

**THE BACKWARD  
PEOPLES AND OUR  
RELATIONS WITH THEM**

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The Backward Peoples and Our Relations with Them by Sir Harry Johnston

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**SIR HARRY JOHNSTON**

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# THE BACKWARD PEOPLES AND OUR RELATIONS WITH THEM

## CHAPTER I

### WHO ARE THE BACKWARD PEOPLES ?

BEFORE we consider the great problem of the relations between the backward peoples and those races and nations of the world mainly of the Christian and Jewish religions who believe themselves to have the power of enforcing their will on the rest of humanity, let us proceed to define who and what these backward or unprogressive peoples are and to what extent they may be considered to be retrograde and ineffective as compared with the dominating white race. “The chief and obvious distinction between the backward and the forward peoples is that the former, with the exception of about 20,000,000 in the Mediterranean basin and the Near East, are of coloured skin; while the latter are white-skinned or, as in the case of the Japanese and the inhabitants of Northern China, nearly white.”

“I think if we took all the factors into consideration—religion, education (especially knowledge concerning the relations between this planet and the universe of which it is a minute speck, the history and geography of the planet, the sciences that are a part of earth-study), standard of living, respect for sanitation, infant death rate, bodily strength, manner of government, regard for law and order, position in agriculture and manufactures,—we might appraise mathematically, according to the following ratio,

the principal nations and peoples into which humanity is divided :—

1. Great Britain and Ireland, Canada and Newfoundland, White Australia, New Zealand, White South Africa (south of the Zambezi), Malta and Mauritius, United States, France, Corsica, much of Algeria and Tunis, Belgium and Luxembourg, Holland, Germany, Austria, Chekho-Slovakia, Italy, Switzerland, Hungary, Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Iceland, Finland, Esthonia, Spain, Chile, Argentina, Japan . . . . . 100 per cent.
2. Poland and Lithuania, Serbia and Croatia, Bulgaria, Rumania, Portugal, Greece, Cyprus, Brazil, Peru, Colombia, British Guiana, French and Dutch Guiana, British and French West Indies, Cuba and Porto Rico, Hawaii, Uruguay . . . . . 98 per cent.
3. Russia, Russian Siberia, Russian Central Asia, the Caucasus, Egypt, British India, French Indo-China, Siam, British Malaysia, Mexico, Central America, Bolivia, Venezuela, Ecuador, Paraguay, Java, Siam, Armenia . . . . . 97 per cent.
4. Albania, Asia Minor, Morocco, Southern Algeria, Tripoli, Palestine, Syria, Persia, China, Tibet, Afghanistan, Zanzibar . . . . . 95 per cent.
5. Madagascar, Black South Africa, French West Africa, British West Africa, Uganda, British Central and East Africa, Sumatra, Borneo, the Philippines, the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, Angöla, Santo Domingo . . . . . 90 per cent.
6. Abyssinia, Arabia, Portuguese East Africa, the Belgian Congo, Portu-

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- guese Congo, Liberia, Haiti, Celebes,  
Timor, New Caledonia, British Papua . 80 per cent.
7. Dutch New Guinea and New Hebrides,  
Portuguese Guinea, French Central  
Africa . . . . . 75 per cent.

This rough estimate of civilization and culture does not imply that the nations or peoples which are classed together resemble one another in all their stages of culture. Some will excel in one direction, some in another. In certain directions a people may be very forward, coupled with retrograde features which reduce their average value.

Obviously, the foremost nations in the world at the present day are Britain and the regions of the British Empire in which the white race predominates; the United States; France; and Germany,—not only by the numbers of their peoples and the degree of their national wealth, but by their industry, commerce and the proportion of educated to uneducated people in their population. In all elements of greatness, but not in potency of numbers, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Finland, Holland, Luxembourg and Belgium, are on an equal footing. From their magnificent parts in history, one would like to class Spain, Portugal and Italy with these powers of the first rank, and before many more years have passed Spain and Italy, at any rate, may have attained such a position, when the whole of their peoples are sufficiently educated and political troubles have ceased to hinder progress.

It is the peoples of 95 per cent. to 90 per cent. that may be put in the unprogressive or retrograde class, unable at present to govern themselves in a manner conducive to progress; while those that are graded 80 and 75 per cent. still contain in their midst elements of sheer savagery. Such regions, if left alone by the controlling white man, might easily relapse into the unprofitable barbarism out of which they have been lifted with the white man's efforts during the past fifty years.

With the exception of Uganda, Abyssinia and Madagas-