

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

FORM APPROVED - - - OMB NO. 0704-0188

PUBLIC REPORTING BURDEN FOR THIS COLLECTION OF INFORMATION IS ESTIMATED TO AVERAGE 1 HOUR PER RESPONSE, INCLUDING THE TIME FOR REVIEWING INSTRUCTIONS, SEARCHING EXISTING DATA SOURCES, GATHERING AND MAINTAINING THE DATA NEEDED, AND COMPLETING AND REVIEWING THE COLLECTION OF INFORMATION. SEND COMMENTS REGARDING THIS BURDEN ESTIMATE OR ANY OTHER ASPECT OF THIS COLLECTION OF INFORMATION, INCLUDING SUGGESTIONS FOR REDUCING THIS BURDEN, TO WASHINGTON HEADQUARTERS SERVICES, DIRECTORATE FOR INFORMATION OPERATIONS AND REPORTS, 1215 JEFFERSON DAVIS HIGHWAY, SUITE 1204, ARLINGTON, VA 22202-4302, AND TO THE OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET, PAPERWORK REDUCTION PROJECT (0704-0188) WASHINGTON, DC 20503

1. AGENCY USE ONLY (LEAVE BLANK)		2. REPORT DATE		3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED <i>STUDENT RESEARCH PAPER</i>	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE <i>FRANCE AND THE RIF WAR: LESSONS FROM A FORGOTTEN COUNTER INSURGENCY WAR. (NORTHERN MOROCCO - APRIL 1925 - MAY 1927)</i>				5. FUNDING NUMBERS <i>N/A</i>	
6. AUTHOR(S) <i>Lieutenant-Colonel Frédéric Danigo Troupes de Marine (France)</i>					
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) <i>USMC COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE 2076 SOUTH STREET, MCCDC, QUANTICO, VA 22134-5068</i>				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER <i>NONE</i>	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) <i>SAME AS #7.</i>				10. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER: <i>NONE</i>	
11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES <i>NONE</i>					
12A. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT <i>NO RESTRICTIONS</i>				12B. DISTRIBUTION CODE <i>N/A</i>	
ABSTRACT (MAXIMUM 200 WORDS) The Rif War (Northern Morocco 1925-1927) experience is relevant to fuel the debate on contemporary counter insurgency, especially because of the numerous and obvious analogies between the Rif and the Afghan theater of operations. The Rif War was neither a "small war" among others, nor a WWI type battle; it was one of the first examples of modern irregular and asymmetric warfare. The French Army had to synthesize its colonial warfare and its conventional operational art to defeat the Riffians. Experts in guerilla tactics and able to leverage modern weapons and propaganda, Abd El Krim's partisans were both the followers of the Berber warriors and the forerunners of the modern revolutionary fighters. Therefore, the Rif War unquestionably provides useful insights for contemporary warfighters, especially with regard to the simultaneous conduct of military and political operations.					
14. SUBJECT TERMS (KEY WORDS ON WHICH TO PERFORM SEARCH) <i>Insurgency – Lyautey – Pétain – Abd El Krim - French Army – Morocco - Rif</i>				15. NUMBER OF PAGES: <i>50</i>	
				16. PRICE CODE: <i>N/A</i>	
17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT <i>UNCLASSIFIED</i>		18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE: <i>UNCLASSIFIED</i>		19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT <i>UNCLASSIFIED</i>	20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT

*United States Marine Corps
Command and Staff College
Marine Corps University
2076 South Street
Marine Corps Combat Development Command
Quantico, Virginia 22134-5068*

MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

TITLE:
FRANCE AND THE RIF WAR:
LESSONS FROM A FORGOTTEN COUNTER INSURGENCY WAR.
(NORTHERN MOROCCO - APRIL 1925 - MAY 1927)

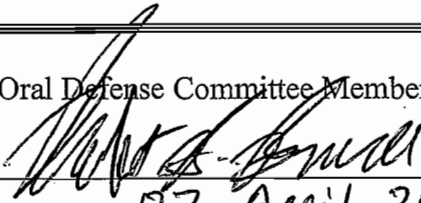
SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

AUTHOR:

Lieutenant-Colonel Frédéric Danigo
Troupes de Marine (France)


AY 09-10

Mentor and Oral Defense Committee Member: Dr. Robert B. Bruce, Associate Professor of Military History

Approved: 

Date: 07 April 2010

Oral Defense Committee Member: Dr. Bradford A. Wineman, Associate Professor of Military History

Approved: 

Date: 7 Apr 2010

DISCLAIMER

THE OPINIONS AND CONCLUSIONS EXPRESSED HEREIN ARE THOSE OF THE INDIVIDUAL STUDENT AUTHOR AND DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT THE VIEWS OF EITHER THE MARINE CORPS COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE OR ANY OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCY. REFERENCES TO THIS STUDY SHOULD INCLUDE THE FOREGOING STATEMENT.

QUOTATION FROM, ABSTRACTION FROM, OR REPRODUCTION OF ALL OR ANY PART OF THIS DOCUMENT IS PERMITTED PROVIDED PROPER ACKNOWLEDGEMENT IS MADE.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Title: France and the Rif War: lessons from a forgotten counterinsurgency war. (Northern Morocco – April 1925 – May 1927)

Author: Lieutenant-Colonel Frédéric Danigo, Troupes de Marine, France

Thesis: The Rif War was one of the first examples of modern irregular and asymmetric warfare. Expert in guerilla tactics and able to leverage modern weapons and propaganda, Abd El Krim's partisans were forerunners of the modern revolutionary fighters. The French Army had to synthesize its colonial warfare and its scientific operational art to defeat them. Therefore, the Rif War unquestionably provides useful insights for contemporary war fighters, especially with regard to the simultaneous conduct of military and political operations.

Discussion: Born in 1921 in the mountainous hinterland of the Spanish zone in Morocco, the Riffan insurgency was initially considered by Marshal Lyautey, then *résident-général*, as a purely Spanish problem. However, the insurgents' growing ambition soon threatened the French interests. When the hostilities broke out inevitably in May 1925, the French Army was almost overwhelmed by a powerful enemy, far superior to the ones it had faced so far in the Empire. The protectorate was saved *in extremis* at a heavy price. In Paris, the government who no longer trusted Lyautey entrusted Marshal Pétain with the conduct of the military operations in August 1925. The sharp differences between Lyautey, the theorist of the colonial conquest, and Pétain, the victor of Verdun and patrician of the "scientific conduct of the battle", led analysts to the commonly accepted reading that Pétain won by crushing the insurgents in a *grand style* offensive, when Lyautey failed and had to quit. However a more balanced study of facts shows that only a combination of their two methods led to the victory. Unfortunately the French Army did not draw doctrinal lessons from that experience. The impact of the Rif War was more an indirect impact on the French military culture. Even if Lyautey resigned and left Morocco, his legacy is still vivid up to the most recent French counter rebellion doctrine, which emphasizes a comprehensive approach, mixing military operations and political actions.

Conclusion: A forgotten but successful counter insurgency campaign, the Rif War provides useful insights to contemporary counter insurgents, especially with regards to the simultaneous conduct of military and political actions among the populations. Because there are numerous and obvious analogies between the Rif War and the Afghan area of operations, it seems relevant to fuel the debate on the counter insurgency tactics implemented there. The study of the Rif War supports the idea that rather than hearts and minds, the Coalition Forces should seek to win respect and trust of a society where force has always prevailed. It encourages warfighters to avoid any naïve reading of Lyautey's principles.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DISCLAIMER	i
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	ii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	iii
PREFACE.....	iv
SETTING THE SCENE: THE ORIGINS OF THE RIFFAN INSURGENCY	1
THE FRENCH COLONIAL ARMY STALEMATED: LYAUTEY’S DEFENSIVE CAMPAIGN (APRIL TO JULY 1925).....	4
THE RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF THE MILITARY SITUATION AND THE VICTORY: PÉTAINE’S OFFENSIVE CAMPAIGN (JULY 1925 TO MAY 1926).....	9
DELAYED ASSESSMENT OF A FORGOTTEN WAR.....	17
CONCLUSION.....	25
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	27
APPENDICES.....	
Appendix A – Maps	31
Appendix B – the Riffan military system.....	37
Appendix C – Extracts from French Doctrinal publications.....	38
Appendix D - Biographies.....	41
ENDNOTES	46

PREFACE

Because every insurgency is the result of a unique set of circumstances, one should not search back in history for the miracle recipe for counter insurgency. However, the study of the past helps to understand the present. The Rif War experience is relevant to fuel the debate on contemporary counter insurgency, especially because of the numerous and obvious analogies between the Rif and the Afghan theater of operations, a wild mountainous terrain, a fiercely independent Muslim population, and a complex tribal organization.

Taking place between the two world conflicts, the Rif War is to some extent a forgotten war. Nevertheless, this conflict constitutes a notable exception in French military history. Within one year (between May 1925 and May 1926) the French government, even though it was weakened by the aftermaths of WWI, managed to mobilize the necessary means and to create the political conditions to defeat the powerful insurrection led by Abd El Krim in the north of Morocco.

The Rif War was neither a “small war” among others, nor a WWI type battle; it was one of the first examples of modern irregular and asymmetric warfare. The French Army had to synthesize its colonial warfare and its scientific operational art to defeat the Riffans. Experts in guerrilla tactics and able to leverage modern weapons and propaganda, Abd El Krim’s partisans were both the followers of the Berber warriors and the forerunners of the modern revolutionary fighters. Therefore, the Rif War unquestionably provides useful insights for contemporary warfighters, especially with regard to the simultaneous conduct of military and political operations.

My personal interest for that campaign dates back from the time I was preparing for the exam to enter the French Military Academy. I was then a student in a military high school named

after Second-Lieutenant Pol Lapeyre, one of the heroes of the Rif War. All the students learned by heart the posthumous citation describing his decision to blow up himself, the remainder of his platoon, and his post, rather than surrender, in Beni Derkoul on June 25, 1925. But, to be honest, my knowledge of the general circumstances of the campaign was poor.

In 2008, the publication of the book, *la guerre du Rif* by Vincent Courcelle-Labrousse and Nicolas Marmié, aroused my curiosity. This book provided a comprehensive coverage of the crisis, but I was quite upset by the treatment of the military aspect, regarding in particular the emblematic episode of the operations conducted by the French Army. In 1925, Marshal Hubert Lyautey, the theorist of the progressive colonial conquest was replaced by Marshal Philippe Pétain, the victor of Verdun and patrician of the “scientific conduct of the battle.” The sharp differences between the two Marshals, with regard to their personalities, their political ideas, and their military backgrounds, led contemporary analysts to consider that Pétain simply won by crushing the insurgents in a *grand style* offensive, when Lyautey failed and had to quit.

Thus, I decided to write a campaign analysis paper on the role played by Pétain’s operational art in the French victory. My conclusion was that it was crucial but not sufficient to win, and that “a complementary patient and skillful application of colonial methods by Lyautey’s disciples was also necessary to ensure the success of what appears to be a modern counter insurgency campaign.”¹

I take advantage of that research paper to elaborate on my initial conclusion and to answer the question: “does the study of the Rif War provide a modern army with lessons and insights applicable to today’s hybrid challenges?”

Available secondary sources on the Rif War are limited, both in English and French. I found precious information in books dealing with the Moroccan history and French colonial poli-

tics, along with biographies of the key players. I also used primary sources, memoirs and articles written by some protagonists shortly after the campaign. Quite understandably, they present the risk of being driven by the desire of their authors to justify their actions. I could not study the French military archives, but had fruitful mail exchanges with Major Jan Pascal who did. I thank him for his help.

Finally, I also would like to gratefully acknowledge that I am indebted to my mentor Doctor Robert B. Bruce, for his interest in my work and his critical advice; to Doctor Patrice Scanlon, Mrs. Andrea L. Hamlen, and Mrs. Kathleen Gallaher from the Leadership Communication Skills Center, who had the patience to correct my English and to make it intelligible; and of course to my wife Laure and our five children, who let me take on already limited family time to write this paper.

SETTING THE SCENE: THE ORIGINS OF THE RIFFAN INSURGENCY

In 1912, two colonial powers – France and Spain – signed an agreement to share Morocco (Appendix A1); the city of Tangiers remaining an international zone. By 1920, the situations in French and Spanish Morocco had evolved quite differently.

On the French side, Marshal Lyautey had been entrusted with the rule of the Protectorate since its creation in 1912. In Morocco, the unorthodox colonial officer had found the right place to implement the concepts he had developed during his career in Tonkin and Madagascar. The corner stone of the Lyautean protectorate was the respect of the authority of the Sultan Moulay Youssef, and of the Muslim identity of the country.² Applying his theory of progressive conquest, the now famous oil stain theory, Lyautey managed to pacify two thirds of the French zone and placed it under the authority of the Sultan. In the 1920s, the *bled Maghzen* was “expected to gradually transfer from a military regime to a civilian administration.”³

Unlike the French protectorate, most of the Spanish zone belonged to the *bled siba*, the land of dissidence. As stated by Moshe Gershovich, “in terms of colonial zeal Spain differed considerably from France.”⁴ There was no real will to develop the colony and more importantly no shared vision of the methods to do it. The Rif region that constituted the heartland of the Spanish colony had not seen any kind of colonial penetration.

The Rif, a wild mountainous quadrilateral area, roughly 300 km long and 100 wide, stretching from Tangiers to the West, to the Moulaya Valley to the East, and from the Mediterranean shore to the North, to the Ouergha valley to the South (Appendix A2), constituted the impregnable fortress of fiercely independent Berber Tribes. Shortly after the war, Lieutenant-Colonel de Boisboissel described the Berber people as:

By nature eager for independence and for liberty, immediately in defense against the foreigner and even against the neighbor, by birth refractory to any kind of authority,

except the ruthless constraint imposed upon his hard life by a wild nature that protects him as much as it oppresses him.⁵

Centuries of independence had prevented the fragmented Berber tribes to fight efficiently against the Spanish, until one man was able to temporarily unite them. The Riffan insurgency was born by the will and ability of Abd El Krim, the charismatic tribal leader of the Beni Ouriaghel tribe. His family was closely linked to the Spanish, and Abd El Krim was educated in Spanish schools, becoming a civil servant of the colonial administration. However, after his father's death around 1920, he radicalized his political views and turned against his former masters.⁶

In 1921, General Silvestre, a firm supporter of a purely military solution, led a Spanish operation designed to crush the rebellion, but that ended up as a major political and military disaster. On July 17, Abd El Krim and his partisans managed to piecemeal and destroy the entire Spanish column while it was retreating from Anual, where it had been surrounded. The rout was as much the result of the Riffans' guerrilla tactics, as the consequence of the incompetent Spanish leadership.⁷ The Riffans killed from 12,000 to 19,000 Spanish and took 1,000 prisoners. They also captured 100 guns, 400 machine guns, and 20,000 rifles.⁸ Those weapons constituted the basis for the equipment of a permanent Riffan army, which Abd El Krim later completed with modern weapons bought with the ransoms given by the Spanish for their prisoners.

