Buddha.”44 This Buddhist group based its mission not only on the Buddhist faith but also on Hyppolite Taine’s text “The Buddhist Morals,” an extract from Nouveaux essais de Critique et d’Histoire (1865). Taine stressed Buddhist charity and morals and its influence on peace and on fostering tolerance toward others.

Their affectionate feelings spread to all races and all sects. In their country, a foreigner is treated as a compatriot …. The pure and the impure no longer exist for them.45

The colonial state promoted Buddhism in such a way as to emphasize how the religion reciprocated in the new limited universalism. During the war, the “Renaissance Circle” – an association of students from the University of Hanoi under the direction of Dominican clerics – emerged with the support of the governor general. Based in a school dormitory, it attempted to produce a Franco-Indochinese elite by teaching them “to work in a spirit of collaboration and mutual understanding” while remaining open to “all the students of Indochina, distinguishing neither race nor denomination.” This project again promoted a universalistic vision of France’s colonial policy at the local level.46 This overarching doctrine sharply contrasted with the racial exclusion of the Jews at home and in the empire.

Another critical example of this universalism was a lecture on “What is the Homeland?” by P. Huard, Professor of Medicine at the University of Hanoi. Aimed at youth, the lecture appeared in the general bulletin of public instruction; earlier, he had presented these ideas during conferences targeting youth. This lecture described the political theory that underlay the definition of the French nation animating the Empire at the time, according to state officials.47 Huard explained to the youth that the definition of the homeland was not a product of race, language, or soil – which were “dividing” factors – but of a common experience. To make his point, Huard cited a famous 1882 lecture by Ernest Renan, “What is a Nation?” that answered people’s free will to unite and live together through the sharing of a “memoire collective”: 
A nation, indeed, is a soul, a spiritual principle, constituted by the common possession of a rich legacy of memory and by mutual consent, the desire to live together.\textsuperscript{48}

This view reflected the dominant conception of the nation after the French Revolution.\textsuperscript{49} In this text, Huard explained the complementarity between “regional patriotism,” a love for the colonial country, and “colonial federalism,” a love for the French empire and the métropole. Huard argued that associationist policies would allow this layered patriotism to flourish.\textsuperscript{50} Marshal Lyautey (1854–1934), among other well-known colonial administrators, believed that this “formula,” which is that of the National Revolution’s, now enables and adjusts the attachment to the small homeland or to the exotic federation, and its attachment to the Empire of which she is a part.\textsuperscript{51} In this exposé, Huard clearly rejects a definition of homeland based on the notion of race. He quickly added that any form of biological racism as a national doctrine could only be adopted by European states without colonies:

If racism can theoretically become the national doctrine of uniquely European states, it can only be completely adopted with difficulty by a white state owning colonies.\ldots The triumph of the law of the white man \ldots has never been the basis of French conceptions … our colonial system \ldots does not know unequals or inferiors in relation to others, but only different civilizations and sister humanities.\textsuperscript{52}

Huard embraced the Third Republican’s \textit{mission civilisatrice}, in which the colonies resembled children who needed French assistance to develop the colonies’ natural and human resources, just as the Gaul needed the Roman:

An enlightened patriotism must convince itself that the Gaul had to become a Roman province to be enriched with a foreign culture, without which, France would not have been born.\textsuperscript{53}

The coherence of the ideology promoted through youth organizations is striking. The National Revolution’s agents in Indochina sought to stabilize local politics and society through groups that brought together French and Indochinese to learn to obey authority. Officials saw racial integration as an avenue to preserve the colony menaced by competitive political forces, such as the nationalists and the Japanese occupiers. Thus, a relatively integrationist policy governed this institution and ideology at the time.
The duties of patriotic subjects in a federated imperial system

According to T. H. Marshall, "citizenship is a status bestowed on those who are full members of the community. All who possess the status are equal with respect to the rights and duties with which the status is endowed." Marshall distinguishes citizenship in terms of the development of civil, political, and social rights. The civil aspect of citizenship emerged in the eighteenth century with the growth of individual rights (freedom of speech, legal equality, liberty); the nineteenth century witnessed the rise of political participation and the twentieth century embodies the arising of social rights (personal security, a basic level of material comfort, and education). Embracing the same perspective, Rogers Brubaker states that since the French Revolution French citizenship has been based on equal rights and obligations:

As a bourgeois revolution, it created a general membership status based on equality before the law. As a democratic revolution, it revived the classical conception of active political citizenship but transformed it from a special into what was, in principle if not yet in practice, a general status. As a national revolution, it sharpened boundaries – and antagonisms – between the members of different nation-states. And as a state-strengthening revolution, it "immediatized" and codified state-membership.

