



## The study of Lyautey's methods in Morocco. What lessons for AMO in 2018? 1/4

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les chefs de bataillon BURTIN, de LASTOURS et THELLIER

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**"What we want is to associate without absorbing, to guide without administering, to move towards progress without distorting. "This slogan, which Marshal Lyautey had made his leitmotiv in Morocco, takes on a new significance as the Army has just created an Operational Military Support Command (AMO). Indeed, the AMO consists of providing an armed force with knowledge, know-how and experience in defence and operational engagement, with a view to enabling an allied state to regain the capacity to fully carry out its regalian functions. Consequently, battalion leaders BURTIN, de LASTOURS and THELLIER are wondering whether it is possible to take up the principles that guided Lyautey's action in Morocco more than a year ago. a century ago, in order to build a realistic doctrine of the AMO, without falling into anachronism or the caricatured reproduction of a complex historical reality.**

Collapsed militarily since the Battle of Isly lost to France in 1844, the Cherifian Empire was placed under international control by the Madrid Conference in 1880. Since then, it has been subject to the competing ambitions of the European powers.

Sultan Moulay Abd-El-Hafid, who had little control over the domestic situation, ended up under siege in Fez and in 1911 requested French aid. On 30 March 1912 the Treaty of Fez was signed, establishing the French protectorate over the Cherifian Empire. Marshal Lyautey was appointed Resident General on 28 April 1912. This position, which he held until 1925, made him "depository of all the powers of the Republic in Morocco".

Upon his arrival as Resident General, Lyautey was confronted with a Morocco that was still unstable, where the southern tribes openly fought against the Sultan's authority. France sent him troops to restore order.

It appears that Lyautey's methods in Morocco today constitute a real source of inspiration in the field of AMO, in that they testify to a "Lyautey spirit" singularly oriented towards understanding, empowerment and influence of the partner.

Above all, Marshal Lyautey distinguishes himself by the amalgamation of traditional and

innovative methods that he was able to implement with real efficiency during the years he was General Resident of Morocco. However, it would be both illusory and harmful to attempt to mechanically apply the processes and means used at the time to the situations that the French armies now encounter in the context of the various operations carried out for the benefit of their allies. The fact remains that the principles identified by Lyautey, in terms of knowledge of the environment, positioning vis-à-vis the partner or even a global approach, have retained all their relevance and seem to be able to advantageously guide not only the action of AMO detachment chiefs, but also that of all the tactical leaders of tomorrow.

### **Methods that are both traditional and revolutionary for the time.**

"It is to be expected, and I believe it to be a historical truth, that in a more or less distant time, North Africa, evolved, civilized, living on its own, will detach itself from the metropolis. At that moment-and this must be the supreme goal of our policy-this separation must be painless and the eyes of the natives must continue to turn affectionately to France." Maréchal Lyautey.

Deeply marked by his different experiences in Tonkin and Madagascar, where he puts into practice Gallieni's methods, as well as in Algeria, where he is severe with regard to the methods of Marshal Lyautey has learned from these experiences, which he has applied since his appointment as General Resident of Morocco in order to rebuild the country by rallying his tribes rather than by force alone.

### **An optimal combination of troops of different origin and nature**

Having regular troops to pacify Morocco and re-establish the Sultan's authority is one of the first challenges Lyautey has to face. When he arrived, he mainly had legionnaires, colonials and Algerian troops. He therefore had to rebuild a local army to take over from these elements who had come to restore order after they had been repatriated. He thus formed auxiliary troops, some of which came from the former Cherifian army. These new units of indigenous hunters will later become regiments of spahis (cavalry) or skirmishers (infantry) Moroccan. Composed of volunteers, they are at their creation strongly supervised by French personnel (as well as Algerian and Tunisian, but in a smaller proportion). Initially as supplementary units, they were gradually regularised to the point where many of them were sent to metropolitan France when the First World War broke out.

In addition to these regular troops, the Resident General set up goums whose territorial anchorage made it possible to recruit from among the newly subdued local tribes. Created by General d'Amade on a model used in Algeria, these supplementary units have a mission that can be likened to that of an internal security force. Arming posts of varying sizes throughout the territory, they contribute directly to the extension of the area controlled by the Lyautey forces.