From that initial victory, Abd El Krim's prestige and ambition steadily grew. Using both persuasion and force, he "created his own kingdom." He managed to persuade most of the Riffans to join the insurgency, but submitted some tribes, by taking hostages and destroying crops, when necessary. Finally, the Riffan regulars infiltrated and supervised the tribes whose fidelity seemed dubious.⁹

Following his military success, Abd El Krim proclaimed the Riffan Republic in February 1922 and tried to obtain international recognition. He gained the French Communist Party's

sympathy, and the support of many French artists and intellectuals.¹⁰ In Spain, along with internal problems, the dramatic situation of Morocco was one of the catalysts to the military coup that gave power to general Primo de Rivera in 1923.

While the Spanish were dealing with the powerful Riffan insurgency, France did not react and observed with mixed feelings the Abd El Krim's rise. There was no mutual support between the two colonial powers at that time due to their poor diplomatic relationships.¹¹ Marshal Lyautey's personal Spanish-phobia matched the French official position. The *résident-général* could not hide his disdain for the Spanish colonial authorities, mostly because he firmly believed in the superiority of his colonization model, according to Guy Pedroncini. Moreover, he thought that France's intervention would likely incite a general insurrection in the northern part of Morocco. His intent was to contain the problem strictly within the Spanish area of responsibility.¹² Thus, Lyautey's policy was "intentionally ambiguous," even Machiavellian, according to Gershovich.¹³

The absence of French reaction was also driven by the lack of troops under Lyautey's command and his operational focus on Southern Morocco, the useful Morocco. Since 1921, the French government had drastically downsized the troops in Morocco. From 91,000 men in 1921, the troops were reduced to 63,000 in 1923 and 59,000 (of whom only 20,000 French) in 1924.¹⁴

In 1924, after another dramatic defeat in Chechaouen (10,000 men killed or missing in action), the Spanish decided to withdraw from the Rif and to concentrate their efforts around Ceuta, Tetouan and Mellila.¹⁵ Thus, Abd El Krim was able to devote troops to the southern part of the Rif, where he aimed at extending his influence on the tribes in contact with the French.¹⁶

In April 1924, Abd El Krim's partisans appeared among tribes on the Northern bank of the Ouergha, a river flowing 35 km south of the French-Spanish border (Appendix A1). There, Riffan emissaries conducted an intense proselytism among the Beni Zeroual tribes to gain influence

in a fertile region whose foodstuffs resources were vital for the insurgency. Marshal Lyautey launched a police operation across the Ouergha and established a line of 45 posts on high grounds (Appendix A3).¹⁷ At the strategic level, the line's purpose, completed by three strong points in Ouezzane, Fez, and Taza, was to cover the axis Fez-Taza-Oudja going to Algeria.¹⁸

For one year, Lyautey had observed with anxiety the growing Riffan threat and had tried to convince the French government that Abd El Krim was dangerous, and that reinforcements were urgently needed. In February 1924, Lyautey sent letters to Paris describing "the serious and above all complex situation," he was now facing. Abd El Krim, he warned, "seem[ed] to wish to play the part of Mustapha Kemal", emphasizing the danger of an independent Muslim state close to the French colonies. Lyautey believed that a confrontation with the Riffan was inevitable.¹⁹

On 21 December 1924, Lyautey exposed his growing concerns in a "comprehensive report on the political and military situation."²⁰ He proposed to conduct an intense political action to keep the Beni Zeroual tribes under the French influence. He also requested reinforcements which, he believed were needed to stop a Riffan attack, which he predicted, would start by the end of March 1925. However, France was slow to move. Morocco was far away and the agitation of some Moroccan tribes seemed of no interest to most of the politicians.

LYAUTEY'S DEFENSIVE CAMPAIGN (APRIL TO JULY 1925)

On 12 April, Abd El Krim took the initiative. The Riffans launched their attack against the Beni Zeroual, and subdued them in less than one week. The Riffans then turned their attack towards the line of French posts. In the meantime, the others tribes in the area, recently allied with the French were either convinced or compelled to join the insurgency and to harass the French troops. The posts were quickly surrounded and cut off from support.

The Riffan assault surprised the French. Even if the attack was not a surprise in itself, the fighting spirit and the tactical capabilities of the Riffan were poorly anticipated. The French were

indeed facing a powerful and disciplined military organization. Leveraging the qualities of the Riffan warriors, tactical mobility and marksmanship, the insurgents also used guns and machine guns to besiege the posts. They launched coordinated attacks after discrete infiltration, and benefited from the technical expertise of European and North African deserters from the Spanish troops.²¹ The Rif War started for the French as an almost symmetric war, in terms of equipment, tactics and manpower. As stated by Usborne, “this front of four hundred kilometers was now threatened by a foe far more formidable than any France had yet to contend with, one who could enforce discipline, had modern equipment, and made use of the very methods of penetration which Lyautey had invented.”²²

Despite his numerous requests, Lyautey did not receive any of the reinforcements he needed. To face the initial strike, Lyautey had limited resources; not more than 10 infantry battalions and a total of roughly 25,000 men were at his disposal. The deployment of reinforcements was delayed because of the change of government in France. The *Cartel des Gauches*, a tactical alliance of Radicals and socialists, had just won the elections in May 1924, and the events in the Rif were not their main focus.²³ Thus, the first wave of reinforcements, five battalions garrisoned in Algeria, had to wait for presidential agreement prior to being deployed. They arrived on April 23 and were ready to fight on April 30. That delay would have dramatic consequences.

With the arrival of the first reinforcements, the chain of command was reorganized. The northern front was divided into three sectors, each under the responsibility of a mobile group.²⁴ This organization corresponded to the pragmatic and empirical model developed by the “Colonial School” in Morocco after years of pacification. It was the result of an effort to synthesize the operational experience, but not a purely doctrinal organization.²⁵ The mobile groups were *ad hoc* combined arms units. In Morocco, the most remarkable characteristic of the mobile groups was

the full integration of aviation assets in the combined arms maneuver.²⁶ From May to June, the three mobile groups conducted operations of relief of the posts during which the 37th Aviation Regiment, under Colonel Armengaud's command, played a key role to support the troops on the ground and to contain the advance of the insurgents. Thanks to his mobility, the aviation constituted the only reserve that, according to Lyautey, saved the situation.²⁷

The mobile columns, as well as the defenders of the posts, fought to the limits of the human resistance, and were exhausted by fierce close-fighting. However, unable to hold the ground, Lyautey decided on 15 May, to evacuate the most exposed posts and to set a new line of defense with Tafrant and Taounet as the two strong points (Appendix A4).

In July, Abd El Krim shifted the bulk of his attack to the eastern sector in order to cut the Fez – Taza – Oudja road. His intent was to break the French encirclement of the “Taza's stain” and to gain leadership over the dissident tribes.²⁸ Simultaneously, the Tsoul and the Branes, two tribes so far under French influence joined the insurgency. The situation was then at its worst, because Abd El Krim was threatening not only Morocco but also Algeria. A breakthrough would have meant the rise of a general insurrection, and would have threatened the whole Empire in Maghreb. The evacuation of Taza was planned by the staff, but on 3 July, Lyautey made the key decision to hold the city in order to cover Fez. Thanks to the heroism of the troops, Taza was saved *in extremis*. But the situation was still precarious and Lyautey was not able to take the initiative. In Taza, Lyautey had committed his last two reserve battalions.

The number of troops was still insufficient and Lyautey kept urging the government to send battalions at full combat strength instead of companies or individual replacements. The troops were also exhausted by the rough terrain and the extreme weather conditions. They had sustained heavy losses; after three months of campaign the casualties amounted to 2,640 killed in action,

7,559 wounded in action, and 1,220 missing in action, hence a total of 11,419 casualties.²⁹

Moreover, the scattering of the units on an extended front, the precariousness of their communications with their adjacent units and the rear area rendered difficult the coordination of efforts by the command. As stated by Captain Loustau-Lacau, the unremitting effort to seal the frontline and to thwart the Riffan infiltrations ruined the French economy of force. Lyautey was unable to recreate a theater reserve because all the reinforcements were immediately absorbed in the battle. The units were disorganized and their tactical bonds were severed; some battalions had their companies scattered all across the frontline. The negative impact on the morale of the troops was also a great concern, all the more so as most of the units were composed of Muslim African soldiers, sensitive to Abd El Krim's propaganda, and who needed to be commanded by experienced leaders.³⁰

In addition to the operational difficulties, Lyautey had to face a difficult political situation and lost the government's trust. His personal relationships with Paul Painlevé, premier and minister of war, and Aristide Briand, minister of foreign affairs, had been difficult since WWI.³¹ More generally, most of the left-wing politicians had not much sympathy for him, because he was a monarchist and a traditional Catholic. Moreover, they considered his position of *résident-général*, allowing him to retain both political and military powers, as un-republican. According to his *aide-de-camp*, "it was a second front opening in Paris for Lyautey and for Morocco!"³²

The political climate in France in the aftermaths of WWI was not favorable to a military intervention. As stated by Guy Pedroncini, Painlevé had a narrow space of maneuver. He was constrained by the general situation, parliament, and public opinion.³³ The French Communist Party leveraged the growing opposition to the war in order to weaken the government. In addition to

the outrageous declaration of communist representatives like Jacques Dorriot, some intellectuals, like the *Surréalistes* led by Andre Breton developed an aggressive antimilitarism.³⁴

Furthermore, Lyautey's dispatches were contradictory in particular with regard to the possibility of negotiating a truce with Abd El Krim. As highlighted by Courcelle Labrousse, Lyautey's train of thought, usually clear and constant, became unintelligible for his Parisian interlocutors.³⁵ In his correspondence Lyautey fluctuated between the recognition of Riffan independence, the pragmatic cooperation with Spain that he had so far disdained, and the request for supplies of hyperite artillery shells. As explained by Gershovich: "This duality of his approach puzzled his superiors and led to a serious erosion of his credibility."³⁶ The decline of Lyautey's prestige became more and more obvious, and Painlevé decided to separate military and civilian powers in Morocco, giving General Naulin supreme authority over military operations on 24 July 1925.

Simultaneously, numerous criticisms also arose within the military establishment.³⁷ The disorganization of the troops, induced by the defensive operations in May-June 1925, was a major concern of the General Staff in Paris. In a report on the moral state of the army, one of its officers, Captain Mast noted:

One has, until now, systematically destroyed in Morocco, the tactical links and the regimental organization in use in France, the result in the frontline units is a disorder which is urgent to stop as soon as possible [...] this defective organization had for consequence a considerable exhaustion of the troops and the animals and eventually allowed to reach only poor results.³⁸

As analyzed by Courcelle-Labrousse, the freedom of speech of that captain, openly criticizing the conduct of war, probably reflects the atmosphere in the high spheres of the French Army.

On 12 June, the confusion was such that Painlevé decided to fly to Morocco in order to personally assess the situation. There, he met with Lyautey who insisted on the need for more troops and proposed a coordinated diplomatic and military strategy with Spain. Visiting the front, Painlevé argued that he had no reinforcements available.³⁹ He was now personally con-

vinced of the gravity of the situation. Nevertheless, the decision to devote all the necessary means to reestablish the military situation was a political challenge because of the growing opposition to the war, and because it had consequences on the general mobilization plan and on the strategic cover of the Rhine.⁴⁰

PÉTAIN'S OFFENSIVE CAMPAIGN (JULY 1925 TO MAY 1926).

The difficult political and military situation described above led to the personal involvement of Marshal Pétain in the Rif crisis. Indeed, Painlevé needed the moral authority of Pétain to support the decision to send more troops. Pétain was then the most influential officer in the French Army. He was both vice president of the *conseil supérieur de guerre* and general inspector of the Army. He also had an immense personal prestige as the victor of Verdun and was considered as a republican general. His authority was unquestionable. However, Pétain had no colonial experience and no “sentimental longings for imperial grandeur.”⁴¹ He was initially reluctant to commit himself in an adventure that could put his prestige at risk.⁴² Pétain eventually accepted to assess the situation in Morocco. On 17 July 1925, he landed in Casablanca to conduct a mission described in deliberately vague terms by Painlevé in order not to offend Lyautey.⁴³

Lyautey initially considered that Pétain's involvement was the sign of the interest of the government, but the visit of the front turned quickly into an inquiry. Pétain's irony and grating remarks showed his deep disagreement with the colonial methods in use on the theater of operations. For example, Pétain is said to have declared to a colonial officer describing the situation in his sector: “you are talking to me about going in that region because it is a good field for political action; at war, I only know shooting fields.” True or not, those words were repeated in all the officer messes in Morocco.⁴⁴

However, Pétain immediately understood the urgency of the situation. He discovered a situation quite similar to the one he had to deal with in 1917, and he applied the same recipe. The troops were exhausted and somehow demoralized by a difficult campaign. His first orders focused on the restoration of their moral: awards of the *Croix de Guerre*, improvement of the quality of the meals, free tobacco and postal services.

In his first mail to Paris he laconically stated: “We are at war,” and asked the government not to take any decision before his return to France.⁴⁵ Pétain had already in mind the outlines of a campaign plan. Contrarily to the subtleties of Lyautey’s Moroccan politics, he “saw the crisis in Northern Morocco and its solution in strict military terms,” and was convinced that the victory over Abd El Krim relied on a full cooperation with Spain.⁴⁶ Thus, his most immediate concern was to put the finishing touches to the prospect of a military cooperation with the Spanish authorities. On 26 July, “he personally met Primo de Rivera, the Spanish dictator, and agreed upon the terms of a major combined operation, giving concrete expression to an intense diplomatic activity.”⁴⁷ The improvement of the relationships with Spain was the first step of a major shift in France’s politics towards the Moroccan crisis.

Back in France on 27 July, Pétain wrote a report acknowledging that: “the brutal fact is that we were unexpectedly attacked by the most powerful and the best armed enemy that we have ever met with in our colonial campaigns.”⁴⁸ This assessment confirmed Painlevé in his own view, that a surge in Morocco was urgently needed and led to his decision to take all the necessary measures to save the protectorate.

Thanks to Pétain’s visit, the Rif turned from a peripheral crisis to a national priority.⁴⁹ Taking advantage of the end of the parliamentary session, Painlevé authorized the deployment of all the reinforcements deemed appropriate by the General Staff. Pétain ordered the organization

of a massive reinforcement plan and the deployment of the French army's most modern equipment, including FT 17 tanks, armored patrol cars and 155mm heavy artillery. He also significantly increased the number of aviation squadrons, from six in April to twenty in September 1925. By the end of August the expeditionary forces amounted to more than 142,000 men and 20,000 irregular *goumiers*.

Disapproving of the "Moroccan way of war," Pétain also ordered the reorganization of the chain of command in accordance with the French WWI type doctrine. General Naulin was entrusted with the difficult task to organize the deployment of the reinforcements and the simultaneous consolidation of the front line (Appendix A6).⁵⁰ The timelines were extremely constrained since there were only ten weeks left, before the beginning of the rain season.