The weakness of this work is that it does not discuss the colonies. Specifically, in Indochina during World War II, rights were extended partially for political reasons. Although state actors promoted the rhetoric of Indochinese being part of the French nation, indigenous subjects in youth corps were only offered access to social rights, not access to civil and political rights. Indeed, the distinction of Indochinese youth subjects from the French was in terms of quality of rights. The overwhelming majority of natives were subjects, not citizens, differentially the former from the latter at the political, juridical, and cultural levels. The juridical and administrative regimes of the colonial set up a partition between citizens (enjoying full rights) and subjects (excluded from basic rights such as voting). Still Indochinese who obtained French citizenship did not, through this deed, come to be equal to born and bred French citizens. Instead, they were then called "évolué" or "développé," labels that imply the transition from a lower to a higher order of life. As Bruschi puts it, subjects were "French but not completely." French Indochina's persistent lack of referring to racial categories in the rhetoric and official documents regarding the youth project, did not prevent on the ground distinctions based on race to emerge, since its Indochinese members were only offered social rights, and not civil or political rights.
Social rights were offered through these youth corps by improving the material life of its members and extending their access to education. Maurice Ducoroy, who was in charge of the Indochina General Commissariat for Physical Education, Sports, and Youth, outlined two goals for this institution. One was political; the other one was social. This social aim was to ease the material, everyday life at a time of war-induced penury. By the end of 1943 and the beginning of 1944, American planes based in China targeted roads, bridges, and railways, provoking food shortages that, in turn, led to inflation. From 1940 to 1944, the cost of food nearly tripled in Cochincha (South Vietnam) and more than quadrupled in Tonkin (North Vietnam). For instance, the School for Instructors of the Hotel Business [l'École des Moniteurs d'Hotellerie] was set up at Dalat in November 1944. Also an eight-month training program, which was followed by two months' training in a hotel in Indochina, was offered to members of youth corps. This plan was part of a scheme to find new work opportunities for youngsters, based on the belief that Indochina would be a tourist destination after World War II. Jean Decoux, the governor general of Indochina, also wanted to expand the education of youngsters to include training for craft production. Ducoroy had already been able to organize, with the support of the mandarins, the youth in provinces by offering them jobs as youth cadres.

The war economy and product shortages led to the creation of an annex to this Hotel-Business School in the form of a market to assist poor youngsters who were struggling with the rising cost of supplies and food. The annex sold discounted products from the farm school, which was created in August 1944 at Phanthiet. Responding to the high costs and material concerns of daily life, hairdressing salons and baths with showers were launched by the Commissariat in 1944. Many youth corps were already encouraging gardens and other activities related to livestock breeding; the products went to the Sport-Youth restaurants of the area to feed local youth inexpensively. By 1944, there were fifty-seven Sports-Youth restaurants in Indochina, while authorities had created a "garden-farm school" in Phanthiet to familiarize youngsters with agricultural activities. In view of the intensifying food shortage in November 1944, Ducoroy stressed the importance of giving agricultural skills to youth; each province, he argued, should have a garden cultivated by youngsters, in addition to school gardens. Mobile squads [brigades mobiles] of veterinary instructors and agricultural instructors taught youth to dig irrigation canals that would improve farm output. An agricultural school to train instructors
was built in Phanthiet. Social rights have a welfare part, by offering a universal minimum level of material comfort and access to education. State officials in Indochina extended these rights within youth corps as a way to gain allegiance from the indigenous native in a competitive political environment. Although they were getting access only to the social aspect of citizenship, it was still for the time a relatively integrationist policy.

