



In reaction to Lyautey's news, RMG 54 Douglas Porch: "The conquest of Morocco"

Military Review No. 55

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Published on 11/11/2019

Histoire & stratégie

Do we need to read Lyautey again? More than a hundred years after Taza was taken and after the "Lyautey method" has been served to us "in all sauces" for ten years, with the success that we know, as referred to in the "Lyautey method", in the "Lyautey method".the theories of the American counter-insurgency and the French doctrine of counter-rebellion, the time seems to have come to try to unravel, behind the screen of the thurifiers, the truth of the myth.

The exercise involves facing two perils. On the one hand, the criticism touches on one of the founding myths of the French army, thus on its cohesion, its deep culture, its very being: the idea that the French army would have, more than any other, the capacity (perhaps even the vocation ?) to pacify warring peoples through the use of benevolent persuasion rather than force. On the other hand, any criticism of this founding myth risks flirting dangerously with the ideas of the anti-colonial and anti-militarist currents. Hence the interest in following a historian who is as foreign to our quarrels and independent of our moral authorities as he is insensitive to our emotions on all sides.

American historian married to a French woman and author of a thesis on the evolution of the French army between 1870 and 1914.¹ then of several works in particular on the army and the French colonial adventures.²Thirty years ago, Mr. Douglas Porch gave us an in-depth study of the events of 1902-1914 in their local and international environment, in the form of a report on the events of 1902-1914.This is a colourful adventure book, punctuated by "knife cut" portraits, picturesque genre scenes (the Sultan's mehalla in the countryside, a military review under the walls of Fez, etc.) and a series of picturesque scenes (the Sultan's mehalla in the field, a military review under the walls of Fez, etc.)), and brutal considerations on the reality and effectiveness of the doctrines implemented by the conquerors, starting with the "Lyautey method". The whole reads like an excellent historical novel, but very far from the spirit of the "Golden Book of the Foreign Legion".

The author retraces the major stages that marked the conquest since the battles of Taghit and El Mounkar on the Algerian-Moroccan borders in August and September 1903: the arrival of Lyautey at the command of the Southorane, his reform of troops and methods, the occupation of Béchar and Ras-el-Ain (renamed Colomb and Berguent in order to disappoint the government opposition); the revolt of Bou Hamara at Taza and then the rise and misdeeds of El Raisuni in the Rif; the "coup de Tangier" in 1905 and the Algiers convention; the riot and the bombing of Casablanca in 1907; the revolt of Madani-el-Glaoui in the south and the disastrous campaign of the Chaouia, concluded by the abdication of the Sultan whom the French had supported; the uprising of the Beni Snassen and the fighting at Bou Denib in 1908, the first serious test of the Lyautey "method"; the disorders of 1908 and 1909, consecutive to the 1911 expedition against the Cherarda, the first siege of Fez led by the Beni M'Tir and the slow march of the relief column of General Moniers; the announcement of the protectorate treaty, the mutiny of Fez in 1911, the reunification of Fez in 1911 and the subsequent reunification of the Cherarda, the first siege of Fez by the Beni M'Tir and the slow march of the relief column of General Moniers. 1912 and the strong tensions between French military and diplomatic leaders in Fez leading to the recall of Lyautey as a general resident. the arrival of Lyautey and the second siege of Fez; the abdication of Moulay Hafid and the uprising of El Hiba in the South in August 1912. 1912, posing the threat of a national revolution; the seizure of Marrakech by General Mangin at the end of September 1912 and the agreement with the Grand Caïds of the Atlas; the pacification of the Zaer tribes; Franchet d'Espérey's campaign around Essaouira the 1912-1913 and the costly capture of Kasbah Tadla by Mangin in April 1913; the entry of Generals Gouraud and Baumgarten into Taza in May 1914, the policy of consolidation which followed the entry into the war and the dangerous "snag" of the Khénifra affair.

The thread of the story leads the author to detail and discuss the essential bases of the "Lyautey method", a method based on the expedition of the "Lyautey expedition", a method based on the "Lyautey expedition". The thread of the story leads the author to detail and discuss the essential foundations of the "Lyautey method", a method based on the Tongan and Malagasy experience (the "Gallieni method") which Lyautey contrasts with the Algerian method, which he despises, and the "Sudanese" method, which he abhors. At the tactical level, the method consists in constantly nomadising from important positions, applying one's own methods to the adversary, opposing the counter-djich to the djich in order to leave no incursion unpunished. In order to avoid major operations that were too destructive but above all too visible, Lyautey relied on local tactics, on "situational intelligence" provided by officers of the Service of Indigenous Affairs, and on the use of natives, goumiers, Saharans, etc., who had been trained in the use of the local population. At the strategic level, he favoured the combination of the carrot (the economic interest in particular, through the creation of "free" markets in the region) and the use of the carrot. At the strategic level, it favours the combination of the carrot (the economic interest in particular, by creating "free" markets at the edge of the dissident zones) and the stick (punitive expeditions on the local model of the rezzou and not on the heavy and destructive Western model used by the "Sudanese"). One of the fundamental ideas of the method is that the conquest will be the work of the Moroccans themselves, convinced of their own interest, and Lyautey will always give political priority to the protectorate over colonisation, an indirect government by local elites rather than the direct government implemented in Algeria.