Naulin's leadership was effective because he, and his staff, had experience in large scale operations, and because he was wise enough to seek advice from experienced colonial officers. Thus, after a series of successful local operations to consolidate the front, he developed a campaign plan under Lyautey's supervision. The purpose of the operation was limited to the conquest of the territories lost in April 1925, and relied on the disorganization rather than the destruction of Abd El Krim's military organization. Since they could not foresee the results of the diplomatic efforts towards the Spanish, Lyautey and Naulin could not envision a direct attack on Abd El Krim's sanctuary. Once the Beni Zeroual tribal area was reoccupied, no other operations were planned for 1926. The Lyautey-Naulin concept of operation, inspired by the oil stain theory, privileging an indirect approach and a limited goal was "in the pure Lyauteyan orthodoxy," as stated by Courcelle-Labrousse."⁵¹

With the reinforcements, Lyautey thought that he could finally take the initiative, but that would not be the case. Pétain had convinced the government that he was the only one who could

conduct a major offensive operation, and Painlevé appointed him director of military operations on 12 August.⁵² Upon his arrival, Pétain rebuked the Lyautey-Naulin plan, because he considered that the objectives were too limited in relation to the reinforcements granted by the government. Furthermore, he disagreed with their essentially political nature. Patrician of the scientific conduct of the battle, he thought that the insurgency had to be destroyed methodically by an attack directed against geographic objectives in the heart of its sanctuary. He wanted a regular and articulated advance of conventional divisions supported by modern artillery, airplanes, and tanks. In doing so he broke with Bugeaud's and Lyautey's methods⁵³

Pétain's intent was to coordinate the French counter attack with the Spanish, who had planned a large amphibious operation at Al Hoceima Bay (Appendix A2).⁵⁴ He thought that such a coordinated attack from the north and the south would allow constituting a continuous frontline covering the French Morocco and Algeria in a first phase, and would provide a base of departure for a major spring operation to crush the insurgency after the inevitable wintering of the troops. He described the operational objectives of the initial attack as follows:

To conquer the entry points opening the access to the heart of the Rif; doing so, to constitute a possible base of departure for future operations in that region and to open possibilities of cooperation with the Spanish forces in the sector of Melilla; thus to create a threat likely to strike a severe and lasting blow at Abdelkrim's prestige."⁵⁵

The timeline for the operation was extremely constrained and Pétain was fully aware that the classical military operations would stop once the rain had started. In his planning guidance, he also ordered to plan the use of "political actions" during the winter 1925-1926. Typical of the Lyautean colonial warfare, the "political action" encompassed the operations of indigenous troops "capable by nature of conducting Moroccan guerrilla warfare, a weapon that was worth using to extend the effort that the regular troops could no longer make;" and also the fight against enemy propaganda that, as stated by captain Loustaunau-Lacau:

Requires specific, more skilful, nuanced, and delicate ways of action; here one must fight on the field of the morale forces, reach not only the bodies and the material goods, but strike the minds. This is what is to be called political action. The method is based on an in-depth knowledge of the country and of its inhabitants, of its administrative organization, and of its influential peoples. [...] This action is the daily bread of the Intelligence Service; pushed to various degrees, it aims in every occasion at dismantling the morale strengths of the adversary.⁵⁶

Initially dubious of the relevance of such methods, Pétain had been wise enough to incorporate the officers of the *Bureaux Arabes*, in the second bureaus of each of the seven divisions of the northern front.⁵⁷ When Lyautey had planned a comprehensive political-military campaign, Pétain had conceived a sequential plan where political action was used in support, when military actions were no longer possible.

The change of command and the subsequent shift at the operational level of war inevitably created frictions between the colonial and the metropolitan officers. Many historians focused their attention on the sharp contrasts between the personalities of Marshal Lyautey and Pétain as a symbol of the rivalry of two schools of thought. It seems that their alleged personal rivalry was amplified by their respective staffs, who were truly convinced that their general was the only one able to gain victory.⁵⁸

Lyautey himself considered the intervention of the *Métropole* in “his” protectorate as an unacceptable outrage. He also felt betrayed since “the sudden influx of men and materials fed [his] suspicions that he had been intentionally denied aid in an effort to damage his reputation and his authority.”⁵⁹ Deeply hurt, Marshal Lyautey officially resigned on 25 September. The official reason was for health concerns, but Lyautey bitterly wrote in a letter to Briand that he fully disagreed with the methods implemented in Morocco. He described them as “heavy, slow, inappropriate for the country and very costly for the French budget,” and reiterated his own conception of a more intense use of the political action, simultaneous to the military operations.⁶⁰

Pétain had launched his *grand style* offensive even before the departure of Lyautey. General Naulin's staff had devoted considerable work to prepare the attack, and to face the logistical challenge of organizing the frontline for a WWI style offensive campaign (Appendix A5).⁶¹ French operations started on 11 September after the Spanish landed at Alhucemas Bay.

Despite Pétain's assumption, the coordination with the Spanish forces was far from easy. Once ashore, the intent of the Spanish forces was to secure the enclave of Mellila rather than join the French forces. Part of the French plan was thus useless. After one month of methodical campaign, "the entry points of the Rif were seized and secured according to the plan, but the junction with the Spanish was more symbolic than operationally relevant."⁶² Since the rain impeded all logistical resupplies and operational communications, he announced the closure of active military operations and the wintering of the troops on 16 October. The methodical conventional attack was successful insofar as it allowed the French to surround the Riffans in their mountainous sanctuary, and impressed the local population by its overwhelming air and ground fire power. As planned by Pétain, it was a first phase that created the conditions for subsequent operations, not the decisive phase of the campaign.

Contrarily to the most commonly accepted reading of the events that emphasizes the immediate and unquestionable success of the attack, a balanced study of facts shows that "the *grand style* offensives conducted by Marshal Pétain were crucial, but not sufficient to gain victory."⁶³ A complementary patient and skillful application of colonial methods by Lyautey's disciples was also necessary to ensure the success of what appears to be a modern counter insurgency campaign."⁶⁴ The first French offensive indeed revealed the asymmetric nature of the Rif War, and the subsequent limitations of WWI operational art. The insurgents, who had broken

contact during the attack, reappeared to harass the isolated troops when the rain started and limited the effectiveness of the European units and of their heavy equipment.

The main danger in October 1925 was to abandon the conquered terrain to more mobile insurgents and to let them regain control of the tribes. As explained by Loustaunau-Lacau, “the halt of the military operations, at the very moment when they started to bear fruits, could seriously jeopardize the results gained.”⁶⁵

However, all operational activities did not stop during the wintering period. Both on the ground and in the air, the French Forces remained active. While most of the conventional units were devoted to the construction of roads and the logistic preparation of the spring offensive, the Colonial Army, its intelligence officers and its indigenous troops conducted less visible, but important operations. In accordance with the planning, an intense political action resumed. The 2nd bureau conducted numerous engagements with key tribal leaders in order to persuade them that, if they quit the insurgency, the irregular troops commanded by French officers, would protect them against any retaliation from the Riffans. Having witnessed the overwhelming fire power of French military troops, numerous tribes thought that Abd El Krim’s defeat in the next spring was inevitable. Thus, they offered their submission in exchange of protection by the French. The efficient support provided by the aviation during the winter is worth mentioning. As soon as the weather permitted it, the aviation provided close air support to the indigenous troops and put the insurgents under pressure from the sky by regular bombing or strafing. The pilots also conducted air reconnaissance and photographic missions to study in depth the Riffan network of trenches and strong points, in preparation for the next offensive.⁶⁶

Unquestionably the combined actions of small indigenous units and key leader engagement by the Intelligence officer, both supported by an innovative use of aviation, had a significant im-

pact on the network of tribes that Abd El Krim had patiently and skillfully set up by persuasion and terror. The rebel leader himself recognized after his surrender the political action's pivotal role in his defeat.⁶⁷ However, the submission of the tribes would not have happened without the massive operation which set up the conditions for the political action.⁶⁸ The events had somehow reconciled the two marshals' schools of thought and led the French staff to a synthesis of both colonial and conventional warfare.

The unexpected results of the political action did not divert Marshal Pétain from his initial objective to destroy Abd El Krim's military power. In February, he agreed with Primo de Rivera upon the outlines of a powerful combined French-Spanish attack against the heart of the Rif. Pétain had no incentive to take a moderate approach, unlike Théodore Steeg, the new civilian *resident-général*, a firm supporter of political action who considered that:

The current situation makes *grand style* military operations useless. To consider a spring offensive would be dangerous and false. Dangerous, because of the emotion that may result of it in the *Métropole*. False, because the issue is no longer to reduce organized groups, yet to organize an almost submitted area.⁶⁹

Under pressure, Abd El Krim had no other alternative than to propose a bid for peace, which would have allowed some kind of recognition of his Riffan Republic. Sure of their victory, both the French and the Spanish sabotaged the peace conference organized in Oudja with last-minute demands.⁷⁰

The campaign resumed on 7 May, with a relentless, well coordinated, air-ground offensive. The network of alliances set-up by Abd El Krim, and shaken by the French political action during the winter quickly collapsed. "Assessing that he had no more support from the tribes, the rebel leader asked for the cessations of the fights and surrendered to the French forces on 27 May."⁷¹ He knew that he would be well treated by the French. Whereas the Spanish considered

him a criminal, the French considered him *de facto* a political prisoner and exiled him, and his family, on the island of La Réunion, a French territory in the Indian Ocean.

Subsequent operations of stabilization were conducted in the Rif to eradicate the last resistance pockets and more importantly to show that the presence of the French and Spanish troops was to last. According to Steeg, “we have gained the submission by force; we now have to gain the peace by organization.” In his view, the surrender of the rebel leader implied the return to the best practices of the Lyautean protectorate.⁷²

DELAYED ASSESSMENT OF A FORGOTTEN WAR.

Although the French victory in the Rif was due to its significant capacity for adaptation, it did not have much impact on French doctrine. As stated by Major Jan Pascal, the Rif War’s main effect on the French Army was to weaken a certain number of colonial and metropolitan certainties by proving, to the ones, that the enemy could acquire a semblance of technological parity, reconcilable with guerilla tactics; to the others, that European warfare was not fully exportable to an overseas theater of operations. Hence it constituted an “original episode of synthesis that would have been worth theorizing to open onto doctrinal evolutions.” Unfortunately, the German obsession killed any vague desire to do so.⁷³ In addition to that obvious strategic reason, others factors may help understanding why the French Army forgot the Rif War.

First, the general and political atmosphere in France did not favor a sound exploitation of the lessons learned. Describing the feelings of Pétain after the war, Robert Bruce writes that he “was disturbed by what he saw when he returned to Paris. Much to his disgust, he learned that, rather than celebrating the French victory, leftist members of the Chamber of Deputies had condemned the war and the French army’s participation in it.”⁷⁴

It is also worth noting, that if it is easy today to emphasize the main characteristics of asymmetric warfare and insurgency in the Rif campaign, none of those concepts had been developed at that time. In the minds of most of the actors of the Rif War, the French colonies were to last forever; only Lyautey and a few others understood that the young Moroccan elites were getting frustrated. Thus, most of the studies written shortly after the operations, stressed the adaptations at the tactical level of war, but did not provide critical thinking on the nature of the war. For example, in their article, Captains Loustaunau-Lacau and Montblanc argued that: “if the particular processes of military art have infinity of varieties, its general rules are forever.” However they somehow have the intuition that the Rif War was a “pivot war” when they wrote that “by his extent, the Moroccan adventure opened the era of a series of clashes of civilization, which are not close to stop and which would have bloody manifestations.”⁷⁵

The notable exception is the attempt by Colonel Armengaud, chief of the 37th Aviation Regiment, to adapt the lessons learned in Morocco to the doctrine of the nascent French air power. During the war, the aviation played a dual role. In addition to the tactical combined arms support, it played a new operational role of psychological constraint and of direct attrition of the economic potential of the Rif.⁷⁶ Armengaud published an essay in 1928 in which he built on his operational experience to think of the aviation’s role in a future European war, and advocated a flexible and independent arm that tailored combat power to the needs of the theater.⁷⁷ The contribution of aviation was much appreciated during the Rif campaign. Aviation’s essential capacities of quick reaction, adaptability, and mobility convinced many army officers to change their minds about “the new arm,” and contributed to build bounds of mutual respect between the pilots and the ground troops. Armengaud’s proposals contributed to the development of an autonomous French Air Force’s doctrine.

Many veterans of the campaign experienced some bitterness when they realized that their remarkable work would not be remembered as it should. Marshal Juin noted in his memoirs: “For too long, one has wanted to hide the persevering, methodical, always painful, sometimes heroic, work of the French Army in Morocco [...] We seemed ashamed of our own success.”⁷⁸

However, the Rif War certainly had an indirect impact on the French military culture. After WWI, it provided an original operational experience to a generation of officers. It is interesting to note that some of them later had a significant influence on the French Army. In addition to Marshal Lyautey and Pétain, three “Marshals to be” took part in the fighting: the then captains Alphonse Juin, Jean de Lattre de Tassigny, and Lieutenant Philippe de Hautecloque. In his study Three Marshals of France, Leadership after Trauma, Anthony Clayton emphasizes the importance of their Moroccan experience in their career. He stresses the fact that Morocco taught all three many lessons in warfare, in particular with regard to flexibility and sense of improvisation. Moreover he demonstrates that Marshal Lyautey exercised a profound influence on Juin and de Lattre, because of their direct and close relationships. Facing new insurgencies in Indochina and Algeria, de Lattre and Juin certainly used their Moroccan experience.

Then Captain de Lattre was among the talented junior officers who criticized the methods implemented by Pétain. Assigned to Morocco in 1921, he had already gained experience in fighting against dissident tribes. At the outbreak of the Rif War, he was chief of staff of the military region of Taza. He considered that Pétain had been refighting the Great War, and that the overreliance on technology was detrimental to the speed, mobility and training that he considered being the paramount of colonial warfare.⁷⁹ Wounded in action, he wrote a study on Morocco during his convalescence, in which he stated that: “by implementing such a materialistic theory of war

against an enemy having such disproportionate means, one commits one of those psychological mistakes that have to be paid sooner or later.”⁸⁰

Assigned as Commander in Chief in Indochina in 1950 and fighting Giap’s divisions in Tonkin, Marshal de Lattre conducted conventional operations where, according to Clayton: “firepower and mobility were developed versions of the traditional *Armée d’Afrique* tactics that de Lattre had learnt in Morocco in the 1920s.”⁸¹ Clayton even draws a parallel between de Lattre’s decision to hold the Tonkin region, against the advices of many staff officers, with Lyautey’s capital decision to hold Taza in 1925.⁸²

De Lattre took also into account the revolutionary character of the war, and used unconventional methods similar to those observed in Morocco. He set up a program of “*jaunissement*” (yellowing) in order to create Vietnamese combat units with French cadres. In 1951, he ordered the creation of the *Groupement des Commando Mixtes Aéroportés* (GCMA – Composite Airborne Commando Group) in order to wage a counter insurgency war along the logistic routes of the Viet Minh in Northern Indochina. He also encouraged and publicized the action of atypical counter guerrilla units, such as the “Black Tigers” of the *Adjudant-Chef* Vandenberghe, a unit composed of former Viet Minh. By his tactical role and its importance as a morale booster for the troops, the epic of this unit recalls that of the *Spahis* of Lieutenant de Bournazel, one of the most famous heroes of the winter 1925. Finally, in his dealings with the local elite, he followed the example of Lyautey’s tact and respect, and considered the economic development of the colony as another counter insurgency tool.⁸³

Captain Juin was the chief of staff of the Central sector under the command of General Colombat. He then commanded Lyautey’s personal staff. In his memoirs written in 1960, Marshal Juin, stated with regard to the Algerian insurgency: “I have myself recalled that during the Riffan

aggression of 1925, the methods used by Abd El Krim were exactly the same that the Algerian rebellion has been using in Algeria for more than five years.”⁸⁴

The post-WWII French military thinkers of counter insurgency tactics based their intellectual work on their Indochinese and Algerian experience. However, their thinking also has roots in Morocco because the Rif experience influenced the French military culture. Arguably the main legacy of the Rif War was the demonstration of the relevance of the Lyautean methods, in particular of the simultaneity of political and military actions.