Traditionally a nation is conceptualized through rights that adhere to nationality, that is, who has and who does not have the right to become a citizen. The colonial state proposed a multiple political identity that fell short of full assimilation and citizenship but that offered a French imperial identity that would help natives better recapture their own local identity. The policy built ties between subjects and their motherland but rejected full assimilation into French culture while offering limited access to the benefits of the French Enlightenment. As propaganda put it, French imperialism was “of the spirit” and offered two homelands to the colonized. To be sure, the French state did not want full assimilation, for officials believed that it was too dangerous to educate large numbers of indigenous people and much safer to reroot them in their villages. This policy was in continuity with the thirties, when officials rejected an assimilationist approach to colonial subjects, opting for natives to stay true to what the French perceived as their “own” peasant roots and way of life. For example, the promise of limiting political subversion by restricting full “westernization” led to decrees that limited colonial subjects’ access to schooling.

The French sought to employ youth organizations to promote a multi-tiered patriotism – i.e., the love of a people for its colonial country (pays), for the colonial federation of Indochina (the colonies and protectorates of Tonkin, Annam, Cochinchina, Laos, and Cambodia), and for the French empire and the metropole – without stimulating an indigenous nationalist political program that pursued independence from external control. It was a critical set of distinctions for the French to draw, for many of their subjects rejected the imperial model of the ruling nation-state and sought to replace it with one of their own making. The Governor general of Indochina conceptualized the dangerous problem in this way:

Although I actually encouraged specific “patriotisms,” on the other hand I formally condemned “nationalisms” of all kinds, because they had a xenophobic and anti-French tendency, and received their orders from abroad.
This “amplified regionalism” penetrated even local social networks through complex, federated institutions. One of these identities was an Indochinese one. For Decoux, the idea of Indochinese federalism – the association and cooperation of the various geographical units within Indochina – predated World War II. Indeed, the notion was first promoted after World War I by Governor General Albert Sarraut. Governor General Pasquier brought it back to life in the 1930s, by speaking of “the federal Indochinese citizen” and of Indochina as “a federation of states.” He believed that the various competing local identities of this geographical unit would serve to halt the building of a single national identity.\textsuperscript{55} Decoux also threw his administrative weight toward the development of a “federal spirit” and “federal consciousness” with the help of writers, journalists, and jurists, in all of the five pays.\textsuperscript{56} Indeed, authorities invited French and Indochinese professionals and artists to participate in defining the imperial community and promoting the evolution of Indochina within it. Philosophers, church people, and moralists were asked to find common points between Indochina and France.\textsuperscript{77} In hopes of moving Indochina beyond a mere administrative and economic reality, the French state encouraged locals to self-consciously identify themselves as members of this polity. Pétain believed the National Revolution could not be realized only through decrees and laws; it had to be a project embraced by the people.\textsuperscript{78}

Decoux insisted that federalism did not mean centralization, but rather “favoring the blooming of sovereignties and local personalities” under proper guidance.\textsuperscript{59} This federalism grew as a by-product of intracolonal visits of sovereigns, inter-pays sporting demonstrations, the centralized University of Hanoi, and the appointment of natives to additional administrative posts. While Decoux spoke of the federal union, he concurrently encouraged pays to retain their distinctive cultures.\textsuperscript{80} France, the archetype of a centralized and unitary state, had not yet generated much political theory on the subject of federalism. Agulhon argues that only “a sentimental regionalism” resembled the doctrine, expressing itself through folklore rather than politics.\textsuperscript{81}

The point in itself was not to teach the Indochinese to become “French,” but to inculcate locals with a new set of civic duties. This brand of patriotism thus incorporated natives into the French nation without granting them full citizenship. One who acquires citizenship in a nation is certified as a member of the polity; citizenship provides a status defined in terms of an exchange of rights and obligations.
Although unrealized, Decoux spoke of "the progressive creation" of an Indochinese citizenship.\textsuperscript{82} In the case at hand, the Indochinese were at best second-rate members of the Empire, for the French colonial state clearly emphasized the duties of the Indochinese toward the colonial power. The official conceptualization of political identity was thus not rigidly linked to a single nation-state. The French state manipulated and appropriated the idea of multicultural identity – in that it encompassed different ethnic and racial groups – without sharing power with the natives. Above all, authorities defined Frenchness in opposition to other cultures and nations.

