



General Lyautey, the inventor of Soft Power?

military-Earth thinking notebook

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Published on 20/07/2018

Histoire & stratégie

The title may seem provocative as the formula seems anachronistic at first glance and, moreover, surprising, as it would be tantamount to lending to a general officer the right to be a "General Officer".¹ In fact, the general officer at the beginning of the twentieth century^{the} invention of a political formula that appeared in 1990 in the pen of the American Joseph S. Nye^[1]. Nevertheless, the analysis must be attempted, because in retrospect the politico-military strategy carried out by Lyautey in his time in Morocco corresponds more or less to the current definitions of Soft Power, to a greater or lesser extent to the current definitions of the "soft power". the capacity of a State to influence the behaviour of another State by non-coercive means when Hard Power (the use of coercive means) becomes inoperative or impossible. If this definition is retained, Soft Power, or its intermediate version Smart Power^[2], would thus be derivative if not degraded forms of Hard Power together with an imperial modality^[3]. It is this point that we propose to analyze by placing it in the historical perspective of the reflection and action of General Hubert Lyautey in Morocco at the beginning of the 20th century.

¹ Joseph Nye, "Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power", New York, Basic Books, 1990.

² Smart Power would be a combination of Soft and Hard Power. The term was recently popularized by Hillary Clinton.

³ See the works of Pierre Vermeren which all tend to show the still real influence that Lyautey exerts on the Moroccan elites. See in particular "La Formation des élites marocaines", Paris, La Découverte , 2002.

Without coming from the infantry or the colonial artillery, General Lyautey was undoubtedly one of the best thinkers of the colonial fact in that he never thought of colonization in terms of occupation alone but in terms of economic development and influence. Perceived in his time as original, this thought is less however due to the intellectual capacities of Hubert Lyautey - because it is shared by many other colonials

such as Théophile Pennequin, Etienne-François Aymonier, Auguste Bonifacy or Pierre Ibos - than to his concern never to detach tactical and military concerns from the political environment in which they were embedded. However, much more than other officers, Lyautey was a "politician". Very early on, during his Tongan experience with Gallieni (1894), the man who then appears simply as the disciple of Albert de Mun's social Catholicism through his famous article on the "Rôle social of officers" undertakes to criticize and deconstruct the principle of the expeditionary column as it is applied in Sudan, under the guise of being able to criticize more discreetly those deployed in Tonkin by General Duchemin [1]. This denunciation of the Sudanese columns (Brière de l'Isle, Borgnis-Desbordes, Archinard [2]) in reality takes little account of the climatic constraints - expeditions reduced to six months because of the wintering - which, by imposing their rhythm on tactics, ipso facto lead to the use of a force that seeks all the less to be peaceful as each expedition must be victorious in order to be annually renewed by Paris.

Now, if Lyautey does not raise the question of the political dimension of the Sudanese columns, he does not forget to address it for himself as soon as he finds himself in a position of command. He undertook it for the first time in a report he submitted to the governor of Tonkin, Armand Rousseau, in 1896, in which he assigned a triple role to all colonial officers: diplomatic, political and military. This new dimension attributed to the colonial war authorizes him to write the following year that in Tonkin, he "saw and fought the war in its only noble and fruitful form, the war that produces life" [3]. 3] In reality, he is merely expressing here in a form of his own the precepts of the "Gallieni school", that of the combined action of force and politics in areas that are perfectly free from violence. This makes it possible to undertake a gradual conquest by joining forces with the local elites in order to advance only once the territories have been pacified. These principles are theorized in Gallieni's instructions of May 1898 under the term "civilized conquest", while he also affirms that "the military work was, despite the apparent contradiction of words, a peaceful work" [4]. 4] As for the term "oil stain" - which is very difficult to find in Gallieni's writings - its function is simply to replace the image of the linear and violent progression of the column with the softer and gentler one of the circle in order to distinguish the two colonial schools of thought.

More fundamentally, as the time of conquest draws to a close, the colonials understand that the use of excessive force is no longer appropriate and that peaceful occupations of the still coveted territories must be envisaged. The reflections on "peaceful penetration", however, come less from a reflection on the art of warfare or from a re-examination of the concept of "peaceful penetration" than from a reflection on the art of war. The reflections on "peaceful penetration", however, stem less from a reflection on the art of war or from indigenous resistance which is beginning to grow than from a more refined understanding of the financial obligations inherent in any campaign. The finance law of April 1900 having imposed on every colony the need to provide for its own needs - apart from the salaries of officers and soldiers - it becomes imperative to think of the imperial occupation in economic terms. This is why the principles of "conquest" initially attached to the image of the column were transformed into "peaceful penetration", accelerating the process of "conquest". This is why the principles of "conquest" initially attached to the image of the column were transformed into "peaceful penetration", thus accelerating the reflection on the "development" of the colonies, which resulted in the creation of a Colonial Office in the Ministry of the Colonies in order to develop trade [5]. Most of the officers in Gallieni's team were imbued with these notions of economic development, which reinforced the notion of the protective state inscribed in the protectorates (Tunisia in 1882, Madagascar in 1895, Morocco in 1912).