The Lyautean methods and theories continue to influence French military thinking, and the Rif may be considered as a major link in a chain of experience that led to the development of the French counter rebellion doctrine. For example, in his book Guerre-Subversion-Révolution, published in 1968, and quoted in the counter rebellion field manual FT13, Colonel Roger Trinquier describes the comprehensive maneuver designed to defeat an insurgency in terms that echo the methods of political action developed in 1925-1926 and during the stabilization phase. The most recent evolutions of the French doctrine are still inspired by Lyautey. The combined use of military and political action is emphasized in FT 01 Winning the Battle, Building the Peace, a doctrinal document that defines the basis of contemporary warfare (Appendix C).

Today, the Rif War is the object of a renewed interest due to the appealing analogies it shows with the contemporary counter insurgency in Afghanistan. Even if the Rif War does not provide a miracle recipe to defeat an insurgency, its study is relevant to fuel the debate on contemporary counter insurgency, and provides useful insights to today’s warfighters.

The first lesson is that a strong political will and the capacity to sustain heavy losses are essential to succeed. The current situation in Afghanistan shows that it is still a major concern. Under the pressure of their reluctant public opinions, most major European partners have imposed

caveats and short-term mandates on their national contingents. Those limitations impede efficient planning and raise doubts about the depth of commitment of those countries.⁸⁵ By contrast, Painlevé's decision to commit all the necessary forces to Morocco was a courageous one especially in the framework of post WWI France, weakened and traumatized by the Great War.

The second lesson, directly linked to the previous one, is that despite modern technologies, numerous "boots on the ground" are still needed to achieve victory. As in the Rif, the problem today in Afghanistan is "to go and to stay."⁸⁶ When planning the French counter offensive, one of the key concerns of Marshal Lyautey was to keep the ground and not to launch any operations leading to the withdrawal and the abandonment of the conquered terrain.⁸⁷ The Rif War shows that a surge may be successful. The French gained victory when they started to deploy units at full combat strength and could reconstitute an operational reserve. Still today in Afghanistan, the strategic enablers are crucial but not sufficient. It is tempting for some countries to provide only specialists, but at the end it is all about infantrymen to hold the ground.

The third lesson the Rif War emphasizes is the invaluable knowledge of the human terrain in two different fields: intelligence and foreign language specialists, and indigenous troops. Those were the two key elements of the successful political action in 1925. As stated by Marshal Lyautey, "Our soldiers' bravery and obstinacy will never offset the true knowledge of terrain and native customs."⁸⁸ The knowledge of the Arabic and Berber speaking intelligence officers was worth many battalions during the winter 1925-26. The use of indigenous troops, able to fight as their enemy, is also worth studying. The Rif demonstrates the effectiveness of the combination of the tactical skills of Western leaders combined with the intimate knowledge of terrain and the natural warfighting skills of local troops. In that regard, the attempt to replicate a western army with the Afghan National Army does not seem productive.

The fourth lesson is that a successful counter insurgency force relies on its reactive adaptation capacity. The adaptation in Morocco was not a doctrine driven, but an event driven process. One of General Daugan's first actions, upon taking command, was to request a report on the operations to each battalion commander in order to share his experience with the newly deployed units. In that regard the organization of training was crucial and was directly inspired by the lessons painfully learned on the western front during WWI. The French Army was still a learning organization in 1925, the most significant examples of this capacity being the task organization of the units, and the innovative use of Aviation for bombing, direct fire, and logistical support.

Lastly, but most importantly, the Rif War leads the contemporary warfighters to think critically about today's political action. The obvious analogies with the Afghan theater of operations are limited by the fact that contemporary rules of engagement (ROE) would not allow the Coalition forces to conduct a campaign similar to the 1925 French-Spanish offensive. In particular, the French and Spanish forces deliberately targeted the population in order to destroy the enemy's fighting spirit and to convince the tribal leaders to cooperate.⁸⁹

The so called "political action" was not about winning hearts and minds, simply because it would not have meant anything to the Riffans. At that time, the submission to the law of the strongest was the capstone of the tribal relationships in the Rif. Both the Riffans and the French attempted to impose their will rather than to seduce the population. Trying to go beyond this initial idea, some elements of the political action appear to still be relevant today within the framework of contemporary ROE and high standards of military ethics.

First, the main tenet of a successful counterinsurgency campaign is the capacity to conduct simultaneously an intense political action and large scale military operations. The use of force must always be at the service of a political project that can only be developed by an in depth

knowledge of “today’s adversary who will be tomorrow’s partner”, according to another Lyautan principle. The discussions in the framework of the political action must be conducted at the local and tribal level by social interactions and key leader engagements. In that regard the Arab proverb: “Baroud fi n’har, siassa fel leil – During the day you fight, at night you discuss” is worth remembering. The tendency to consider the insurgency in Afghanistan as a monolithic organization to be destroyed, and to label it with the infamous term of Taliban, disregards the reality of the situation and prevents the Allies to seize opportunities of dialogue with the population.

Second, The Rif showed the limitations of the progressive penetration when facing a charismatic and educated rebel leader. The main take away of the Rif War could be that the aim of the counter insurgency campaign is to win the respect and trust of the population rather than hearts and minds. In his article written in 1927, captain Loustaunau-Lacau noted:

The tribes in contact found themselves facing the terrible alternative either to remain in dissidence and to support the consequences of their hostility towards us or to submit and to expose themselves to the rogui’s revenge [...] so they came back to obey only because they thought that we would protect them efficiently.⁹⁰

It is reasonable to think that the situation of many Afghans is the same. The reports of the French battalion commanders in Afghanistan amazingly echo the principles painfully learned by their predecessors in Morocco. In a report on the counter insurgency tactics he implemented in Afghanistan in 2009 when he was commanding officer Task Force Korrigan, Colonel Chanson writes that “[there] the trust comes from the respect that one inspires and from the esteem that one arouses. That respect and that esteem are judged according to the way we use force and after the goods that our concrete achievements bring.” Like his colonial predecessors, Colonel Chanson considers that the “the use of force and the support of population cannot be separated”.⁹¹

In the same token, Colonel Le Nen, a *Chasseurs Alpins*⁹² battalion commander, expresses the same ideas in a slightly different way. He notes in his report on a successful operation:

Facing an enemy for a long time warned of our intent [...], the *effet majeur*⁹³, was to break the insurgents' resistance will by conducting a brutal attack in order to get the population of the valley back in the camp of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA). In a country where force has so far always prevailed over law, the conquest of the hearts and minds of the populations of this valley demanded beforehand a demonstration of force such that their doubts on the capacities of the coalition forces to militarily defeat the insurgents were totally and definitely removed.⁹⁴

In support of those recent operational experiences, the Rif shows that the aim of counter insurgency is indeed a moral and political victory, and that the critical vulnerability of the insurgency is its fragile network of alliances within the population. Therefore the conquest of the populations, in societies where force has always prevailed, cannot be separated from the attrition of the insurgents and the demonstration of the power of our troops. The success relies on a well balanced combination of conventional operations and irregular operations with local troops mentored (or commanded) by western cadres. The objective must be to hold and organize the physical and human terrain once it has been conquered. The three steps of the campaign are to conquer respect by showing force and determination, trust by proving that the use of this force is discriminate and that the control of terrain against insurgent's reprisals is lasting. The third step is a longer one and is the consequence of the first two; it is to gain sympathy on the long term, otherwise called winning hearts and minds. Thus, the Rif War example shows that counter insurgency is not a matter of good feelings and encourages us to avoid a naïve and "watered down" reading of Lyautey's principles.

CONCLUSION

The Rif War was a preview of the decolonization wars that characterized the post WW II world. It was unquestionably the first spark of modern revolutionary warfare. After the war, Ho Chi Minh who had followed the events, paid tribute to the Moroccan leader, declaring: "the lesson of the Rif War is to show clearly the capacity of a small people to contain and defeat a mod-

ern and organized army when he takes arms to defend his fatherland. The Riffans have the merit to give that lesson to the entire world.”⁹⁵ In his seminal essay On Guerrilla Warfare, Mao Zedong mentions “the guerrilla warfare conducted by the Moroccan against the French and the Spanish” to illustrate his thesis.⁹⁶ By inextricably mixing propaganda, political action, and guerrilla warfare to obtain the Rif’s independence, Abd El Krim was a source of inspiration for Mao.⁹⁷

The victors are supposed to write History, but they have a short memory. Paradoxically, while lost wars, like Indochina or Algeria, kept focusing attention long after the defeats, the victorious French forgot the Rif War as soon as it was over. By thoroughly studying Abd El Krim’s initial success and final failure, revolutionary theorists successfully applied lessons from the Rif War; the counter insurgents did not take the same opportunity.

Today, lessons from the Rif War should also inspire contemporary counter insurgency leaders, in particular with regard to the application of Lyautean principles and to the simultaneous conduct of political and military actions. The Rif War example is also an incitement to avoid naïve and “watered down” reading of Lyautean principles. The use of force was an integral part of his colonial method that aimed at gaining respect and trust of the population rather than hearts and minds. The emblematic episode of the change of command between Lyautey and Pétain and the subsequent shift at the operational level of war provides useful insights. The original and unexpected synthesis of colonial and WWI type operational arts implemented by the French Army proves that the synergies between kinetic and non kinetic actions are not only possible but also successful.

Bibliography

Primary sources:

Books:

- Armengaud, Paul, *Quelques enseignements des campagnes du Rif en matière d'aviation*. Paris: Berger Levrault, 1928.
- Juin, Alphonse (Maréchal), *Je suis soldat* : Paris, Editions du Conquistador, 1960.
- Laure, Auguste, *La victoire franco-espagnole dans le Rif*. Paris; Plon, 1927.
- Lyautey, Hubert, *Lyautey l'Africain, Textes et Lettres présentés par Pierre Lyautey*. Paris: Plon, 1957.

Articles:

- Boisboissel (de - lieutenant-colonel), "les opérations au Maroc en 1925", *Revue Militaire Française*, May 1930.
- Loustaunau-Lacau (captain) and Montjean (captain), "Au Maroc Français en 1925, le rétablissement de la situation militaire", *Revue Militaire Française*, December 1927, January-February-March 1928.
- Report of colonel Chanson, commanding officer Task Force Korrigan. "Tactiques de contre insurrection en Kapissa. La population au centre des préoccupations, la raison plutôt que le cœur. ", August 2009. <http://www.lepoint2.com/sons/pdf/rapport-chanson.pdf> (accessed January 9, 2009)

Military doctrinal publications:

- French Department of Defense, French Tradoc. FT-01 *Gagner la bataille, conduire a la paix. Les forces terrestres dans les conflits aujourd'hui et demain*. Paris, January 2007.
- French Department of Defense, French Tradoc. FT-02 *Tactique générale*. Paris, July 2008.
- French Department of Defense, French Tradoc. FT-13 *Doctrine de contre-rebellion*. Paris, January 2009.

Secondary sources:

Books:

On the Rif War

- Alvarez, José E., *The betrothed of death: the Spanish Foreign Legion during the Rif rebellion 1920-1927*. Westport, CT, Greenwood Press, 2001.
- Ayache, Germain, *La guerre du Rif*. Paris: l'Harmattan, 1996.
- Courcelle-Labrousse Vincent and Marmié Nicolas, *La guerre du Rif*. Paris: Points Histoire, 2009.
- Harris, Walter, *France, Spain and the Rif*. London: Edward Arnold & CO., 1927.
- Woolman, David, *Rebels in the Rif, Abd el-Krim and the Rif Rebellion*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1968.

On the French Empire and Colonial Morocco

- Barnett, Singer and Langdon, John, *Makers and defenders of the French Colonial Empire*, Madison, The University of Wisconsin Press, 2004.
- Gershovich Moshe, *French military rule in Morocco*. London: Franck Cass, 2000.
- Usborne, C.V., *The conquest of Morocco*. London: Stanley Paul & CO. LTD., 1936

On Insurgency and Irregular Warfare

- Chailland, Gérard, *Le nouvel art de la guerre*. Paris: L'Archipel, 2008.
- Mao Tse Tung, *on guerrilla warfare*, trans. BG Samuel B. Griffith. New York, NY: Praeger publishers, 1961
- Weir, William, *Guerrilla warfare : irregular warfare in the twentieth century*. Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2008.

On the French Air Force

- Cain, Anthony C., *The forgotten Air Force : French air doctrine in the 1930s*. Washington [D.C.] : Smithsonian Institution Press, 2002.

Biographies

- Bruce, Robert B., *Pétain, from Verdun to Vichy*. Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 2008.
- Clayton, Anthony, *Three Marshals of France, Leadership after Trauma*. London: Brassey's, 1992.
- Daoud, Zakia *Abdelkrim, une épopée de sang et d'or*. Paris : Segquier, 1999.
- Durosoy, Maurice, *Avec Lyautey, homme de guerre, homme de paix*. Paris, Nouvelles Editions Latines, 1976.
- Pedroncini, Guy, *Pétain, Le Soldat, 1914-1940* : Paris, Perrin, 1998
- Salisbury-Jones, Guy (Major-General), *So full a glory, a biography of Marshal de Lattre de Tassigny*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1954.
- Teyssier Arnaud, *Lyautey*. Paris: Perrin, 2004.