More specifically, however, the French defined patriotism through a "public-service ethic," by insisting that their subjects, particularly the young ones, be healthy and strong through regular exercise in case the nation, then embedded in a dangerous geopolitical environment, required defending. This ethic enshrined the notion of duty, obligation, and sacrifice, a secular altruism that required the supersession of self in the interest of a higher cause [in this case the French imperial nation].\textsuperscript{83} The promotion of patriotism defined a specific national ideal: the maintenance of France as a global power through sacrifice and national service aimed at preserving imperial unity. At the time of the Vichy regime's loss of North Africa to the Allies, various French-language newspapers advanced the idea that

> The first law of patriotism is to maintain the unity of the Homeland. If each individual pretended to get a particular idea of what commands patriotic duty, there would be no homeland, no nation; only factions – in the service of personal ambition – would remain.\textsuperscript{84}

Patriotism thus required the defense of "threatened values" and the regeneration of society. The "enemy" was both interior – the "decadent" values inherited from the Third Republic, the Jews and Freemasons – and exterior, in the form of dangerous aggressor states in the region. Patriotism meant preparing youth to resist the forces of the decadence and decay found in the Third Republic, and directed them to stand as a bulwark against external threats. The concept of partial and special rights was a routine tool of imperial rule and contrasted spectacularly with the concept of universal rights that had dominated in Republican France.
Imperial appeals to cultural commonalities: The cement of federation and integration

Colonial leaders used youth organizations to emphasize publicly the commonalities between Pétain's National Revolution and local cultures. The administration aligned itself with the traditional culture of Vietnam, for example, which was essentially Confucianist, with strong Buddhist influences. The conservative features of these two doctrines were compatible with Pétain's ideology of a return to a rural, traditional, and hierarchical society. This allowed the colonial state to escape the problem of obvious national and ethnic inequality by emphasizing the similarities between the two cultures. For instance, a booklet published in French, Vietnamese, and Chinese emphasized the similarities between Pétain’s words and ancient “Sino-Annamite” wisdom regarding family, work, homeland, and order. Patriotism did not always operate to diffuse insurgent nationalism, however. Various insurgent groups, including those directed by Ho Chi Minh, claimed to embody a true patriotism. Since segments of the local population interpreted patriotism differently from the meaning that the propagators intended, the initiative, by placing indigenous and imperial patriotism in stark relief, paradoxically served as a springboard toward national independence. Whereas French colonialism in the nineteenth century severely damaged Confucianism, whose disciples were unable to imagine reforming their worldview to fit Western values, the Vichy regime sponsored a revival of Confucianist values in what has been called "a reactionary charade."  

Buddhism affirmed the vanity (and even the unreality) of things of this world, preached renunciation, and directed people's minds toward supernatural hopes. Confucianism taught that man is above all a social being, bound by social obligations. The duties which Confucian doctrine assigned to everyone were service to the king, honoring one's parents, remaining faithful to one's spouse until death, managing family affairs as well, participating in the administration of the country, and helping to maintain peace in the world. This belief system, based on a hierarchical view of society, kindness toward others, obedience, and filial piety, fit the conservative goals of the Vichy regime like a glove. From an early age, children memorized specific rules of conduct from Confucius's classic books and attempted to apply these rules to their everyday lives. This conservative political doctrine eschewed political, social, and material competition in favor of moral and ethical development and reflection. Since it did not seek to change political institutions, instead exhorting individuals to im-

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prove their moral standards as the way to ameliorate society, the doctrine attracted politicians who feared social change. The French interest in Buddhism was not new. The impressive growth of sects in the 1920s and 1930s in southern Vietnam – the syncretic religion of Cao Dai and the reform Buddhism of the Hoa Hao – threatened orthodox Buddhism, which seemed outdated to many. To reevaluate Buddhist concepts and their relationship to an evolving society, new Buddhist centers and study groups emerged in the 1920s and 1930s. This appearance of new organizations, periodicals, and religious schools, as well as the collecting of Buddhist texts, fostered a significant growth in Buddhist adherents in Vietnam. In the 1930s, the French responded by prohibiting the creation of a national Buddhist organization. Instead, authorities involved themselves in regional initiatives intending to direct potential followers toward the state’s purposes. The religion’s profession of universal love for fellowman – if channeled into patriotic forms – could conserve rather than challenge the colonial power. Authorities also feared that Japanese would devise means to influence youngsters through the use of Buddhism. According to Decoux, by June 1943, the Japanese, professing their intent to unify Buddhist sects throughout Asia, sent Japanese priests to Indochina to spread “racial and xenophobic” propaganda. Rivalries among Buddhist branches in Cochin China prompted some of them to consider pursing their own incorporation into the Japanese Co-Prospertiy Sphere. By July 1943, Tokyo planned a “Rally of Buddhist Youth” in the countries belonging to Great Oriental Asia. Eight Indochinese representatives participated.

