

# Indomitable!

(June 2024)

The public is generally imbued with the entrenched notion that the remarkable ease with which European polities were able to subjugate most of the world in the past centuries can somehow be explained by some overwhelming technical superiority.

However, upon scrutinizing geography and the balance of forces during the conquests of colonial empires, and considering that:

1. A few foreign iron swords or even muskets cannot be as superior to a myriad domestic slingshots used on their own turf as a nuclear bomb might be to a million swords, and
2. A few dozen foreign horses cannot offer as much ascendancy over millions of domestic foot soldiers in their own environment as a supersonic jet fighter would over a thousand horsemen,

one comes to the conclusion that the explanation may lie elsewhere.

## Brief history of the conquests <sup>1</sup>

- A.** In 1519, after having sailed in small rudimentary sailboats across 10,000 km of Atlantic Ocean, Spaniard Hernan Cortes, with his retinue of 450 men and 16 horses, quickly obliterated the whole Aztec Empire, a 2,000 km wide quite advanced place with a population of 25 million,

which is a ratio of 0.002%.

- B.** In 1532, illiterate Spaniard Francisco Pizarro, initially with 80 men and 20 horses, although he later returned with 160 men and 40 horses, left the Isthmus of Panama and rapidly annihilated the whole Inca Empire, a 3,500 km wide, considerably rugged and quite advanced place with a population of 12 million,

which is a ratio of 0.001%.

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<sup>1</sup> Figures are indicative and are provided only for the sake of proportion.

C. In 1565, Spaniard Miguel Lopez de Legazpi sailed from New Spain (Mexico) across 15,000 km of Pacific Ocean with 250 men in 5 small rudimentary sailboats, swiftly conquered the Philippines, a 1,500 km wide archipelago with a population of 2 million, and made it a possession of New Spain, some 25,000 km from Old Spain,

which is a ratio of 0.02%.

D. By 1930, more than four centuries after the first Europeans had arrived in the Indian subcontinent, about 100,000 Britons were ruling over 300 million natives in a 3,000 km wide piece of land, 20,000 km from home,

which is a ratio of 0.03%.

E. By 1930, more than four centuries after the first Europeans had arrived in the Indonesian Archipelago, about 200,000 Dutchmen were ruling over 60 million natives in a 6,000 km wide piece of land, 25,000 km from home,

which is a ratio of 0.4%.

F. By 1930, in 8,000 km wide Africa, less than 3 million Europeans were ruling over perhaps 150 million people,

which is a ratio of 2%.

So what was it that made it such a relatively easy undertaking for the conquerors<sup>2</sup> (except when they were getting at each other's throat) and led them to become firmly convinced of some prodigious martial superiority?

Instead of offering his views forthright, the author of these lines kindly requests the gentle reader to submit his<sup>3</sup> proposed understanding.

*Kind reader, be reassured<sup>4</sup> that the purported explanation is nothing scandalous nor jingoistic, although it might be considered by many perhaps a tad unsettling.*

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<sup>2</sup> From another standpoint, what was it that allowed 7,000 Muslim conquerors from North Africa to occupy nearly all of the Iberian Peninsula in about a decade, Portugal included, and stay there nearly 8 centuries?

<sup>3</sup> Or her, or its.

<sup>4</sup> Or disappointed, depending on your position regarding gregarious transcendence.