Unpublished research papers :

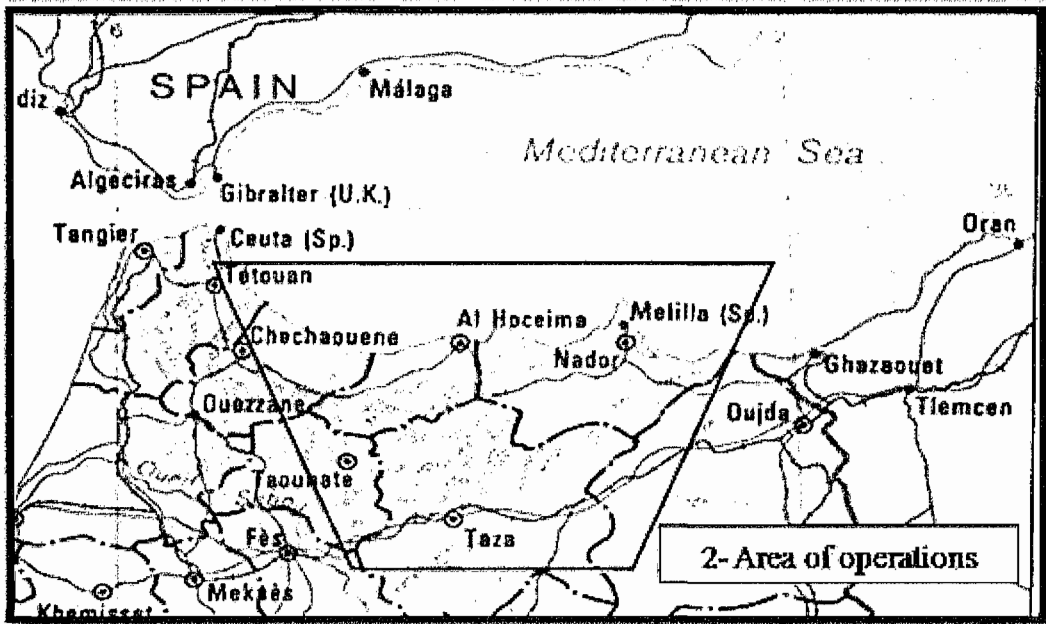
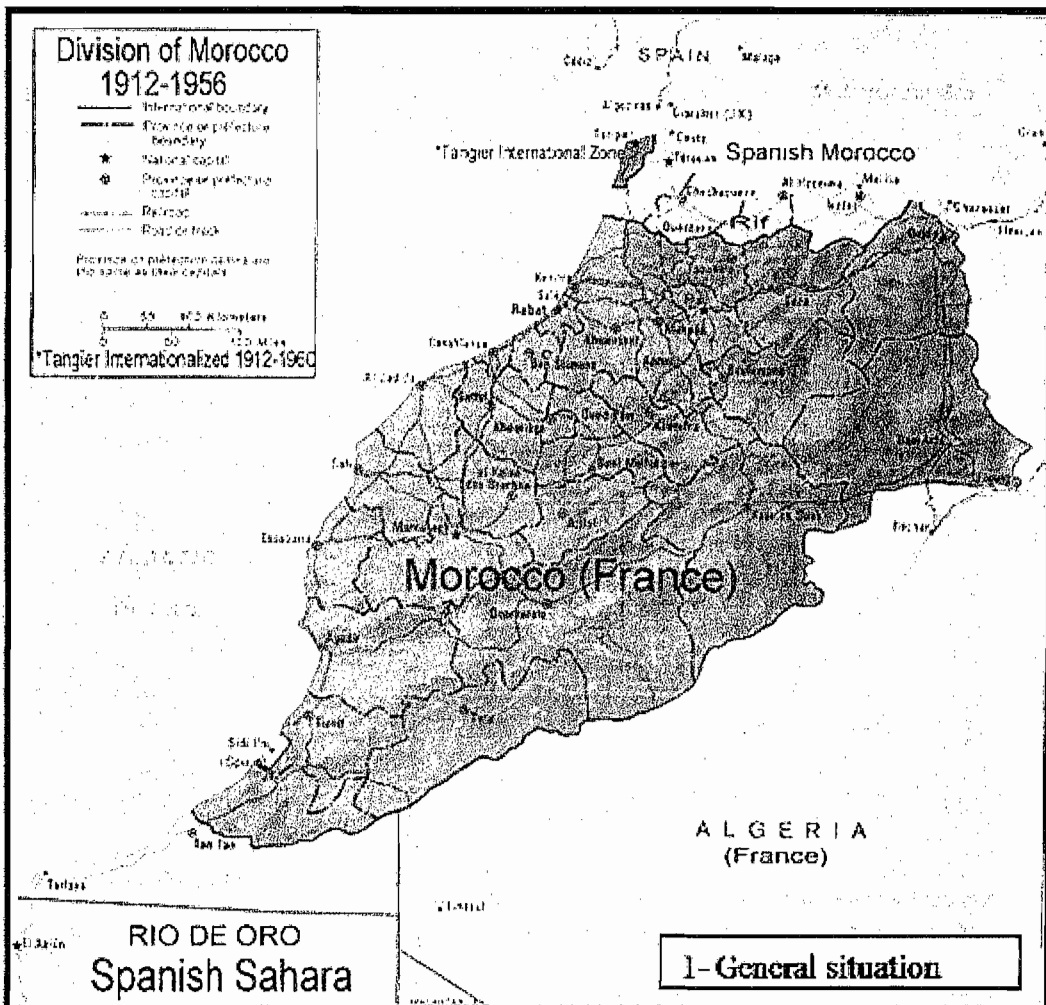
- Danigo (major), "Pétain's campaign in the Rif: a successful counter insurgency campaign", Joint Campaign Analysis, Marine Corps University, 2009.
- Gutierrez (major), "The last great Spanish campaign in Morocco: Alhucemas landing, 1925", Joint Campaign Analysis, Marine Corps University, 2002.
- Pascal, Jan (Major), "Les opérations de pacification des Armées Françaises durant la guerre du Rif 1921-1927. Guerre conventionnelle ou guerre irrégulière? ", Research paper, French Joint Defense College, Paris, March 2009.

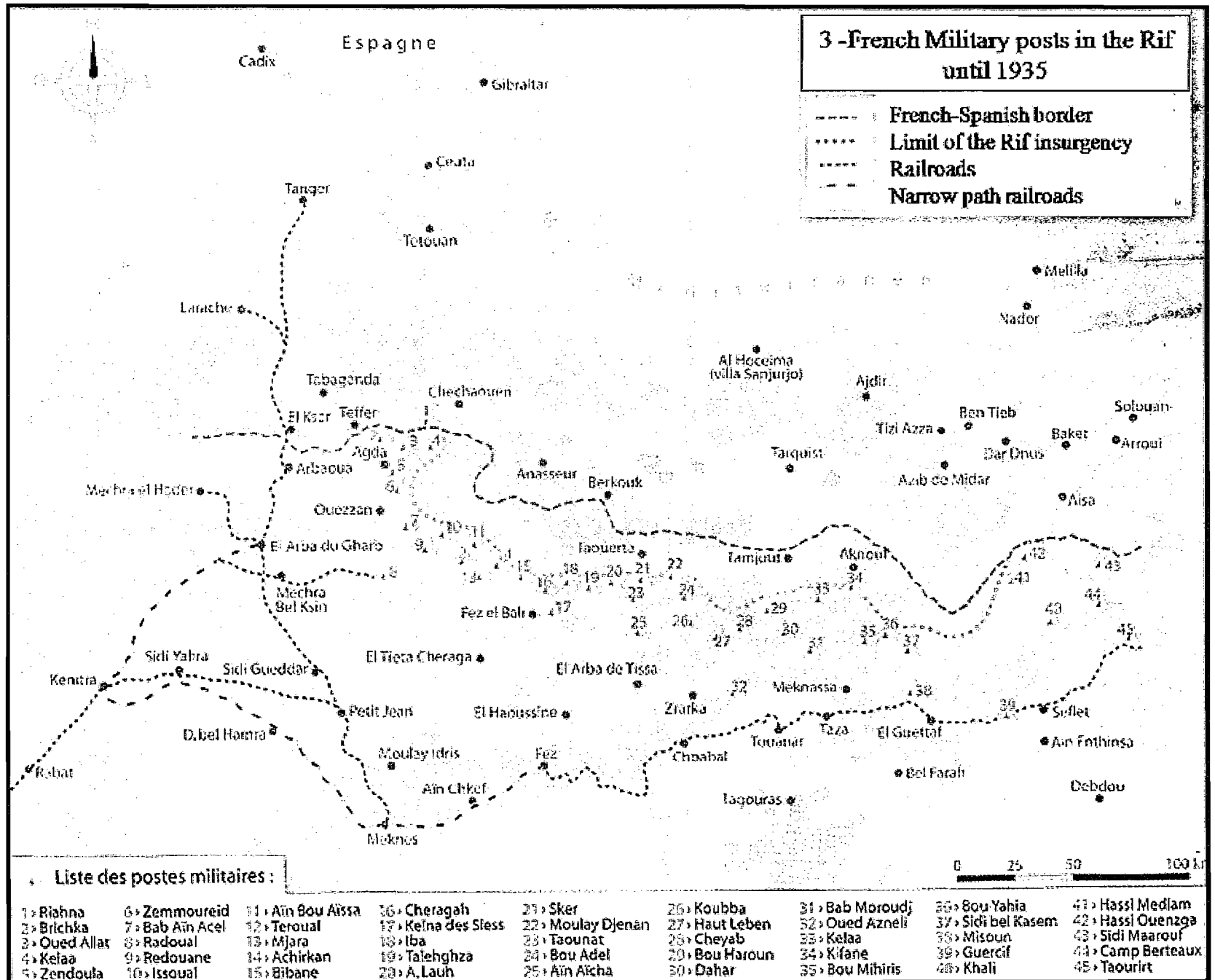
Articles:

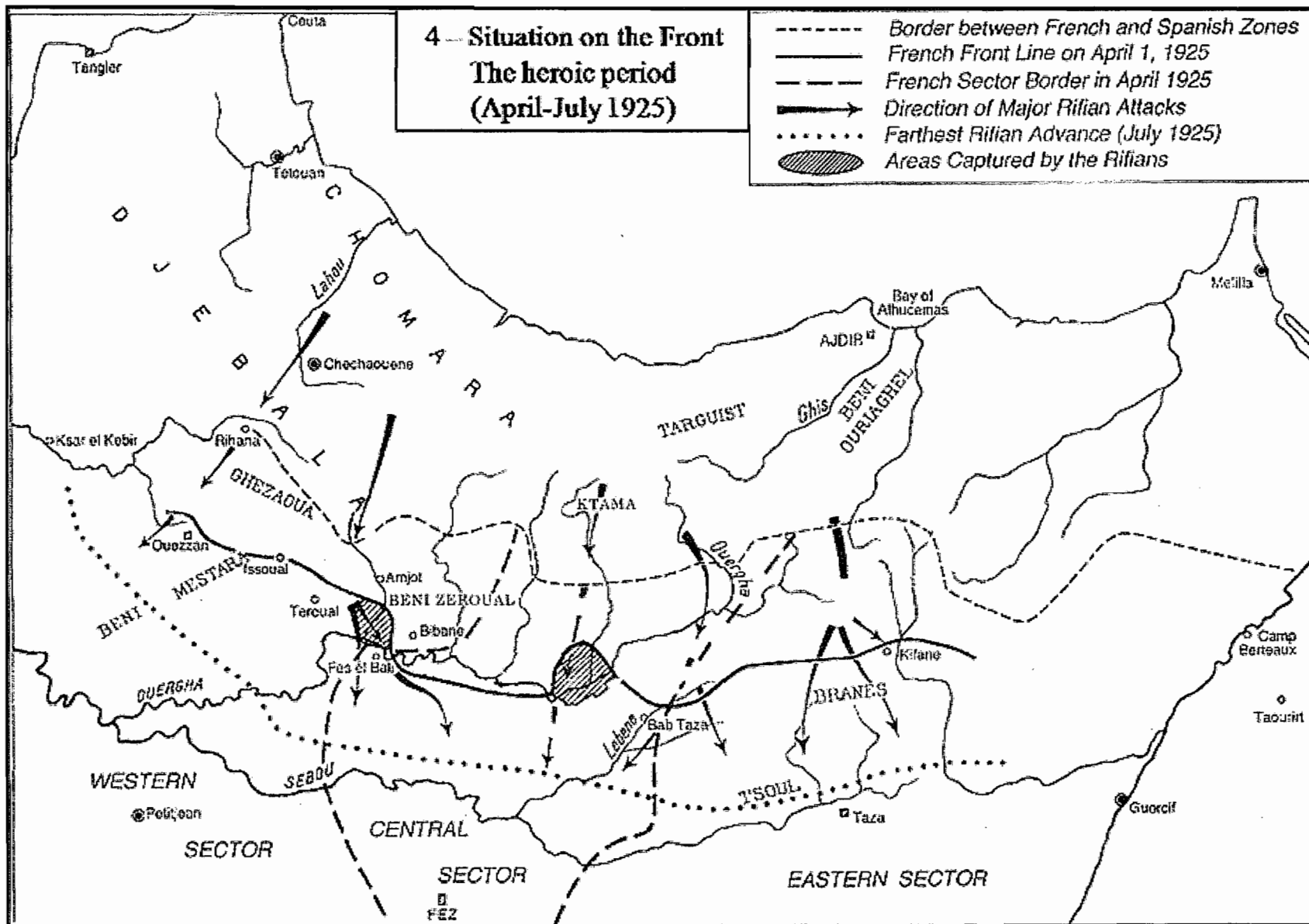
- Danigo, Frédéric, "Les forces morales, un défi permanent pour l'Armée de Terre", *Les cahiers de Mars*, September 2009.
- Dean, William, "Des Américains dans la guerre du Rif", *Revue historique des armées*, 2007 <http://rha.revues.org//index2393.html> (accessed August 30, 2009).
- Millet, Jérôme, "L'aviation militaire dans la Guerre du Rif", *Revue Historique des Armées*, mars, 1987.