In both France and Indochina, French officials proposed that the populace return to what they defined as their roots: the “real,” essential France and Indochina. In the métropole, it was the pre-French Revolution period, that is, a non-parliamentary “restoration” of a hierarchical society based on the family, rather than on the individual. Likewise authorities in the colony attempted to drive native youth to return to their own pre-colonial civilizations with traditional rulers, while rejecting the “imported” ideology of society offered by the Japanese Co-Prosperty Sphere.

Conclusion

While France participated to the Holocaust, it was praising multiracialism in Indochina. The Jewish question was quite trivial in the
Asian context since the occupier was Japan, not Germany. Rather, the Indochinese case shows the continuities of pre-Vichy and Vichy traditions regarding the inculcation of French "values" on indigenous youth, such as the idea of Indochinese federalism.

This youth project was not a success when it comes to evidences of racial integration. The training at the Superior School for Youth Cadres and in any superior school at Phanthiet and Dalat was in French, interprovincial schools trained in the local language. Clearly, this movement made an effort to reach a larger audience than merely those natives who were already "assimilated" into the French language and culture. Nevertheless, the language problem was a barrier that slowed down the progress of the racial integration of the French and Indochinese youngsters. For instance, the majority of Laotian Youngsters could not understand youth cadres who spoke only in French and Vietnamese languages. Ducoroy complained about having taken part in silent youth parades, and he recommended as a remedy that those who could not sing in French should be encouraged to sing in their native tongues instead. Another example pointing to the failure of racial integration is the fact that a number of youngsters and cadre of these youth corps had joined indigenous nationalist forces by 1945. Some youths and adults opposed the French presence from inside this youth mobilization. Perhaps, as Tønnesson speculates, the French groups provided native youth of all political orientations a legal means of organizing, which was highly valued because it was rare. Even more threatening to the French state, youth projects permitted illegal youth corps to exist semi-legally. Already through French police reports from 1942 to 1944 for the area of Cochinchina, we are able to see the different repertoires of collective action that certain youth movements used to contest the Vichy project, frequently including anti-French song lyrics. Ducoroy's youth service reminded youth leaders that there was a sizable number of young men who could become youth leaders because they had "techniques, common sense, education, and the habit of rough living." And this policy was also valid "even for the ones who, obeying some other agenda, are thought of as opposition leaders." Frequent inspections of cadres by leaders of local services and other members of youth organizations, as well as the youth service's close relation to the police department, did not prevent the state from losing control of some of these corps as time passed. Indeed, a Gaullist intelligence source reported in October 1945 that the majority of about 2,500 physical-education instructors trained by the Phanthiet ESEPIC [Superior School of Physical Education of Indochina] had
joined the Viet Minh. In fact, “more Viet Minh company commanders were to graduate from the Pétainist youth corps than from all the Viet Minh cadres schools.” Even if indigenous youngsters temporarily felt as if they belonged to the imperial community, the colonial state only offered them social rights, a too restrictive privilege to endorse it indefinitely.

Jacques Lebas, the General Commissioner of Youth until December 1941, noted that the “complex” nature of the youth question in Indochina resulted from three existing groups of youths: the French, the Indochinese, and the Eurasian. The latter, he claimed, demanded “particular solutions.” Unfortunately, he did not further discuss the Eurasian population. A few official documents under the commissionership of Lebas pointed to the existence of two youths: French and Indochinese. But apart from these direct references to race, the official documents reflect the state’s interest in unifying, rather than distinguishing between, ethnicities and nationalities. From December 1941 on, the colonial state dropped referrals to two distinct racial groups, thus reflecting the attempt to stress the unity of all its subjects around a French-core identity. However, the racial hierarchy was maintained through the silence of its existence and the Indochinese youth were offered only social rights, not civil and political rights.