Douglas Porch raises the question of the effectiveness of this method, or even its reality

and the sincerity of the discourse in which it is used. Porch questions the effectiveness of this method, even its reality and the sincerity of the discourse in which it is exposed (notably Lyautey's speeches and letters, most of which he observes have been sorted, selected, amended and published by Lyautey himself and not by some posthumous admirer). As he recounts it, the conquest is the undertaking of soldiers and diplomats convinced that they are serving the interests of France but also of Moroccans, but who act on their own initiative, against the directives of their government and the opinion of the country. Each of their initiatives is based on erroneous assessments based on a superficial knowledge of the country, triggering a reaction that is contrary to the desired effect. As a result, the conquest consists of a succession of crises as violent as they are unexpected, from which the French always end up getting out by force of arms at the cost of enormous human losses.

The author observes, for example, that the opening of a "cut-price" market on the border, instead of bringing the inhabitants of the neighbourhood into the arms of the French, was the only way to prevent the French from taking over their territory. The author observes, for example, that the opening of a "cut-price" market on the border, instead of bringing the inhabitants of the neighbourhood into the arms of the French, had above all had the effect of threatening very important economic interests deep in the territory, provoking a coalition against the French. Similarly, the idea that the pacified tribes would "conquer" others was based on a profound ignorance of Moroccan society, since looting was the only legitimate aim of the war between the tribes. The extreme violence of the various stages of the conquest finally belies the idea that it was almost peaceful, more by persuasion than by force.

Douglas Porch finally sees in the "Lyautey method" an instrument intended to defeat, not the resistance of the dissidents in Morocco, but that of the opponents in metropolitan France, opponents ultimately much more dangerous than the Berber tribes. He convincingly shows how Lyautey, a figure reputed to be hostile on principle to the republican political staff, maintains his political networks and uses his "discourse of the method" to mislead governments, put the anti-colonial parties to sleep in the Chambers and arm the colonialist party on the contrary. By showing that Lyautey does not hesitate to use force when necessary, he underscores the extent to which his hostility to large-scale, high-calibre operations, such as the "war on terror", is a sign of his own political will. The method dear to the officers of the 'Sudanese school', is above all a façade and motivated by the desire to avoid alerting anti-colonial opinion.

The preface added by the author in the 2005 edition, when counter-insurgency campaigns were in full swing in Afghanistan and Iraq, is not the least interesting of the book. The author offers a convincing critique of the current ideas, which he traces back to Fukuyama's "end of history" theory. In this spirit, the theories of globalization of the world that are being expressed today (and the actual policies, especially American policies, that these theories justify) would ultimately be only a final avatar of the same ideas developed at the end of the nineteenth century by European colonialists like Lyautey. And, as was the case at the time, their real result is an aggravation of the resistance of countries and peoples, resistance to which increasing violence is an inevitable response.

We are not obliged to share all of the author's conclusions. In particular, the fact that his study stops in 1914 allows us to object that the following years could have led to a different assessment of the effectiveness of a method whose effects necessarily took

time to unfold. However, it is impossible for the soldier to evade the "questions that make people angry", since the sum of the testimonies and the concordant facts call into question our most ingrained certainties.

Finally, the book should lead us to question the relevance of another military-to-political taboo of the moment, the military's ability to peacefully resolve crises, as reflected in the interallied concept of a global or comprehensive approach. While we are going to repeat that "today there is no military solution to conflicts", we are constantly saying that the military is not capable of resolving conflicts peacefully. While we will repeat that "there is no military solution to conflicts today", we keep explaining that we have the capacity to resolve conflicts through a method inherited from the "conquest of hearts and minds". While the "Lyautey method" may have been a trap set for politicians by the military and diplomats, its contemporary avatar may well prove the opposite.

1 "The march to the Marne: the French army 1871-1914", 1981, reprinted Cambridge University press, 2010.

2 "The conquest of Sahara"; "The conquest of Morocco"; "The French foreign legion" (published in French); "The French secret services from the Dreyfus affair to the Gulf War" (published in French); "The path to victory: the Mediterranean theater in World War II"; "Counter-insurgency: exposing the myths of the new way of war".

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Release date	06/11/2019

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