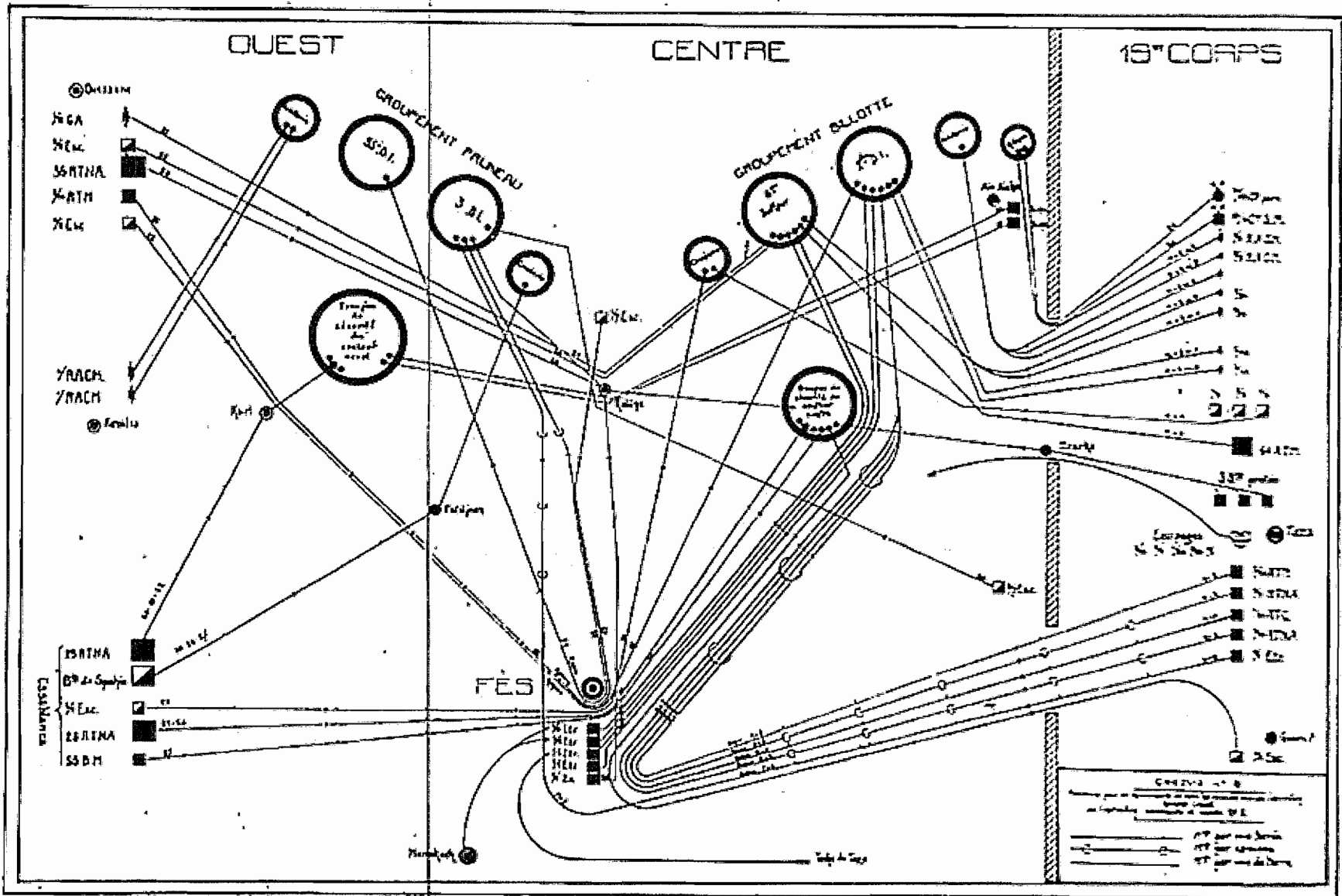
- Pascal, Jan, "L'armée française et Abdelkrim ou la tentation de mener une guerre conventionnelle dans la guerre irrégulière 1924-1927", *revue stratégique*, September, 2009.
- Porte, Rémy, "les prisonniers de guerre dans les conflits asymétriques, la guerre du Rif": CHERPA, IEP d'Aix-en-Provence. <http://www.iep.u-3mrs.fr/media/remi-porte.pdf> (accessed September 4, 2009)
- Schneider, Raphaël, "La dernière rébellion : Abd-el-Krim et la guerre du Rif", *Champs de bataille*, February-March, 2009

Appendix A – Maps

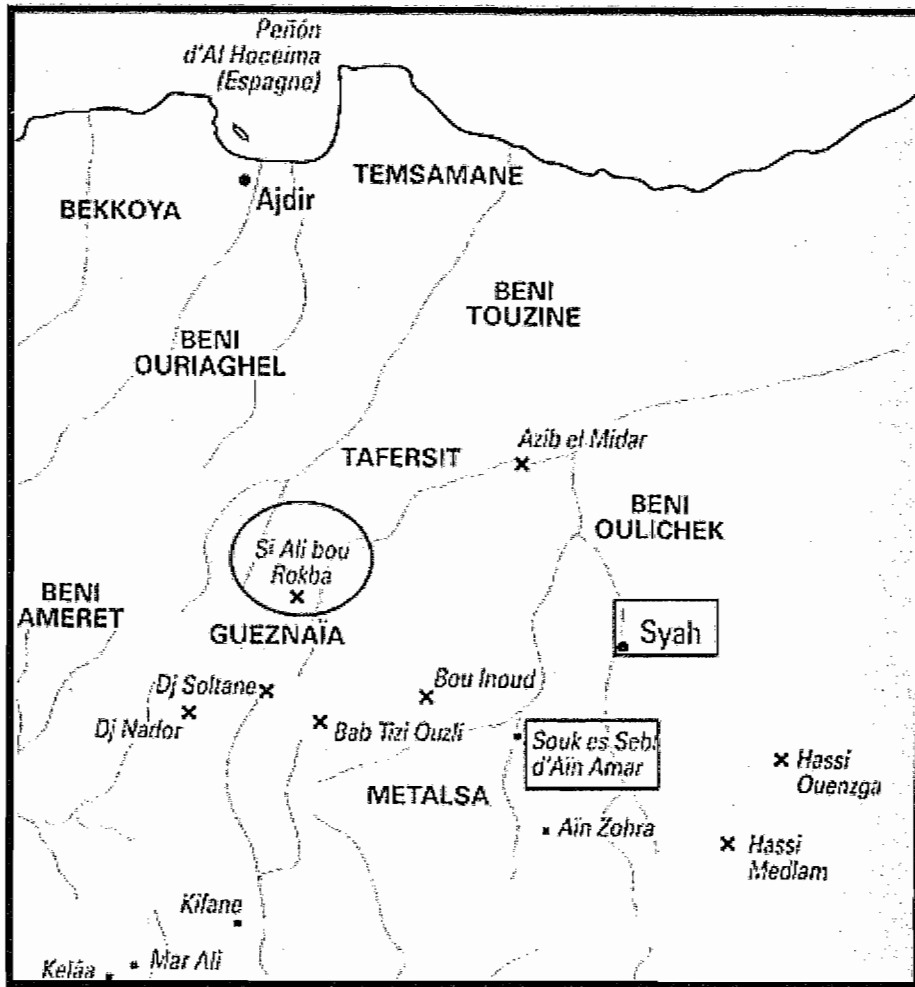




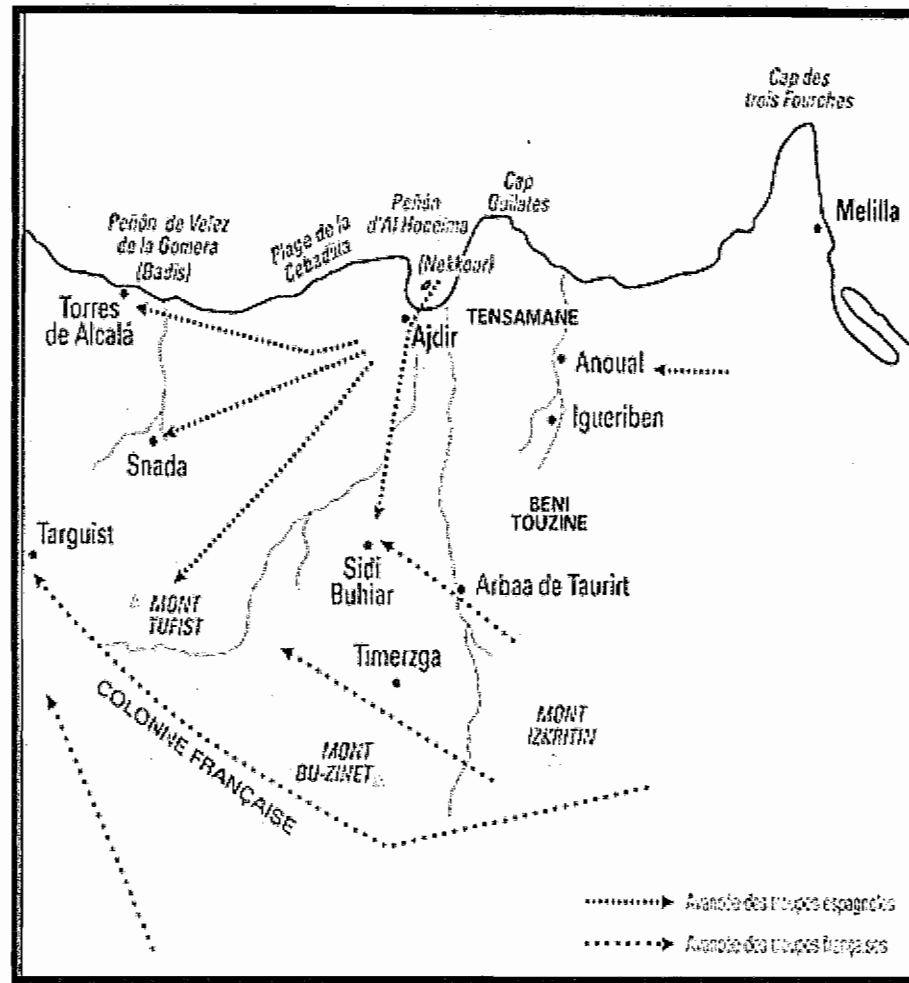




5 - An illustration of scientific operational art:
Schema of the units' movements prior to the September 1925 offensive

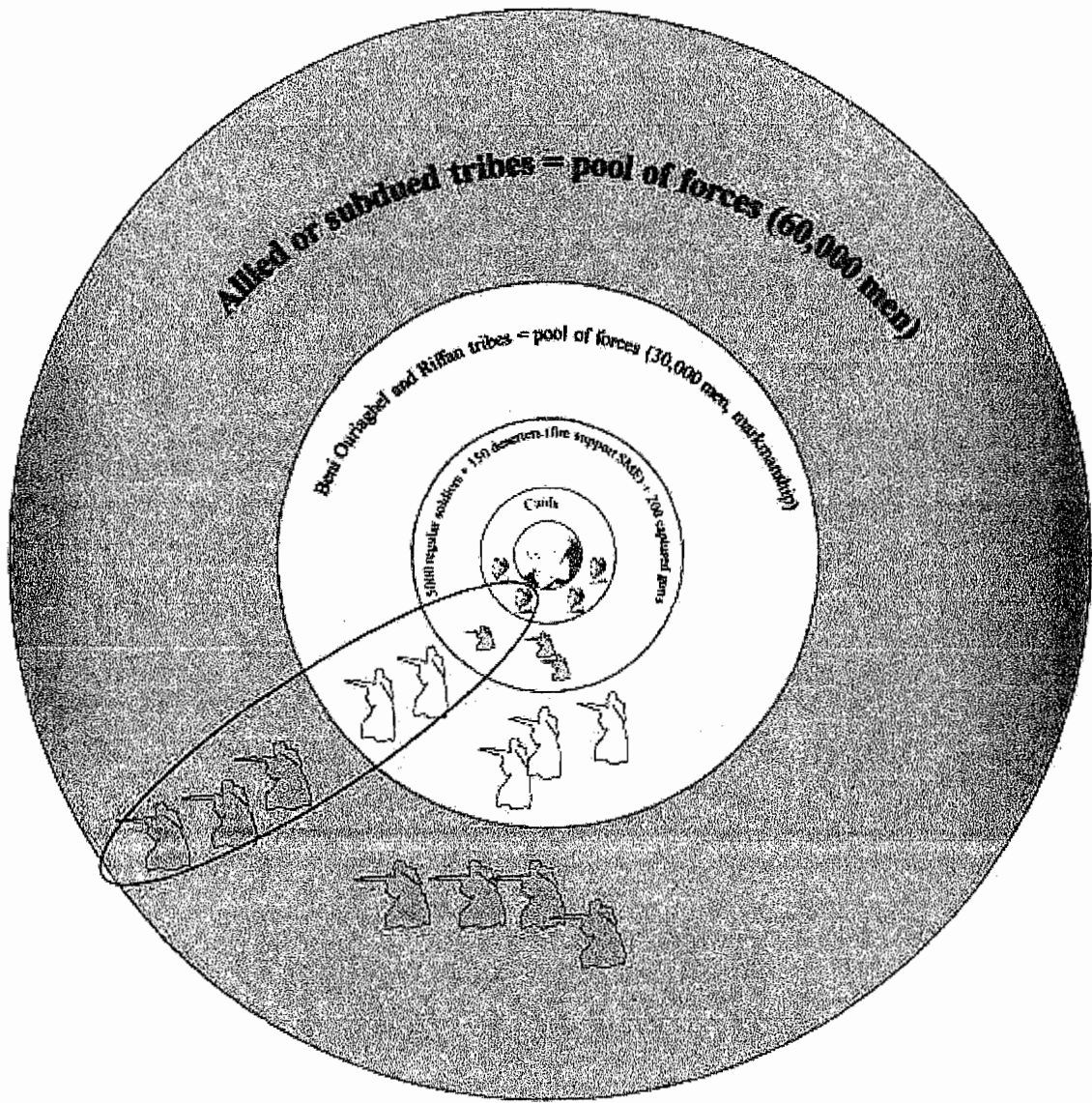


7- Area of the September-October 1925 offensive
(The bold names are the main tribal areas)



8 Area of the May 1926 offensive
Source: Courcelle-Labrousse Vincent and Marnié Nicolas, *La guerre du Rif*. Paris: Points Histoire, 2009.

Appendix B – the Rifian military system



Appendix C – Extracts from French Doctrinal publications

FT 01 – winning the Battle, Building Peace – Land Forces in Present and Future Conflicts.

FT01 is the bedrock of the French doctrine. It emphasizes the political nature of contemporary war waged among the populations, and argues that the decisive phase is no longer the kinetic initial intervention, but the long phase of stabilization that follows. Most of the historical vignettes in support of that argument are taken from Marshal Lyautey's writings or from his mentor's Marshal Gallieni.

“A country has not been conquered and pacified when the people have been decimated by military operations and bowed down in terror; once the initial fright has subsided, seeds of revolt will take root that will be further nourished by the built-up rancour due to the brutality of the initial action.”

“The best way to attain peace is to combine force with politics. We must remember that destruction must be used as a last recourse, and even then only in order to build something better in the end... Each time an officer is required to act against a village in a war, he needs to remember that his first duty, after securing submission of the local population, is to rebuild the village, reorganize the local market and establish a school. The process of establishing peace and future organization in a country will come from the combined use of force and politics. Political action is by far the most important. It derives its strength from the country's organization and its inhabitants.”

General Gallieni

Fundamental Instructions, May 22nd 1898.

“A number of situations obviously require military intervention in its classic and traditional form: when a specific objective needs to be reached before anything else, when the enemy's assets and morale must be destroyed, when key leaders must be removed... When a military action is required, it must be carried out using all the elements of modern tactics and science, based on detailed preparation and with utmost vigor. This is the optimal way to save time, human resources and money. It is imperative that that there be no misunderstanding on this issue.

A different approach is used in securing a zone in which it is believed that economic activity will be conducted shortly thereafter.