In spite of the locution “the French state,” the policies were not carried forward by the same agency in Vichy France and in Indochina. We can wonder if these policies – proscribing Jews as “racial undesirables” while encouraging ethnocultural integration in colonial Indochina – were perceived as an ideological contradiction by officials. I did not find any remark from actors indicating that they noticed this discrepancy. Indeed, the Vichy regime saw a Jewish conspiracy as the source of the French military defeat of 1940. Colonial subjects were never given such a power. The idea of Europeans uplifting “inferior” races was a well-ingrained idea. The duty of civilizing indigenous was in continuity with France’s nineteenth-century policy of free and compulsory education for all. Youth corps provided an extra-curriculum education.

My research suggests that the idea of integrating difference in Indochina, exemplified by the absence of race-based, anti-Asian legislation, contrasts sharply with the idea of the Jew as an unassimilable outsider who challenged the core of French identity and national cohesion. Abroad, the French simply could not reject all those defined as “others,” for the colonial state required their subjects’ support,
especially during wartime. The French call for native participation was a typical response to a war crisis; it was not an unfamiliar situation, just a more desperate one. Cultural pluralism was a less dangerous threat to colonial rule than the Enlightenment-influenced quest for equal rights and self-governance. Clearly, the French state’s ideology of race was highly contingent and variable. This research suggests that security concerns and the ideological challenge to “white” authority related to deflecting the power of an occupying force help explain widely divergent policies regarding race and citizenship at home and in the colonies during World War II. In Indochina, officials explicitly rejected race as a basis for imperial nationality; in Vichy it was often an explicit criterion by which officials expelled citizens from nationality. My inquiry contradicts Brubaker’s vision of French citizenship grounded in a “plane equality,” in the context of the colonial Indochinese; indeed, social rights were extended to indigenous youth, the civil and political aspects of citizenship were only rhetoric. In both cases, the state used inclusion and exclusion as tools with which to navigate its desperate attempt to retain sovereignty in the face of defeat and occupation.

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Notes

1. Note n. 1880 IPP/S, 8/26/1942, Hanoi, in GGI, reference d.271F30, n. 1370, National Archives Center N. 1, Hanoi, [hereafter, VNN].
12. With the signing of the 1940 armistice, France was divided in different administrative zones. A Demarcation line separated a northern zone occupied by Germany, and an unoccupied southern zone, often called Unoccupied France, Unoccupied Zone, or "Free" Zone. France's capital was moved in Vichy, in the Unoccupied Zone. In theory, Vichy was the capital of all France, in reality German authorities seriously restrained its authority. The landing of the Allied in French North Africa in November 1942 entailed the Germans to occupy the previously Unoccupied Zone and to interfere more in Vichy affairs.
13. "In the 1930s, under the Third Republic, tolerant and cosmopolitan France had been a haven for thousands of refugees, many of them Jewish, who fled from Germany and Eastern Europe, from Fascist Italy, and from the battleground of the Spanish civil war." Michael R. Marrus and Robert O. Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1995), XV.
15. Ibid., 101.
16. See ibid.
19. National security concerns seem to have been as important as ethnic motivations. Of the 187 European state employees turned out, 139 were for disciplinary reasons, 30 for belonging to secret societies, and 3 for non-French origin. Some were put under police surveillance, while others were placed under house arrest or administrative internment. Lamant, "La révolution nationale," 26. Targeting radicals and freemasons on 21 September 1940, the governor general of Indochina, Jean Decoux, ordered civil servants, both French and Indochinese, to claim that they did not belong to a secret society. Authorities removed from public office the former leaders of these defunct societies. Vu, "Political and Social Change in Viet Nam," 97–98.
22. Paxton, Vichy France, Old Guard.
25. It was simply “not a happy time to be different in France.” Gypsies were interned, often harshly. Spanish refugees in the southwest were unwelcome, and officials considered shipping a large number of them to Mexico. Marrus and Paxton, Vichy France, 366.
26. Ibid., 366–368.
34. At the time, this represented 15% of the four million youth in Indochina. Telegram n. 783, 2/10/1944, Hanoi, agence FOM, box 272, file 451, centre des Archives d’Outre-Mer, Aix-en-Provence [hereafter CAOM]. The estimation of four million youth was drawn from J. Sarlat, “Sports et Jeunesse où en sommes-nous?,” Indochine, n. 108, 9/24/1942, 2.
36. “Affaires nouvelles,” in GGI, reference 65296, CAOM.
38. These practices answered the fear of European parents that their children might become “too native,” by learning to speak the local language, or by adopting non-European behavior, gestures, and attitudes that were part of the panoply of behaviors that the French believed distinguished “them from us.” Ann Stoler, “Rethinking Colonial Categories: European Communities and the Boundaries of Rule,” in Nicholas B. Dirks, editor, Colonialism and Culture, (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1992), 334.
39. “Questions de moyens propres à favoriser le rapprochement franco-indochinois à la session de juillet 1942 du conseil fédéral indochinois,” GGI, reference 2.271F30, n. 1307, VNNNA.
40. This ideology of course could blend into racism, as social inequality could readily be ascribed to suppose biological inequality. Jean-Luc Chabot, Le nationalisme (Paris: PUF, 1986), 46.
41. “Appel du Commandant Ducoroy,” Publication mensuelle de la Direction de