As a good disciple of his master, Lyautey subscribed very early on to the project of "peaceful penetration of Morocco" [6], presented alternately as an Algerian police operation or as a policy of assistance to a failing central government, the Maghzen. He is all the more ready to follow his example because he wrote as early as 1900 that he saw in the communication routes, the road in particular, "no longer just the line of operation, the invasion route, but the commercial penetration route of tomorrow"[7]. At the beginning of the 20th century, not a single colonial article on the Moroccan conquest fails to praise this form of colonization by recalling how much the conquest must be carried out by means of communication. Roads, railways, ports thus became the alpha and omega of any campaign, while raising the difficult question of how to finance it. The obligation to have recourse to State loans or other public subsidies[8] nevertheless led Lyautey towards a necessity, that of having to subscribe to the adage of the colonials: "know how and make known". His economic development program thus pushed him to develop a communication strategy that became all the more necessary as a large part of his troops and equipment were withdrawn at the beginning of the Great War. Lyautey then demanded from his minister, Millerand, "compensatory means" [9], that is, the possibility of further developing trade as a response to the attrition of executives. In order to preserve his freedom of action - to respond to German propaganda and to justify the capacity of the Cherifian kingdom to support the French war effort - the Resident of Morocco decided to take the decision to withdraw his troops from the country. In the midst of the war, the Resident of Morocco then developed a dynamic commercial policy towards French industrialists, his campaigns of commercial exhibitions in Casablanca coupled with an exhibition of Moroccan art at the Pavillon de Marsan in Paris in 1917 appearing as "combat exhibitions" [10].

10] At that time, the disciple completely disassociated himself from his master Gallieni, who was in fact closer to Bugeaud's "colon-soldier" than to the industrialist and entrepreneur dear to Lyautey. By building this commercial development programme for the Cherifian kingdom against the backdrop of the struggle against the German press, the Resident was able to use all the registers of propaganda through the press with great mastery. He thus became an outstanding propagandist, as shown a few years later at the 1931 Exhibition, while at the same time establishing the use of soft power in the imperial context.

1] Commander-in-Chief of the Indo-Chinese troops from December 1892 to May 1893. See the work of Commander Chabrol, "Military operations in Tonkin" Paris, Lavauzelle, 1900, which describes the Tongan columns and their tactics.

2] The criticism of the "Asians" against the "Africans" is coupled with a rivalry between the "Africans", between those of the Southern Rivers and the Sudanese. Archinard complained about this in "Le Soudan en 1893", "Renseignements Coloniaux, supplément du Bulletin du comité de l'Afrique française", April 1895, no. 2, p. 43-46.

3] Lyautey to Louise Baignères, September 9, 1897.

4] Gallieni, "Chemins de fer, routes et sentiers à Madagascar", L'Année coloniale, 1899, p. 1-26, p. 2.

5] The process of reflection on "development" existed as early as the summer of 1898. It continued to grow until the 1920s, when the Minister of the Colonies, Albert Sarraut, gave a keynote address.

6] Camille Sabatier, "La pénétration pacifique et le Maroc", Revue Politique et Parlementaire, January 1904, no. 115, volume XXXIX, pp. 27-60.

7] Hubert Lyautey, "Du rôle colonial de l'Armée", Revue des Deux Mondes, 15 January 1900, T. CLVII, pp. 308-328, p. 315.

8] Lucien Hubert, "Les travaux publics au Maroc. Ports, roads, railways", Bulletin de la Société des études coloniales et maritimes, April

1914, p. 97-111.

9] Pierre Lyautey, *Lyautey the African. Textes et lettres de Lyautey*, tome III, 1915-1918, Paris, Plon, 1956, letter of June 11, 1915, p. 3-23.

10] Charles Mourey, "Le Maroc pendant la guerre et l'Exposition de Casablanca", *Annales de Géographie*, 1915, n°132, T. XXIII, p. 437-442.
Henry Froidevaux, "L'Exposition d'art marocain au Pavillon de Marsan : ses enseignements historiques", *Revue de l'histoire des colonies françaises*, 3rd quarter 1917 tome V, p. 331-348.

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Release date 10/07/2018