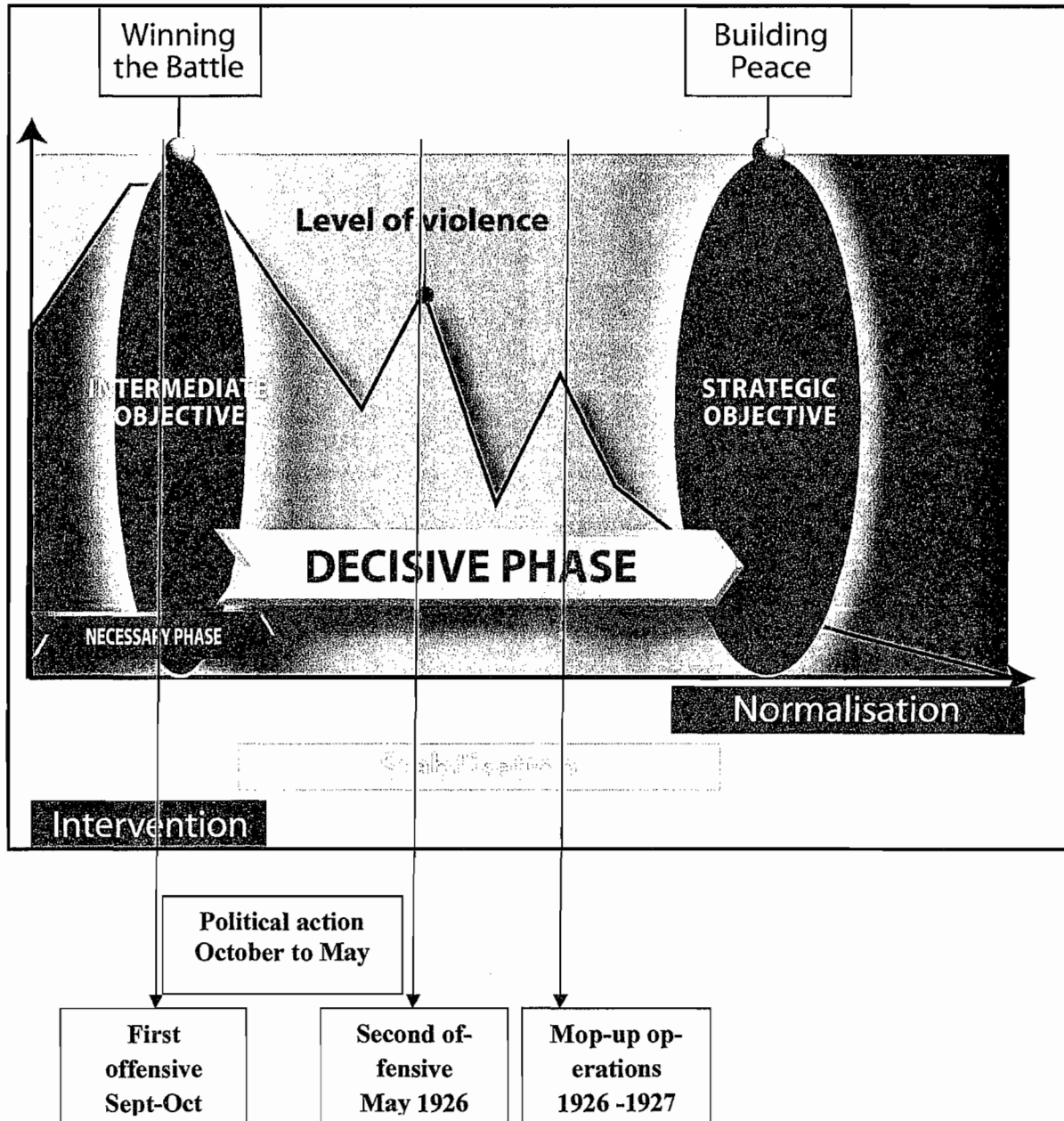
Do you think that a soldier, knowing that the village that is being taken will become his garrison for weeks or years to come, will torch it willingly? Will he mistreat its inhabitants who will shortly be working at his side? No.

Does it not take more leadership, calm, judgement and rectitude to maintain under submission, and without firing a single shot, a hostile and angry population, than to crush an insurrection using heavy artillery?”

Marshal Lyautey

Letters from Tonkin and Madagascar - 1921

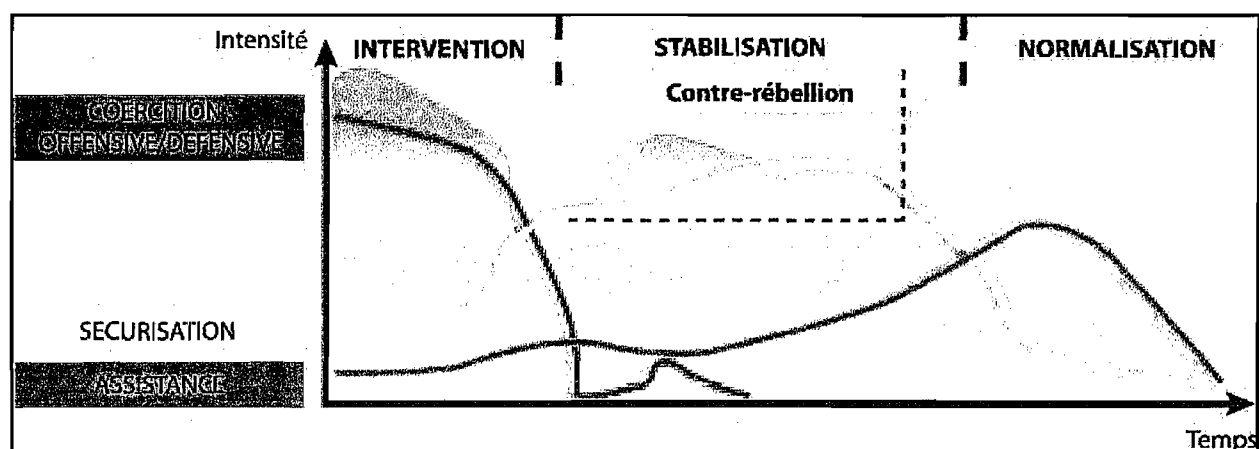
The following illustration summarizes the main arguments developed in FT 01. The key events of the Rif war match the framework of analysis it provides.



FT13 - Counter rebellion Doctrine

FT 13 argues that the conduct of the counter rebellion must first produce a predominantly **political effect**: to insure the security of the theater of operations by the action among the population. The complementary action has an **operational nature**: the neutralization of the rebels by the fight against the armed gangs.

The tactical action of influence are then planned and conducted by the specialist of the Military Operations of Influence. In counter rebellion operations, they have two purposes; to isolate the rebels from the population and to disintegrate the rebellion. **Thus they aim at comforting the parties supporting the Force, at rallying the neutrals and at countering and even dividing the opponents.**



Page 10 – Counter rebellion within the operational continuum.

The three principles that the army must always apply when facing a guerilla war are:

- to cut the guerillas from the population;
- to organize the population to prevent the offensive come-back of the adversary;
- to render the refuge area untenable to the insurgents' units

The battalions engaged in the operation must encompass:

- sanitary teams to give first aid to the families and the children
- social services teams to take care of the most urgent social cases
- psychological operation teams to explain to the inhabitants the necessity of the measures taken or to exploit all the situations, all the incidents induced by the operation to undermine the moral of the rebellion's force.

Page 33 Extracts from Guerre-Subversion-Revolution
by Colonel Roger Trinquier (Paris, Robert Laffont, 1968)

Appendix D – Biographies

Source: Britannica online (<http://search.eb.com>)

- **Louis Hubert Lyautey**

(born 17 November 1854, Nancy, France - died 21 July 1934, Thorey, France)



French statesman, soldier, marshal of France, and devoted believer in the civilizing virtues of colonialism, who built the French protectorate over Morocco.

Despite a childhood spinal injury, Lyautey was an outstanding student and entered the Saint-Cyr Military Academy in 1873. After serving with a cavalry regiment at Châteaudun, he went to Algeria in 1880. On his return to France two years later he was promoted to captain. Though he was a staunch royalist, his Legitimist beliefs prevented him from sympathizing with the royal House of Orléans, and he preferred instead to serve the existing republican regime.

In 1894 Lyautey was sent to Indochina, where, at Tonkin, he met Joseph Gallieni, whose notion of conquest as a means of civilization he adopted. Despite his liking for Tonkin, Lyautey responded immediately when Gallieni summoned him to Madagascar, which he conquered in two years. In 1902 he returned to France to take command of the 14th Regiment of Hussars at Alençon. In 1904 the governor general of Algeria, Célestin Jonnart, obtained for Lyautey the post of commandant of the subdivision of Aïn Sefra. When Morocco protested to France over Lyautey's encroachments on Moroccan territory in order to round off the frontier, Jonnart protected him, and Lyautey reduced the frontier tribes to obedience. From 1906, as commandant at Oran, he continued with persistence to push the frontier westward.

In 1910 Lyautey was recalled to France to command the army corps at Rennes but in 1912 was appointed resident general in Morocco, over which the French protectorate had just been proclaimed. After routing insurgent tribes in Fès, he replaced the sultan Moulay Hafid by his more reliable brother Moulay Yusuf. In the task of conquering and pacifying the whole country, however, Lyautey showed respect for local institutions and impressed the Arabs with his sense of grandeur and his competence. Recalled to France to be minister of war (1916–17), he thereafter returned to Morocco, remaining until his resignation in 1925. A member of the French Academy from 1912, Lyautey was made a marshal of France in 1921.

Philippe Pétain

(born 24 April 1856, Cauchy-à-la-Tour, France - died 23 July 1951, Île d'Yeu, France)



French general who was a national hero for his victory at the Battle of Verdun in World War I but was discredited as chief of state of the French government at Vichy in World War II. He died under sentence in a prison fortress.

Born into a family of farmers in northern France, Pétain, after attending the local village school and a religious secondary school, was admitted to Saint-Cyr, France's principal military academy. As a young second lieutenant in an Alpine regiment, sharing the rough outdoor life of his men, he came to understand the ordinary soldier. The extraordinary popularity he was later to enjoy with the rank and file in World War I is believed to have had its origin there.

His advancement until the outbreak of World War I in 1914—he was 58 when he finally became a general—was slow because as a professor at the War College he had propounded tactical theories opposed to those held by the high command. While the latter favoured the offensive at all costs, Pétain held that a well-organized defensive was sometimes called for and that before any attack the commander must be sure of the superiority of his fire power.

After successively commanding a brigade, a corps, and an army, Pétain in 1916 was charged with stopping the German attack on the fortress city of Verdun. Though the situation was practically hopeless, he masterfully reorganized both the front and the transport systems, made prudent use of the artillery, and was able to inspire in his troops a heroism that became historic. He became a popular hero, and, when serious mutinies erupted in the French army following the ill-considered offensives of General Robert-Georges Nivelle, then French commander in chief, Pétain was named his successor.

He reestablished discipline with a minimum of repression by personally explaining his intentions to the soldiers and improving their living conditions. Under him the French armies participated in the victorious offensive of 1918, led by Marshal Ferdinand Foch, generalissimo of the Allied armies. Pétain was made a marshal of France in November 1918 and was subsequently appointed to the highest military offices (vice president of the Supreme War Council and inspector general of the army).

Following the German attack of May 1940 in World War II, Paul Reynaud, who was then head of the government, named Pétain vice premier, and on June 16, at the age of 84, Marshal Pétain was asked to form a new ministry. Seeing the French army defeated, the “hero of Verdun” asked for an armistice. After it was concluded, the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate, meeting in Vichy, conferred upon him almost absolute powers as “chief of state.”

With the German army occupying two-thirds of the country, Pétain believed he could repair the ruin caused by the invasion and obtain the release of the numerous prisoners of war only by cooperating with the Germans. In the southern part of France, left free by the armistice agreement, he set up a paternalistic regime the motto of which was “Work, Family, and Fatherland.” Reactionary by temperament and education, he allowed his government to promulgate a law dissolving the Masonic lodges and excluding Jews from certain professions.

He was, however, opposed to the policy of close Franco-German collaboration advocated by his vice premier Pierre Laval, whom he dismissed in December 1940, replacing him with Admiral François Darlan. Pétain then attempted to practice a foreign policy of neutrality and delay. He secretly sent an emis-

sary to London, met with the Spanish dictator Francisco Franco, whom he urged to refuse free passage of Adolf Hitler's army to North Africa, and maintained a cordial relationship with Admiral William Leahy, the U.S. ambassador to Vichy until 1942.

When, in April 1942, the Germans forced Pétain to take Laval back as premier, he himself withdrew into a purely nominal role. Yet he balked at resigning, convinced that, if he did, Hitler would place all of France directly under German rule. After Allied landings in November 1942 in North Africa, Pétain secretly ordered Admiral Darlan, then in Algeria, to merge the French forces in Africa with those of the Allies. But, at the same time, he published official messages protesting the landing. His double-dealing was to prove his undoing.

In August 1944, after the liberation of Paris by General Charles de Gaulle, Pétain dispatched an emissary to arrange for a peaceful transfer of power. De Gaulle refused to receive the envoy. At the end of August the Germans transferred Pétain from Vichy to Germany. Brought to trial in France for his behaviour after 1940, he was condemned to death in August 1945. His sentence was immediately commuted to solitary confinement for life. He was imprisoned in a fortress on the Île d'Yeu off the Atlantic coast, where he died at the age of 95.

Abd El Krim *in full Muhammad Ibn 'abd Al-karim Al-khattabi*

(born 1882, Ajdir, Morocco - died. 6 February 1963, Cairo, Egypt)



Leader of a resistance movement against Spanish and French rule in North Africa and founder of the short-lived Republic of the Rif (1921–26). A skilled tactician and a capable organizer, he led a liberation movement that made him the hero of the Maghrib (northwest Africa). A precursor of the anticolonial struggle for independence, Abd el-Krim was defeated only by the military and technological superiority of the colonial powers.

Son of an influential member of the Berber tribe Banu Uriaghel, Abd el-Krim received a Spanish education in addition to the traditional Muslim schooling. He was employed as a secretary in the Bureau of Native Affairs. In 1915 he was appointed the *qadi al-qudat*, or chief Muslim judge, for the district of Melilla, where he also taught at a Hispano-Arabic school and was the editor of an Arabic section of *El Telegrama del Rif*.

During his employment with the Spanish protectorate administration he began to be disillusioned with Spanish rule, eventually opposed Spanish policies, and was imprisoned. He escaped and in 1918 was made chief Muslim judge at Melilla again, but he left the post in 1919 to return to Ajdir.

Soon Abd el-Krim, joined by his brother, who later became his chief adviser and commander of the Rif army, was organizing tribal resistance against foreign domination of Morocco. In July 1921 at Annoual he defeated a Spanish army and pursued it to the suburbs of Melilla. At that time the Republic of the Rif was founded with Abd el-Krim as its president. Overcoming tribal rivalries, he began organizing a centralized administration based upon traditional Berber tribal institutions. He defeated another Spanish army in 1924; in 1925 he almost reached the ancient city of Fès in his drive against French forces that had captured his supply base in the Wargha valley.