42. Report by Maurice Ducoroy, 9/21/1945, Saigon, in HCl, consul 247, CAOM, emphasis in original.


48. Huard, *Qui est ce que la Patrie?*, 16.


50. Colonial associationist policy points to the model of indirect rule and governing through indigenous people and their institutions as well as the refusal of making the colonies into overseas France by turning indigenous people into Frenchmen.

51. Huard, *Qui est ce que la Patrie?* 19.

52. Ibid., 11, 18–19.

53. Ibid., 19.


55. Ibid., chapter IV.


58. Quoted in ibid., 129.


61. *Journal Officiel de l'Indochine Française* [hereafter JOIF], 12/2/1944, 2691.


64. Telegram from Jean Decoux, 8/17/1944, Dalat, box 272, file 451, CAOM.

70. Schnapper, Dominique, La France de l'intégration, 51.
76. Telegram from Jean Decoux, 1/10/1941, Hanoi, FOM, box 272, file 451, CAOM.
77. "Moyens propres à favoriser le rapprochement franco-indochinois," in GGI, reference 65296, CAOM.
78. Quote from Philippe Pétain, La Tribune Indochnoise, 12/1/1941.
84. Quoted in Voix d'Empire, 11/26/1942, 1.
88. Ibid., 26.
89. Ibid., 35–36.
91. Decoux, A la barre de l'Indochine, 236, emphasis added.
92. "La propagande anti-française dans les milieux religieux de la Cochinchn, 1943," GGI, reference 65499, CAOM.

94. The adaptation of colonial rules to local cultures and the manipulation of customs and popular figures were not new phenomena. For example, Indochina’s Governor General Pierre Paquier (1928–1934) revived interest in traditional concepts of social harmony and order as an answer to indigenous social unrest. David Marr, *Vietnamese Tradition on Trial 1920–1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 293, footnote 11.


100. “Rapport mensuel sûreté intérieure 16 avril au 15 mai 1944”; “Rapport mensuel sûreté intérieure 16 décembre 1943 au 15 janvier 1944”; “Cochinchine rapport mensuel sûreté intérieure 16 novembre au 15 décembre 1943”; all in HCI, conspol 161, CAOM.


102. Rapport from Maurice Ducoroy.


105. Jacques Lebas, report n. 186-CGJ, 11/12/1941, Hanoi, GGI, IB 444 (41), unindexed. 2, CAOM.

106. See *JOIF*, 4/23/1941, 1153.


109. In 1914, the French called on the Indochinese to join the fight against the “Huns.” At the time, the governor general proclaimed that the French state would be an “elder brother” in transmitting the full benefits of modern civilization, and would consider the possibility of native self-rule at some unspecified point in the future.” When the war was over, such a pledge was conveniently forgotten. Marr, *Vietnamese Tradition on Trial 1920–1945*, 5–6.