



THE LONDON SCHOOL
OF ECONOMICS AND
POLITICAL SCIENCE

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On reading the manuscript of Bruce Gilley's *The Last Imperialist*, I wrote these lines: "the book shows how individual lives shaped the experience of colonialism in the mid-twentieth century as the British Empire ended and nation states emerged. The book brings complexity and nuance back into a historiography increasingly ruled by one-dimensional partisan narratives." *The Last Imperialist* is a finely written evidence-based biographical study that illuminates West African history during transition from colonial rule to nationhood. I looked forward to its publication by Lexington Books.

It came as a shock to know that the publishers withdrew the book. I understand that a campaign initiated by a Toronto academic calling Professor Gilley an "apologist of colonialism" influenced the decision. If the facts are right, the decision is shocking and sets a bad example. I take only one kind of historical scholarship seriously, one based on evidence and explaining a process of change - the manuscript passed that test, not only for me, but also the referees. That it could be an apology for empires, whatever that idiotic expression means, never crossed my mind, I do not think the book was one.

The publishers failed the test by giving in to a crowd that has internet power but no apparent credential to judge scholarship. A decision like theirs means that a group of phony academics based in the privileged universities of the Western world should decide what is published on Asian and African history, and their decision will be based not on quality but loyalty to the clan. That attempt represents real colonialism to me, and Lexington became an accessory to it.

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