As "Moroccan militias" taking advantage of the spirit of the tribe and living with their families in their area of origin, they remain in contact with the dissident tribes after the departure of the regular troops. Commanded by an officer of the Indigenous Affairs - speaking the language - assisted by three lieutenants and five French NCOs, these mixed goums, comprising the equivalent of three sections of infantry and a cavalry platoon, are

at once tools of influence, sovereignty and intelligence.

In addition, in view of the need for responsive manoeuvre elements and varied capabilities, Lyautey used "mobile groups" which were set up as early as 1912 by General Poeymirau, Deputy Operations Officer of the Resident General. These mixed units were made up of three infantry battalions (one of legion, one of skirmishers and one of colonial troops) accompanied by a squadron of legion or spahis cavalry, which gave them a capacity of and supported by a few 65 mm mountain guns that allow them to have good firepower without hindering their mobility in front of the rocky ramparts of the Atlas mountains. These ancestors of the GTIA are revealed from the time of their creation, as tools particularly adapted to the submission of tribes prior to the lifting of a goum.

### **A forerunner of the "global approach".**

Convinced that the military tool is only a means to an end, the marshal practises a truly multidimensional action, entirely oriented towards supporting his political project of pacification by supporting himself and his people. Convinced that the military tool is only a means to an end, the Marshal practices a truly multidimensional action, entirely oriented towards supporting his political project of pacification by relying in particular on the corps of civilian controllers and the Indigenous Affairs, institutions that he has created by selecting individuals trained in his methods and capable of implementing them. Applying his instruction "a farm or a building site is worth a battalion", Lyautey pacified the unsettled areas at the same time as he restored the Makhzen, built modern cities near the medinas, and deep-water ports. Only this combination of military force subordinated to political action with simultaneous actions for the benefit of the people in the economic and social fields can achieve a lasting result. The period of the First World War was also marked by a clear commercial effort to boost the country's economy, while France concentrated on military issues.

Indeed, in the spirit of Lyautey, the achievement of real and lasting pacification could not be achieved without the support of the people. However, this can only be achieved temporarily by using only coercion. Thus, rather than defeating the rebellious tribes, Lyautey turns them to his advantage after a work of influence which often ends in a symbolic baroud of honour offering an honourable way out to all. This brings the double benefit of saving the troops at his disposal - because the fighting is certainly violent, but brief - and of quickly building up units ready for battle as soon as the tribes have rallied. This way of proceeding allows Lyautey to build the unity of the country on these "...Moroccans who were submissive the day before but won forever.

In this way, Marshal Lyautey took up and perfected the "oil stain" method learned from Gallieni, whose successes in Tonkin and Madagascar he was able to appreciate and continue. This method consists in "...only gaining ground forward after having completely organized the one left behind". Faced with the immensity of the task to be accomplished, he creates, as the country is pacified, chains of posts that radiate out from the border of the pacified zone. Thus consolidating the ground held, he can, on solid supports, extend the zone controlled by capillarity. Indeed, when the protection of the tribes and their development are ensured, the neighbouring populations in turn show a desire for inclusion, which makes it easier to extend the pacified zone. In Morocco, this mode of action is conducted simultaneously in several regions, resulting in the constitution of "circles", administrative districts corresponding to the various "oil stains" being extended thanks to this combination of force and construction actions.

Conversely, the purely coercive method used by Pétain to pacify the Rif in 1925 would not achieve the same results, since the use of force alone would certainly win the war in less than a year, but would not rally the populations. Thus, the Moroccan Rif, one of the regions that was not pacified by Lyautey, remained on the fringes of the country's economic development until recently, due to the acute resentment that the region kept towards France and especially towards the Sultan, locally considered as the puppet of Paris. The Rif campaign thus seems to highlight the relevance of Lyautey's methods, even if one should note a paradigm shift in that this struggle led by Abd El Krim marked for the first time a nationalist rebellion where previously they were "barouds" of isolated tribes.

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