Faced with Abd el-Krim's successes and seeing in his movement a threat to their colonial possessions in North Africa, the Franco-Spanish conference meeting in Madrid decided upon joint action. As a Spanish force landed at Alhucemas near Ajdir, a French army of 160,000 men under Marshal Philippe Pétain attacked from the south. Confronted with this combined Franco-Spanish force of 250,000 men with overwhelming technological superiority, Abd el-Krim surrendered on May 27, 1926, and was exiled to the island of Réunion in the Indian Ocean. Receiving permission in 1947 to live in France, he left Réunion and was granted political asylum en route by the Egyptian government; for five years he presided over the Liberation Committee of the Arab West (sometimes called the Maghrib Bureau) in Cairo. After the restoration of Moroccan independence, King Muhammad V invited him to return to Morocco, which he refused to do as long as French troops remained on North African soil.

ENDNOTES

-
- ¹ Major Frédéric Danigo, "Marshall Pétain's campaign in the Rif. A successful counter-insurgency campaign" (manuscript, joint campaign analysis, MCU/CSC, November 2009).
- ² Moshe Gershovich, *French military rule in Morocco* (London: Franck Cass, 2000), 64. "One of Lyautey's most prominent credentials as a colonialist thinker and administrator was his adherence to the concept of indirect rule, according to which any colonial administration should work with, not against, native socio-economical elites and respect pre-colonial customs and traditions".
- ³ Gershovich, *French military rule in Morocco*, 122.
- ⁴ Gershovich, *French military rule in Morocco*, 123.
- ⁵ Vincent Courcelle-Labrousse and Nicolas Marmié, *La guerre du Rif* (Paris: Points Histoire, 2009), 17.
- ⁶ On the youth and education of Abd El Krim see Courcelle-Labrousse, *La guerre du Rif*, 213.
- ⁷ David Woolman, *Rebels in the Rif, Abd el-Krim and the Rif Rebellion* (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1968), 83-93.
- ⁸ Figures vary according to sources. Those are mentioned in Guy Pedroncini, *Pétain, Le Soldat, 1914-1940* (Paris: Perrin, 1998), 385.
- ⁹ Loustaunau-Lacau (captain) and Montjean (captain), "Au Maroc Français en 1925, le rétablissement de la situation militaire", *Revue Militaire Française*, March 1928, 339.
- ¹⁰ Communist Party - French Section of the Communist International. The Party was created in 1920 in Tours after the scission of the Socialist Party. It strictly obeyed the Comintern's orders. Courcelle-Labrousse, *La guerre du Rif*, 236 and 288-290.
- ¹¹ The pro-German neutrality of Spain during WWI was the main reason for French contempt toward the Spanish. They also still disagreed on the status of Tangiers. Gershovich, *French military rule in Morocco*, 162.
- ¹² Guy Pedroncini, *Pétain*, 379.
- ¹³ Gershovich, *French military rule in Morocco*, 123.
- ¹⁴ The French Army's main focus was then on the Rhine to pressure Germany C.V. Osborne, *The conquest of Morocco*. London: Stanley Paul & CO. LTD., 1936, 261.
- ¹⁵ Courcelle-Labrousse, *La guerre du Rif*, 128.
- ¹⁶ Walter Harris, *France, Spain and the Rif*. London: Edward Arnold & CO., 1927, 203.
- ¹⁷ Raphaël Schneider, "La dernière rébellion : Abd-el-Krim et la guerre du Rif", *Champs de bataille*, January-March, 2009. The posts were manned by small garrisons from 15 to 60 men, mostly composed of Senegalese *tiraillleurs* commanded by French non-commissioned officers or field grade officers.
- ¹⁸ Gershovich, *French military rule in Morocco*, 128.
- ¹⁹ Osborne, *The conquest of Morocco*, 262.

²⁰ The report is available in Pierre Lyautey, *Lyautey l'Africain: textes et lettres du Maréchal Lyautey présentés par Pierre Lyautey*. Paris: Plon. 1957, volume IV, 266-272.

²¹ Raphaël Schneider, "La dernière rébellion", 19. Later some *légionnaires* and French indigenous soldiers also joined the insurgency. Even if their number remained small, some remarkable personalities like the German *légionnaire* Joseph Klems contributed to create the myth of a large European force among the insurgents.

²² Usborne, *The conquest of Morocco*, 264.

²³ Courcelle-Labrousse, *La guerre du Rif*, 140.

²⁴ Pascal, Jan (Major), "Les opérations de pacification des Armées Françaises durant la guerre du Rif 1921-1927. Guerre conventionnelle ou guerre irrégulière?" (Manuscript, French Joint Defense College, Paris, March 2009), 71-72 .

- Western sector: one mobile group at Fez Al Bali under colonel Colombat's command,
- Central sector: one mobile group at Ain Aicha under colonel Freidenberg's command,
- Eastern sector: one mobile group North of Taza under colonel Cambay's command.

²⁵ Gérard Chailland, *Le nouvel art de la guerre*, (Paris, L'Archipel, 2008), 81-82

²⁶ On the pivotal role of aviation during the Rif War; Jérôme Millet, "L'aviation militaire dans la Guerre du Rif" (*Revue Historique des Armées*, mars, 1987), 50.

²⁷ In July 1925, the aviation regiment flew 3,623 hours and conducted 1,759 missions, and 1,219 bombing. Millet, "L'aviation militaire dans la Guerre du Rif", 52

²⁸ Gershovich, *French military rule in Morocco*, 131.

²⁹ Harris, *France, Spain and the Rif*, 247.

³⁰ Loustaunau-Lacau "Au Maroc Français en 1925", March 1928, 339.

³¹ Durosoy, *Avec Lyautey*, 140.

³² Durosoy, *Avec Lyautey*, 140.

³³ Pedroncini, *Pétain, Le Soldat*, 380.

³⁴ Pedroncini, *Pétain, Le Soldat*, 381.

³⁵ Courcelle-Labrousse, *La guerre du Rif*, 227

³⁶ Gershovich, *French military rule in Morocco*, 134.

³⁷ "In some military circles, one took this occasion to criticize the surprise, to show that the methods were not the good ones and systematically diverged from the proven principles of the conduct of war." Durosoy, *Avec Lyautey*, 140.

³⁸ Courcelle-Labrousse, *La guerre du Rif*, 245

³⁹ The anecdote is quoted both in Courcelle-Labrousse, *La guerre du Rif*, 213 and Durosoy, *Avec Lyautey*, 164. Durosoy argues that it shows that Lyautey was denied the help he needed, in order to undermine his authority. One month later, once Pétain got involved, 36 metropolitan infantry battalions, 24 artillery batteries and 10 Breguet 14 squadrons arrived in Morocco.

⁴⁰ Courcelle-Labrousse, *La guerre du Rif*, 212

⁴¹ Gershovich, *French military rule in Morocco*, 135.

⁴² Robert B. Bruce, *Pétain : Verdun to Vichy* (Washington D.C., Potomac Books, 2008), 74.

⁴³ Courcelle-Labrousse, *La guerre du Rif*, 242. The extent of the decisional powers given to Pétain is not clearly described in the letter.

⁴⁴ Quoted in Durosoy, *Avec Lyautey*, 189.

⁴⁵ Courcelle-Labrousse, *La guerre du Rif*, 246

⁴⁶ Gershovich, *French military rule in Morocco*, 135.

⁴⁷ Danigo, “Marshall Pétain’s campaign in the Rif.”

⁴⁸ Harris, *France, Spain and the Rif*, 239-241.

⁴⁹ Courcelle-Labrousse, *La guerre du Rif*, 246

⁵⁰ Loustaunau-Lacau “Au Maroc Français en 1925”, March 1928, 339.

⁵¹ Danigo, “Marshall Pétain’s campaign in the Rif.”

⁵² Gershovich, *French military rule in Morocco*, 135.

⁵³ Loustaunau-Lacau “Au Maroc Français en” 342-343.

“The operations planned against the Beni Zeroual and the Mtioua, in spite of their likely positive results, would not be sufficient to produce a material and morale effect able to ruin the prestige and the power of Abdelkrim. In order to reach that goal, it is necessary to direct a more immediate threat against the vital center of the adversary, by organizing and by occupying, methodically and in force, some robust forward bases, which would allow us, if necessary, to resume later and in a favorable position, more decisive action”. See also Pedroncini, *Pétain, Le Soldat*, 385.

⁵⁴ On the Spanish landing at Alhucemas, see Major Gutierrez, “The last great Spanish campaign in Morocco: Alhucemas landing, 1925” (unpublished Joint Campaign Analysis, MCU/CSC, 2002).

⁵⁵ Quoted in Loustaunau-Lacau, “Au Maroc Français”, , January 1928, 195.

⁵⁶ Loustaunau-Lacau, “Au Maroc Français”, January 1928, 195.

⁵⁷ Courcelle-Labrousse, *La guerre du Rif*, 271. During a planning briefing on the political actions, Pétain replied Colonel Catroux, chief of the second bureau, “You are making politics, I am making strategy.” Exchange of e-mails with Jan Pascal, who had the opportunity to study the archives of the campaign at the *Service Historique de la Défense*.

⁵⁸ Durosoy, *Avec Lyautey*, 188.

⁵⁹ Gershovich, *French military rule in Morocco*, 136.

⁶⁰ Pierre Lyautey, *Lyautey l’Africain*, volume IV, 376-378. “The military organizations, doctrines, methods and programs currently used in Morocco have been set up apart from me, without I could express my opinion or against my opinions. I intend neither to appreciate nor to criticize them. But they differ totally from the ones that, during my whole colonial career, and particularly in Morocco, I have always advised and applied. Right or wrong, I have no confidence in their effectiveness. I find them heavy, slow, inappropriate for the country and very costly for the French budget and consequently to Morocco’s. My conception of the goals to be reached, and notably with regards to the mitigation of the winter campaign, was different and aimed at quicker and more decisive results, by the simultaneous and more intense use of the political action, and by much lesser spending.”

⁶¹ Loustaunau-Lacau, “Au Maroc Français”, March 1928, 288-297.

Considerable works were done from the end of August to the end of November. More than 180 kilometers of railroads, 12 railway stations, 12 operational bases, among them 4 able to host 30,000 men, were built. 200 to 300 kilometers of electric wires were installed for the communications. The number of beds in the rear area hospitals increased from 2000 to 12,000.

⁶² Loustaunau-Lacau, “Au Maroc Français”, February 1928, 218.

⁶³ Gershovich, for example, does not mention the role of the political action in his account of the campaign. It is quickly mentioned but not emphasized in Harris, *France, Spain and the Rif*, 307.

⁶⁴ This is the main argument developed in Danigo, “Marshall Pétain’s campaign in the Rif.”

⁶⁵ Loustaunau-Lacau, “Au Maroc Français en 1925”, March 1928, 279.

⁶⁶ Danigo, “Marshall Pétain’s campaign in the Rif.”

⁶⁷ “The activity of your intelligence officers had been considerable among our tribes. Those ones frequented all the markets, and if they didn’t speak loud, softly, under every door, they advised to stop the war against France and to hurry the setting of peace [...]. My populations were war weary and I had no more illusions on what I could expect from them.” Abdelkrim, quoted in Courcelle-Labrousse, *La guerre du Rif*, 297.

⁶⁸ Danigo, “Marshall Pétain’s campaign in the Rif.”

⁶⁹ Courcelle-Labrousse, *La guerre du Rif*, 312.

⁷⁰ Courcelle-Labrousse, *La guerre du Rif*, 315-319

⁷¹ Danigo, “Marshall Pétain’s campaign in the Rif.”

⁷² Courcelle-Labrousse, *La guerre du Rif*, 312.

⁷³ Jan Pascal, “L’armée française et Abdelkrim ou la tentation de mener une guerre conventionnelle dans la guerre irrégulière 1924-1927”, revue stratégique, September 2009.

⁷⁴ Robert B. Bruce, *Pétain*, 76.

⁷⁵ Loustaunau-Lacau “Au Maroc Français” 1928, 288.

⁷⁶ Millet, “L’aviation militaire dans la Guerre du Rif”, 58.

⁷⁷ Paul Armengaud, *Quelques enseignements des campagnes du Rif en matière d’aviation*. Paris: Berger Levrault, 1928. See also Anthony C. Cain, *The forgotten Air Force : French air doctrine in the 1930s*. Washington [D.C.] : Smithsonian Institution Press, 2002, 17.

⁷⁸ Quoted in Major Jan Pascal, « Les opérations de pacification des Armées Françaises durant la guerre du Rif 1921-1927. Guerre conventionnelle ou guerre irrégulière? », manuscript, French Joint Defense College, Paris, March 2009.

⁷⁹ Singer Barnett and John Langdon, *Makers and defenders of the French Colonial Empire* (Madison, The University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), 220.

⁸⁰ Courcelle-Labrousse, *La guerre du Rif*, 283.

-
- ⁸¹ Anthony Clayton, *Three Marshals of France, Leadership after Trauma* (London: Brassey's, 1992), 150.
- ⁸² Clayton, *Three Marshals of France*, 150.
- ⁸³ Clayton, *Three Marshals of France*, 155.
- ⁸⁴ Juin, Alphonse (maréchal), *Je suis soldat*, pp. 102-103.
« J'ai rappelé moi-même qu'au cours de l'agression rifaine de 1925 les méthodes employées par Abd-el-Krim furent exactement celles que la rébellion algérienne utilise en Algérie de depuis plus de cinq ans ».
- ⁸⁵ Major Frédéric Danigo, "Unity of effort in Afghanistan" (Manuscript, position paper, MCU/CSC, November 2009).
- ⁸⁶ Loustaunau-Lacau, "Au Maroc Français en 1925" , January 1928, 95.
- ⁸⁷ Courcelle-Labrousse, *La guerre du Rif*, 259. "In particular, we mustn't conduct no operation compelling our troops to a later tactical withdraw, which, in an indigenous area and a difficult terrain, would always have the most severe political, military and morale consequences."
- ⁸⁸ Unofficial motto of the *Ecole Militaire de Spécialisation de l'Outre-Mer et de l'Etranger*, the French cultural awareness school.
- ⁸⁹ Danigo, "Marshall Pétain's campaign in the Rif."
- ⁹⁰ Loustaunau-Lacau, "Au Maroc Français en 1925" , March 1928, 284.
- ⁹¹ Report of colonel Chanson, commanding officer of the Task Force Korrigan. « Tactiques de contre insurrection en Kapissa. La population au centre des préoccupations, la raison plutôt que le cœur. », August 2009.
<http://www.lepoint2.com/sons/pdf/rapport-chanson.pdf>
- ⁹² French mountain troops
- ⁹³ In French tactical and operational concepts, the *effet majeur* may be compared to a mix of commander's intent and purpose of the operation. It is the bed rock of any military orders.
- ⁹⁴ Quoted in Major Frédéric Danigo, "Les forces morales, un défi permanent pour l'Armée de Terre" (les cahiers de Mars, September 2009)
- ⁹⁵ Ho Chi Min quoted in : Zakia Daoud, *Abdelkrim, une épopée de sang et d'or* (Paris, Segquier, 1999)
- ⁹⁶ Mao Tse Tung, *on guerrilla warfare*, trans. BG Samuel B. Griffith (New York, Praeger publishers, 1961), 49.
- ⁹⁷ "Abdelkrim, "précurseur de la guerilla moderne",
<http://www.casafree.com/modules/news/article.php?storyid=3461>